PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1994–95

COMPRISING PERIOD
16 October—27 October 1995

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 264**

FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1994–95

House of Commons

Monday 16 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed to questions, hon. Members will wish to know that it is intended that tributes will be paid to the late Lord Home of the Hirsel immediately after Question Time.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Regional Orchestras

1. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement on her policies concerning regional orchestras. [35898]

The Minister of State, Department of National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The Arts Council is currently responsible for formulating policy on regional orchestras. Following a consultation process undertaken in association with the BBC, the Arts Council recently published its orchestral strategy document, setting out the council's goals for orchestral activity over the next 10 years.

Mr. Jones: May I warn the Minister that when the Department of the Environment cuts its grants to local councils, they then cut their grants to regional orchestras? Does he know, for example, that on Merseyside one council has ceased to provide grant and another has halved its grant to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra? Does he agree that revenue support is crucial for effectiveness in regional orchestras' futures? Does he also agree that the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic is a world-class orchestra with a charismatic maestro and is really delivering the goods?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, it is a wonderful orchestra. The hon. Gentleman may recall that I had the privilege of hearing it give a stunning performance in May, through the kindness and courtesy of the hon. Gentleman and his wife. Its new chief executive, Mr. Anthony Lewis-Crosby, is also doing a marvellous job.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point about local government, Liverpool council gives the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic but £80,000 a year while Manchester gives the Hallé £500,000 and Birmingham gives £1 million to the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra. It might be a good thing if Liverpool gave a little more than £80,000 to such a wonderful orchestra.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend aware that regional youth orchestras are particularly vulnerable to cuts in local authority support? Does he agree that such orchestras are an important part of the infrastructure of music in this country, as they provide many of the very talented musicians of the future? Will he examine that issue and ensure that the existence of the excellent regional youth orchestra network is not compromised?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an important point: youth orchestras are of exceptional importance. My hon. Friend will be glad to know that this year the Arts Council is spending more on music than it has ever spent before—some £44 million—but I shall certainly draw his remarks to the council's attention.

National Lottery

3. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans she now has for future allocation of lottery funds. [35900]

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Parliament decided that each of the five good causes should benefit equally from the proceeds of the national lottery. I see no reason to change this at present.

Mr. Janner: Does the Secretary of State understand that almost the entire British public at every level consider that the way in which the Government have organised this expenditure of public funds is a public disgrace? Will she see whether there are other ways in which other people's money could be spent which they would find acceptable, whatever the Government may think?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the way in which the funds were distributed—through the five independent distribution bodies—was debated carefully in the House. The fact is that the lottery has been the most remarkable success: it has raised more money for good causes than anyone expected. I am sure that, like me, the hon. and learned Gentleman looks forward to the caring charities making their awards later this month.

Mr. Jessel: As the lottery is giving widespread pleasure and excitement to large numbers of people while raising massive new sums for thousands upon thousands of good causes and also producing some useful revenue for the Government, is it not time that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) stopped carping and complaining and gave the Government credit for a brilliant national achievement?

Mrs. Bottomley: I totally endorse my hon. Friend's comments. Of course it is characteristic of the Labour party that it is unable to welcome such a formidable success. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who asked the question, failed to recognise that in Leicester the lawn tennis club, the Haymarket theatre, Thurmaston parish council, Leicester rowing club and Loxton leisure services all received lottery money. It is characteristic of the Opposition to look for the cloud rather than the silver lining.

Mr. Maxton: Is it not absurd that major arts organisations in Scotland such as Scottish Opera and Glasgow Citizens Theatre should face a major funding crisis at a time when so much money is coming into the lottery and is available to the arts? Is it not time that the rules on funding for the arts were changed so that at least some revenue spending as well as capital spending can be funded?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that already in Scotland the Scottish Arts Council has made 66 grants totalling almost £6 million. I agree that overall, in the country as a whole, the figures are 462 grants and £190 million. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that I have been having discussions with the chairman of the Arts Council as to whether there are ways in which, as the lottery money unfolds, it would make sense to modify the rules. However, nobody should underestimate the phenomenal contribution to the arts as a result of this very successful lottery.

Mr. Dicks: Does my right hon. Friend not feel ashamed of the way in which, in the media today, she tried to defend the allocation of £21 million to Sadler's Wells, bearing in mind that two medical charities in which I am involved have got nothing? Does she agree that the best thing she could do is to say to the Chancellor, "If you want to make public expenditure cuts, close my Department and the Arts Council and everything that goes with it"?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have been looking forward to debating this matter with my hon. Friend and I hope that he will come on a number of visits with me. I was recently at Sadler's Wells watching some of the youngsters rehearsing ballet and I thought particularly of my hon. Friend and wondered whether he would do me the honour of coming with me on such occasions. The constituency Member, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), may wish to debate with my hon. Friend some of the detail involved in the prospects for inner-city regeneration and the popularity of ballet, to which some 2.9 million people went last year.

I share my hon. Friend's wish that medical charities should be supported, and when the Caring Charities Board starts to make its announcements later in the month I hope, like my hon. Friend, that medical charities will have a part to play.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Secretary of State realise that Camelot, the operator of the lottery, is currently taking 1 per cent. as pure profit and that that percentage will inevitably rise as its start-up costs diminish? That means, does it not, that Camelot's profit for this year alone will stand at some £50 million? Would it not be far better for the operation of the lottery to be put on a not-for-profit basis, with the money saved going to charities whose fund raising is currently suffering grievously?

Mrs. Bottomley: Labour Members never learn and never change. They have this ideological hostility to any organisation ever making a profit. I commend to the House today's report by Peter Davis of Oflot in which he further discusses the award of the operating licence to Camelot. That was commended by no less a body than the National Audit Office. Writing of Camelot, Mr. Davis said that it

"offered the greatest contribution to the good causes . . . and retained the lowest percentage of turnover to cover its operating costs and profits."

The Labour party threatens to undermine the good that is going to good causes because of its ideological opposition to anybody ever making a profit.

Sir Patrick Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend accept that when the distribution of lottery money was debated in the House there was virtually no opposition to the present system? Will she try to ensure that in future the charities board gets a better record and reports more regularly, and that all the announcements by the various grant-making bodies are co-ordinated? Would that not reduce much of the current criticism?

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate my hon. Friend's reminding me that those matters were debated thoroughly by the House, and the independence of the distributing bodies was emphasised by both sides. We are now reaching the stage at which the flow of good announcements is such that everyone is having constantly to amend the figures: 1,432 projects have now received help to the tune of £545 million. My hon. Friend is right to say that the Caring Charities Board has had to work

hard to establish procedures for the distribution of money, but the caring charities receive £300 million a year which they could not otherwise have expected.

Youth Sport

4. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what additional funding she will make available for youth sport. [35901]

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council will make available, additionally to the £4 million already spent on youth sport, an extra £1 million to enable trainee and serving teachers to obtain coaching qualifications. It will also set up a £2 million challenge fund to promote formal links between clubs and schools. Sportsmatch will be earmarking £1 million of its funding for school projects and, within the rules, we intend to make maximum use of the national lottery.

Mr. Hain: Are the Government considering additional funding for youth boxing? After James Murray's tragic death—the second death of a boxer in Britain in 18 months, on top of all the other serious injuries—should not the Government insist that the provision of any public money is conditional on a root and branch reform of boxing, which could perhaps include a ban on punches to the head, the prevention of dangerous dehydration and any other measures necessary to put safety first? Without such reform, should not boxing be banned altogether?

Mr. Sproat: I certainly do not agree that boxing should be banned altogether. None the less, the hon. Gentleman makes a serious point at a tragic time. The Sports Council does not give any money to youth boxing, although Sportsmatch has given some which has been matched by the private sector. As the hon. Gentleman knows, after the tragedy on Saturday, the British Boxing Board of Control is conducting a full inquiry. After the tragic death of Bradley Stone 18 months ago, an independent working party was set up under the neurologist Peter Richards. It has completed its report and a summary is published today; the full report will be published in November. I think that that would be a good time to look again at the findings of the two reports.

Mr. Dykes: Bearing in mind his well-known interest in cricket, will my hon. Friend the Minister, through the Department for Education and Employment and the particular organisers, say something about the programme for reviving cricket in schools in the Greater London area and, indeed, in further education institutions? What progress has been made?

Mr. Sproat: In respect of improving the opportunities for young people to play cricket, the paper that we published on 14 July spelled out clearly the fact that cricket is one of the games that we wish to encourage most. I mentioned in my original answer the £2 million that the Sports Council is to make available to promote links between clubs and schools; cricket clubs will, of course, be among those which will benefit.

Mrs. Mahon: Further to the original question, which dealt with making more money available for youth sports, does the Minister agree that making that money available, especially in deprived areas, could do much to prevent youngsters from getting into trouble in the first place so that we would not need the rather ridiculous statements made by the Home Secretary to the effect that he wants to lock up people for longer? Would it not be better to make funds available at an early stage and give youngsters somewhere decent to play sport?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I agree entirely with the first part of the hon. Lady's question. In fact, her suggestion is one of the prime moving dynamics behind the consultation paper. I want more young people to have better access to sporting facilities. *[Interruption.]* I heard someone mention the selling of school playing fields. We are, I hope, going to make the Sports Council a statutory consultee so that no school playing field can be sold without that body having its say. We also intend to allow schools, with their local communities, to buy back land to make even more sports facilities available for young people.

Tourism

5. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about tourism in the midlands. [35902]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Tourism is an industry of vital importance to the midlands, as it is throughout Britain. In the midlands it provides 240,000 jobs and generates revenue of at least £900 million.

All parts of the country will benefit from Government initiatives to assist the tourism industry to become more competitive. These were announced in the document "Tourism: competing with the best", published by my Department earlier this year.

Sir David Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that overseas tourists should not confine their visits to London, but should go to parts of the midlands? Does she further agree that attractions such as Alton Towers in my constituency and the beautiful scenery surrounding it compare with anything that London can offer?

Mrs. Bottomley: Undoubtedly, tourists coming to this country should visit Alton Towers. Of course, with the increasing pursuit of leisure and holiday activities within this country, people do not need to go overseas for their breaks—they can have excellent holidays in this country.

My hon. Friend is aware of my great concern, which he shares, that an attraction such as Alton Towers, which has 250 full-time workers and up to 1,700 seasonal workers, would be grievously afflicted if this country were ever to join the social chapter. The introduction of the minimum wage and the social chapter would wreck the tourist industry. All those concerned about that industry should ensure that there is a Conservative Government for as long as possible.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Secretary of State look closely at the bid from the city pride site of Derby to be the site for the millennium exhibition? If the bid is successful, would that not be an enormous kick for tourism in the east midlands?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has once again identified the way in which the lottery is resulting in wonderful regeneration projects and opportunities throughout the country. He will be aware that four sites are being closely examined for the millennium festival. We are further ahead than any other country in our preparations to celebrate the millennium. The lottery

means that we can do it in a more magnificent way than anywhere else. I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's remarks about Derby.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my right hon. Friend think that the distribution of lottery funds is sufficient to encourage tourism in the east midlands? Is she aware that there are many attractions in my constituency of Bosworth, such as the Concordia theatre, the new Hinckley museum and even Bosworth battlefield, all of which might benefit from a little more generosity?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend rightly identifies the fact that overseas tourists often refer to heritage and cultural activities as the main reasons for their visits. The lottery money enables us to improve and modernise our arts, heritage and cultural life generally, which is a great boost for tourism. I shall draw my hon. Friend's comments to the distributing bodies, which are independent in their decisions about the distribution of lottery money.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Secretary of State aware that midlands tourism has much less to fear from the social chapter than from the Government's current imposition of VAT on tourism, at levels far above those set by our competitor countries in the European Union? In this pre-Budget period, is she paying particular attention to the views of the Price Waterhouse report on the reduction of VAT? Will she give that her personal support?

Mr. John Marshall: Is that a pledge?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend asks whether that is a pledge. The Opposition parties are very good at reducing sources of income while increasing spending, without even trying to make the figures add up.

I beg to differ with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). As the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, any fool knows that the cost to our country of a minimum wage and of the social chapter would be very great indeed—an estimated 800,000 jobs. Undoubtedly, the tourist industry would be the hardest hit.

National Lottery

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent discussions she has had with Camelot concerning the level of prizes in the national lottery. [35903]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I met Sir George Russell, chairman of Camelot Group plc, on 21 August. We discussed a number of issues concerning the national lottery, including prize levels.

Mr. Hughes: Does the right hon. Lady appreciate that in some cases the multi-million pound prizes actually cause social distress? Would it not be far wiser to limit the top prize to £1 million, thereby creating a more fair and equitable lottery?

Mrs. Bottomley: Looking at the background papers on the subject, I am reminded of the hon. Gentleman saying that he thought that the prizes were not large enough. Be that as it may, the hon. Gentleman will know that growing numbers of people play the lottery in a syndicate, so that very often, when a large prize is won, the proceeds are shared by a number of people. When large prizes are available, there is an enormous increase in the amount of money for good causes. The roll-over results in an increase of about 27 per cent. The lottery is required to maximise the return to good causes, to protect the interests of those playing, and ensure that it is conducted with propriety. I believe that on all three counts it is acting as a model.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that many of my constituents would love to cope with the social distress to which the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred if they were to win such magnificently high prizes? Indeed, that is precisely why so many of my constituents buy tickets. If they were not to do so due to all the petty restrictions beloved of Labour Members, there would be less money available to charities and the other many good causes.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend sums up the situation precisely. If the Opposition parties had their way, they would cap the prizes and reduce the money coming through for good causes. As things are, we are all winners with the lottery. Millions are playing, millions are winning and, above all, 1,432 projects have already benefited. The Labour party cannot abide success.

Mr. Skinner: Is it true that the Secretary of State has issued a memo giving instructions to all the people who are concerned with grants and money from the lottery that in no circumstances should any money go to socialist Stratford?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman checked where the lottery money was falling, he would find that far more goes to socialist authorities than to Conservative authorities, for the very reason that the money is going towards regeneration projects which are totally improving the face of the country—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Stratford?"] There are no special cases. However, perhaps I could give the hon. Gentleman a list of projects in the Stratford area—[HON. MEMBERS: "And Stratford East"]—to reassure him on that front.

Channel 4 Television

7. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how she will ensure that the subsidy that Channel 4 must pay to the ITV companies will be used solely to finance programmes; and if she will make a statement. [35904]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for the Channel 3 companies to decide how they use any moneys paid to them by Channel 4 under the terms of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Ms Jackson: Does the Secretary of State agree that Channel 4's creative programming has produced not only viewer satisfaction and commercial profit, but an increased international respect for this country's primacy in quality public service broadcasting? Will she assure the House that the Bill soon to be introduced on the media will re-examine the present funding formulas so that Channel 4 will not be unfairly penalised in the future—as it undoubtedly is at the moment—for its overwhelming success?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not accept that Channel 4 is penalised for its success. Channel 4 has been extremely

successful as a result of the new arrangements and I congratulate it on all that it has done. The Broadcasting Act 1990 set out the funding formula for Channel 4 and that exists until the end of 1997. It would be quite improper to move the goal posts during that period. Like the hon. Lady, however, I commend the success of Channel 4.

Mr. Allen: The Secretary of State knows perfectly well that the Broadcasting Act was never intended to draw money from Channel 4. Indeed, the safety net was designed to assist Channel 4. Does she accept that taking £70 million from Channel 4 in each of the next two years will damage the creative ability of the British television industry and will mean that one of our biggest assets will be under-used? Will she undertake to review the matter and, if appropriate, bring forward relevant amendments which we could discuss in the House when we debate the new media Bill?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is only the Labour party which constantly wants to move the goal posts. We have already had the smoke-filled deal on BT and the cable companies. Similarly, on this matter, it would be quite improper to modify the arrangements while they are under way. The funding arrangement has ensured the stability of Channel 4 at a time when there is a great deal of change in the television industry. The independent television companies took that into account when they bid for their licences. Certainly, the independent television companies invest very heavily in original programming.

Sports Participation

8. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about the provision of funding for grass roots participation in sport. [35905]

Mr. Sproat: The main provision for grass roots participation in sport is made by local authorities, with expenditure in excess of £950 million annually, but the Sports Council will consider applications to the national lottery from local authorities and others in support of projects offering a wide appeal.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Minister accept that enthusiasm at grass roots for any sport will depend on a number of factors, including funding, but also on safety? In the light of the tragic death on Friday evening in Glasgow, does he agree that it is now necessary to have an independent inquiry into the safety of boxing? Why not set up a royal commission for that purpose?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. and learned Gentleman asks a serious question and I take it seriously. As I said in response to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), there will be an inquiry by the British Boxing Board of Control within the next couple of weeks. The hon. and learned Gentleman used the word "independent". An independent working group under the neurologist Peter Richards will report in November. I suggest that the best thing that we can do is see what both reports say. Then—although I must tell the hon. and learned Gentleman that I am not at this moment in favour of a royal commission—we will certainly look at the matter again.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, notwithstanding the tragic death of James Murray, which everyone regrets deeply, the sport of boxing has a great deal to offer young people of all ages? It is a well controlled and well disciplined sport which is valuable to young people who choose to undertake it and others who do not choose to undertake it. Will he agree not to discourage public funds from going properly into the sport, notwithstanding any possible measures to increase safety?

Mr. Sproat: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. It is a terrific sport and it would be a great shame if this tragic death weighed too heavily. When deaths from sports were last examined in a comprehensive way—between 1986 and 1992—there were some 268 deaths from other sports, including 40 deaths from ball games, as opposed in those days to only three deaths from boxing. So although this is a tragic moment and we should not take it as anything other than that, we should not let ourselves be overwhelmed by one tragedy.

Concessionary Television Licences

9. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is her Department's policy concerning reduced cost television licences for retired pensioners; and if she will make a statement. [35906]

Mr. Sproat: As the Government made clear in the White Paper, "The Future of the BBC", published in July 1994, we have no plans to introduce reduced fee television licences for pensioners. This would be very expensive in terms of lost licence fee revenue, on which the BBC depends for the funding of its home broadcasting services. Any such shortfall would have to be offset by a substantial increase in licence fees for all other licence payers, irrespective of their means.

Mr. Barnes: Many progressive councils which have warden-operated schemes charge as little as £5 for a television licence to those who were lucky enough to be in such accommodation before the Government changed the law in May 1988. Can we not have a national scheme in which all pensioners are winners? That is the subject of campaigning by many people, by *The Star* newspaper in my area and by almost every pensioners' organisation that I have ever addressed.

Mr. Sproat: I certainly pay true tribute to the persistence of the hon. Gentleman on behalf of his constituents who were not eligible for the £5 concessionary fee because they had not signed on before 18 May 1988. Nevertheless, we now have a scheme whereby pensioners or the disabled living in residential accommodation which qualifies for concession receive their television licence for £5 a year. Although I readily admit that there are one or two anomalies in the scheme, it is probably the best that we can construct. Perhaps Opposition Members can use their ingenuity to find a way of making this a matter for discussion when the Broadcasting Bill comes before the House in due course.

Sport

10. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made with carrying out the Government's new sports policy, with special reference to competitive sport in schools. [35907]

Mr. Sproat: The working group on university sports scholarships, which is being chaired by Sir Roger

Bannister, has begun its work, and the consultation stage on the sportsmark and gold star awards scheme for schools closed on 13 October. My Department and the Sports Council are now working towards the implementation of that scheme in secondary schools for the academic term 1996-97. The Department of the Environment will shortly publish a consultation paper on the Sports Council becoming a statutory consultee on planning proposals affecting school playing fields.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he join me in welcoming the development of substantial local projects, of which two in particular are being proposed in my constituency—Blackpool cricket club's plan to develop new facilities for youngsters and a potential partnership between two local primary schools? One of those schools has a sports field but insufficient drainage and the other has no sports field but would like to share a sports field if the lottery will provide funding for a new exterior changing block and for drainage.

Mr. Sproat: I know of the hard work that my hon. Friend has done for Roseacres and for the other school. As long as those schools can show that what they want is good for the wider community, they will certainly be eligible for lottery funds. I wish them all the luck in the world.

Mr. Pendry: Notwithstanding the fact that the Government have no new sports policy—it is more a rehash of others, including parts of our own—does the Minister recognise that more than three quarters of those who responded to the Department for Education's consultation paper on the national curriculum opposed the narrow imposition of compulsory competitive sport in our schools?

If the Minister does not accept the dictum, vox populi, vox Dei, will he at least accept the view of one of our country's mortal sporting gods, Gary Lineker, who only last week spoke of the training programme of one of Europe's most successful soccer clubs, which included dance, aerobics and other physical movement activities? Will the right hon. Gentleman look again at that aspect of his policy?

Mr. Sproat: I was rather surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that we do not have a sports policy. When we announced our new sports policy on 14 July, it was heralded as the biggest revolution in sport for 50 years. We cannot produce policies every day of the week.

I agree that, by and large, the education establishment has been extremely supportive of our proposals, although there may be items that members of the education establishment wish to discuss with me in more detail. I have already met the National Association of Head Teachers. I shall meet Mr. McAvoy and Mr. de Gruchy and I shall listen carefully to what they have to say.

I appointed Mr. Lineker to the new United Kingdom sports council, which starts work on 1 January 1996; no doubt he will have the opportunity to make his views known to a wider public then.

National Lottery

11. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what studies she has undertaken of the impact of the national lottery. [35908]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My Department has commissioned research on participation levels and we are undertaking a study of the economic impact of national lottery proceeds on the cultural and sporting sectors.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that although there is widespread public approval for the success of the lottery there is considerable anxiety about its impact on charities and on the competitive position of small shopkeepers who have been denied the right to sell lottery tickets?

Mrs. Bottomley: Allegations have been made about the lottery's effects on charities; so far, they have been without substance. A recent MORI poll suggested that, of those playing the lottery, 4 per cent. had increased their contribution to charities, whereas 2 per cent. had reduced their contribution. There are many charities. In some years, they are very successful, in others they are less so.

My hon. Friend will be aware that the Home Office is monitoring the impact of the lottery on the charitable sector. Whatever the result, I have no doubt that the £300 million a year that is being made available for the caring charities will far exceed any possible minor effect that the lottery may have had.

The 18,000 retailers who have a lottery outlet have had a great advantage. I know that Camelot is on target to have 40,000 outlets, and it is another way in which the lottery is benefiting not only the retailer but the people who win the prizes and play the games.

Mr. Timms: Is the Secretary of State aware of the Rowntree Foundation's concern that a disproportionate number of lottery grants are going to the most prosperous parts of the country? Will she address particularly the Rowntree Foundation's recommendation that the matching funding requirement should be relaxed in disadvantaged areas where the problems of raising local funds are the most severe?

Mrs. Bottomley: All the distribution bodies take a flexible approach to the way in which matching funding is interpreted. I dispute very strongly the hon. Gentleman's allegation with regard to the Rowntree report. Lottery money is going to a wide range of regeneration projects, such as the recent renaissance of Portsmouth harbour, which received £40 million; the Earth centre at Doncaster, which received £50 million; the Welsh highland railway, which received £4 million; the trans-Pennine trail; the millennium forests in Scotland; and the Sustran cycle tracks up and down the country. Regeneration is proving to be a great boost to the country.

The distribution bodies have invested particularly in projects for disabled people. Some £4.5 million was invested in the Jubilee sailing trust and a touring theatre company has received new vans. Many projects have helped the disadvantaged—and that is before the caring charities have begun to make their awards.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Magistrates

30. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of whether an adequate number of people are applying to become magistrates in the Duchy. [35883]

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Roger Freeman): My assessment is that although there is an adequate number of applications from certain age groups—for example, retired people—we are not receiving enough applications from younger individuals.

Sir Thomas Arnold: I welcome my right hon. Friend to his first Duchy questions. Will he confirm that it is his policy to ensure that successful applicants are drawn from a wider cross-section of the community? Is he aware that there is sometimes a problem in that regard?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I recognise that within the County Palatine, where I have responsibility for appointing magistrates, there is a problem, which also exists throughout England and Wales, in finding enough young applicants, particularly among men and women who work in industry. I intend to approach some of the larger employers within the County Palatine to remind them of the great contribution made by unpaid voluntary magistrates and of the contributions that employers can make to their employment opportunities and to their own businesses by discharging that essential public service.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that there is considerable concern in the County Palatine that the magistrates who are appointed do not reflect the political complexion of the county? I accept that it is not a political duty, but magistrates should represent the political views of a broad cross-section of the people living within a county.

Mr. Freeman: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says and I am pleased that he has reminded the House that magistrates are not appointed purely on the basis of their political affiliations. It is important, however, to ensure that magistrates reflect the views of the communities from which they are drawn and that a fair and proper balance is maintained.

As for the County Palatine, we should like to receive more applications and nominations from those who have political affiliations other than Conservative. Therefore, I believe that the solution lies in the hands of individuals who believe that their political affiliations are not being represented fairly.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Magistrates Association. I pay tribute to all the magistrates in the County Palatine and to the 30,000 magistrates in England and Wales who do such a magnificent job on behalf of the public.

Deregulation

31. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress has been made in implementing the Government's deregulation initiative. [35884]

37. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the progress he has been able to secure on deregulation by Her Majesty's Government. [35892]

Mr. Freeman: With permission—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I can deal with the matter. The Deputy Prime Minister is replying to the question.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply to Question 31 as the Minister responsible for deregulation—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister has been asked to reply; I accept his response.

Mr. Freeman: The Government announced a package of new measures on 19 September in response to a report by the deregulation task force. It included new joint working arrangements on taxation and national insurance. As well as changes to existing legislation, we accepted recommendations to make enforcement more business friendly and to minimise burdens from new regulations. We have now accepted more than 530 of the recommendations made by Lord Sainsbury's task force. Copies of the task force's report, the Government's response and a commentary on progress on Lord Sainsbury's recommendations have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Robinson: May I say how welcome that statement is to many business men in my constituency? I hope that, in progressing the initiative, my right hon. Friend will do his best to ensure that business men are aware of the progress that we are making in achieving deregulation.

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly ensure that. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his supplementary question. The deregulation unit and the Office of Public Service must consider how European directives have been implemented in the United Kingdom. I confirm that the provisions of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 can be used to amend and simplify United Kingdom implementation of legislation in European directives. That will be much welcomed by the business community.

Mr. Wilkinson: I welcome my right hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box in his important new responsibilities and the Government's business friendly initiative announced on 19 September.

Has my right hon. Friend yet found time to read European Commission regulation 3223/94, which, if implemented, would impose an extra 50p on a litre of fresh orange juice sold in this country, costing an estimated 1,000 jobs? In addition, a quarter of our abattoirs would be put out of business by similar regulations—

Madam Speaker: Order. We are not in debate. The hon. Gentleman has asked about a particular document. The Minister must now be allowed to answer. He has had enough information about the document—I certainly have.

Mr. Freeman: I have, too. I confirm that I am aware of those directives.

Mr. Prescott: The Minister has not read them.

Mr. Freeman: I have read them.

Before any European directive is implemented, we shall ensure—collectively as a Government and individually as Ministers—that no provisions are added and that we implement it quickly but fairly and with proper, balanced enforcement.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware of the clear evidence that his pressure to deregulate is leading to fewer inspections of private care homes and residential care premises? That is not only a retrograde step but a

dangerous one. If that is his idea of deregulation, his Government will suffer for it, but my constituents will suffer even more.

Mr. Freeman: That is not the idea of deregulation. It is principally to make sure that we, unlike the Labour party, seek to lift the burden on enterprise, particularly on small and medium-sized enterprises. We are not seeking to remove protection from the consumer, from those in care homes or from anyone else, particularly those in the workplace. We are deregulating to help the competitiveness of the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Chancellor of the Duchy agree that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, which he and the Deputy Prime Minister support, gives unprecedented powers to central Government, because, by statutory instrument, the House can change Acts of Parliament? Does it not also show the undemocratic and centralised view of the Government that the Minister attempts to answer a question from the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) to the Deputy Prime Minister, who is sitting there beside him and does not have the guts to answer?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the Deputy Prime Minister can answer for himself, and he will. *[Interruption.]* The Deputy Prime Minister will answer for himself as soon as I have answered the question.

This is not an undemocratic process. The Scrutiny Committees of the House and the other place consider all secondary legislation to amend primary legislation. I can confirm that we shall lay one order a week to deregulate and to repeal unnecessary legislation.

Departmental Priorities

32. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what principal priorities he has set his Department. [35885]

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Michael Heseltine): To promote the competitiveness agenda, the deregulation initiative and the effective administration of the services for which my Department is responsible.

Mr. Hain: Why has the right hon. Gentleman already promoted himself? In the summer the Order Paper described him as the First Secretary of State, whereas today's Order Paper describes him as the Deputy Prime Minister? Will the next Order Paper describe him by his real title, which is surrogate party chairman? Surely he is nothing more than a glorified party chairman. That being so, should not his salary, at least in part, be funded from Tory central office, or could it not afford him?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will realise that there has been a lot of progress since the summer—we are on our way to victory.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is the Deputy Prime Minister willing to put his great skill, courage and determination in watching expenditure into looking carefully at expenditure by the European Community, which sadly seems out of control? This week we have been told that the agriculture budget will overspend its legal limits by £1,000 million. Will he see whether anything can be done about that matter?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I assure my hon. Friend that I will give the matter full attention.

Mr. Prescott: I offer my congratulations to the right hon. Gentleman on his new jobs. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not mention all his new titles, as I have only 20 minutes.

I should like to take a few seconds to welcome the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that since he took charge of deregulation and competition policy there has been a record number of new regulations and business failures and that Britain has slipped five places in the world competitiveness league? Is it not about time that the hopalong deputy shouted "About turn" on his own policies?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The deputy leader of the Labour party referred to my former hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). There is a better journey—that of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), who saw through the Labour party long before its own leaders, flirted with social democracy and ended up serving his country as a Minister in a Conservative Government.

As for the rather pathetic jokes about hopping along, I do not have much experience of abandoning my principles and my policies, but if I had I would have done the hopping a great deal better.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. Friend accept the evidence that since he joined Mrs. Thatcher's first Administration in 1979 this country has undergone substantial national renewal and that it remains a principal task of any Conservative Government to unite the nation?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend understands that one of the proudest boasts of the Conservative party is its adherence to the philosophies and policies of one nation. For that reason, above all else, we have governed this country longer than any other democratic party in the history of democracy.

Mr. Beith: Should it not be one of the Deputy Prime Minister's priorities to produce a co-ordinated ministerial line on Europe? In that regard, would he explain to the Defence Secretary that this country has had treaty obligations to go to war on behalf of other European countries and has been part of an integrated command structure with other European countries since before the Defence Secretary was in his pram?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary has never questioned the obligations of this country under treaties. He was merely talking about the concept of a federalist defence policy in Europe, which the Government reject.

Government Policy

33. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what are his responsibilities in respect of the presentation of Government policy. [35887]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am chairman of the Cabinet committee with responsibility for the co-ordination and presentation of Government policy.

Mr. Winnick: As he has completed his pantomime act in Blackpool, will the right hon. Gentleman, who is often

described as the Archie Rice of British politics, tell us when he expects a substantial improvement in the standing of the Government? Are we right to believe that if, as seems likely, no such improvement occurs, the right hon. Gentleman will resign, or will he try once more before the next general election to get the job that he really wants?

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, I shall help the Prime Minister win the fifth term which he is entitled to expect.

To describe the party conference that I attended in the terms that the hon. Gentleman does misses the cynicism of his own party conference, which saw the leadership of his party deny the record of his party for as long as I have been in active politics—a total and cynical abdication of everything most Labour Members believe in. The concept of new Labour, with the hon. Members for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on the same side of the House is mesmerising.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that he and I have listened over many years to the Opposition's comments on the Government's policy and that it is those policies and the way in which we have practised them that have won us successive general elections and that will win the next one?

The Deputy Prime Minister: As always, I find myself in complete accord with my hon. Friend.

Departmental Priorities

34. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what are his Department's priorities in Scotland. [35888]

Mr. Freeman: As elsewhere in the United Kingdom, to promote the continuing improvement of public services and the deregulation and increased competitiveness of British industry.

Sir David Steel: In the background briefing to the Deputy Prime Ministers's appointment we were told that he would implement policy across Whitehall. Does that include the Scottish Office and, if so, what gems await us?

Mr. Freeman: The Deputy Prime Minister and, indeed, all the Ministers in the Office of Public Service cover competitiveness across the United Kingdom. The right hon. Gentleman needs to reflect on whether Labour's policy on a national minimum wage and adherence to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty would aid competitiveness. Most Conservative Members will be quite clear about the answer to that question.

Transfers of Responsibility

35. **Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what responsibilities have been transferred from his Department since 1 July. [35889]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service (Mr. John Horam): The Office of Science and Technology has transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: As co-chairman of the all-party group, the Friends of Medical Research, I am disturbed that, in the last funding round, only 30 per cent. of the Medical Research Council's bids for Alpha funding were granted, against the usual figure of around 100 per cent. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that such projects are important to ensure that the brain drain is reversed and that medical research will not fall between the twin stools of his Department and the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Horam: I know that my hon. Friend follows these matters very closely, so he will be aware that we have succeeded in keeping constant in real terms the overall science budget at about £1.3 billion a year. Included in that is a hefty share for medical research. Obviously, I cannot commit my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, whose responsibility that is, but I am sure from my conversations with him that he is well aware of the importance and success of medical research in this country and that he will do his best to keep up funding.

Mr. Henderson: I can understand that the Minister may have some difficulty knowing whether he is deputy to the Deputy or deputy to the deputy to the Deputy, but given the new supervisory regime in the Department, and the demise of the cones hotline, will he now tell us what the three top priorities for the citizens charter are, and who decided them?

Mr. Horam: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman himself knows who he is deputy to—perhaps what happens on Thursday will have some say in that. The fact is that the citizens charter's priorities remain as they always were—to produce a better quality public service.

Deregulation

36. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what proposals he has to introduce new deregulation measures. [35890]

Mr. Freeman: As part of the package of new measures that we announced on 19 September, we hope to bring forward one deregulation order each week Parliament is sitting, using powers under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994.

Mr. Flynn: The whole House will welcome the unfreezing of payments to medal holders, but when will the Government deregulate the rule that freezes 30 other payments, including the payment to widows which has not been increased by a penny since its introduction, even though it replaced the widow's allowance, which was increased every year? The widow's payment should now be £881 more than it is. Is the right hon. Gentleman proud of being a Minister in a Government who cheat widows at the moment of their bereavement?

Mr. Freeman: The whole House will wish to share with the Prime Minister the delighted reception from Victoria Cross holders following the announcement made last week; it was much appreciated not only by the holders but by all members of their families.

I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my colleagues in Cabinet.

Lord Home (Tributes)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): A week ago Alec Douglas-Home, Lord Home, died at his home, The Hirsel. Alec Home was one of those people who light up politics with their integrity. I believe that the whole House will wish to join me today in sending our deepest sympathies to his family.

I was not privileged to know Alec Douglas-Home when he was Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary; I only had the pleasure of meeting him many years later. But even in those days, as someone who watched politics from far beyond this House, I felt from a distance that here was a man of many qualities and few pretensions. He believed that people with privileges had, with those privileges, to accept obligations. He could have chosen the leisured life of a Scottish laird, but he chose to accept obligation and a duty to public service. When fate called him to serve in the highest office, he disclaimed his historic titles, a step that no one in his position could possibly have taken lightly.

Alec Douglas-Home was a modest and a likeable man—a man of dignity, charming, witty and gentle. It is not surprising that he inspired affection among those with whom he worked and among millions who never met him. He never let public life take over. He was happiest with his family, fishing the River Tweed, studying the racing form book or on the cricket field. During one election, he abandoned the election campaign for a day playing cricket, which I think is a perfectly proper sense of priorities for an Englishman—and a very enlightened sense of priorities for a Scottish man. He was a good cricketer too, the only Prime Minister ever to play for MCC.

Alec Home was a family man. His wife Elizabeth, the love of his life, was both his inspiration and his most resolute champion. She shared not only his triumphs and difficulties but his sense of humour. Both of them were devoted Christians, but perhaps only Elizabeth Home could have described the parliamentary Christian wives as the "holy hens" and escaped without rebuke.

Alec Home first stood for election in Coatbridge, as Alec Dunglass, in 1929. He was shocked by the poverty and hardship that he found there. Two years later, elected for the neighbouring constituency of South Lanark, itself no stranger to poverty, he had already formed his strong belief in one nation policies. By the end of 1935, he was parliamentary private secretary at the Ministry of Labour. A few months later, Neville Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, invited him to become his parliamentary private secretary.

Suddenly, with Neville Chamberlain's elevation to Prime Minister, Alec Home found himself at the very centre of government. Although he did not accompany Chamberlain on all his foreign travels, he was with him at that crucial meeting in Munich with Hitler. Alec Home was not, of course, personally responsible for the agreements reached, but, with a loyalty that was characteristic of the man, he would never subsequently criticise Chamberlain's actions.

At the outbreak of war, Alec Home was keen to serve. To his bitter disappointment, he was declared unfit. When tuberculosis of the spine was diagnosed, year upon year of painful treatment followed. With his spine rebuilt, his parting words to his doctors were typical of the man's gentle, self-mocking humour. He said, "You have achieved the impossible; you have put backbone into a politician." Time and time again during his subsequent political career he demonstrated that backbone. He dared to criticise Churchill for the Yalta agreement and the way in which it treated Poland. But three months later, in a typical Churchillian move, Alec Home was appointed to the Foreign Office for a spell lasting only a few weeks before the 1945 election. It was, however, an important step in his political development.

Five years later, Alec Home returned to the House. Only 12 months beyond that he inherited the titles that took him to the other place. He heard the news in the Chamber. He immediately rushed away, only to discover outside the Chamber that he had forgotten his spectacles. In keeping with the tradition of the House, his return was barred now that he was a part of the other place.

With the return of a Conservative Government, Alec Home was appointed to a new post as Minister of State, Scottish Office. He cared deeply about Scotland and about the Union. He once said, "I have always taken the view that we have successfully borrowed the canniness of the highlander to make a living out of the Englishman."

In 1955, Anthony Eden promoted Alec Home to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. It was a time of unsettling change for the Commonwealth, which was struggling to adjust to the end of Empire. Alec Home was central to the Commonwealth's evolution, taking particular responsibility for developing economic co-operation. During that period, he held also the offices of Lord Privy Seal and Lord President of the Council.

Harold Macmillan increasingly relied on Alec Home's wise and honest advice. In 1960, Macmillan made him Foreign Secretary. Alec Home quickly established authority across the world during an especially sensitive period in international relations. He displayed firmness in challenging the Soviet Union and he resolved a serious international crisis in Asia. He performed his role as Foreign Secretary as he did every role, without pretension.

The sight of a British Foreign Secretary climbing from an aeroplane in a rumpled tweed suit amused many foreign dignitaries. As Macmillan later said, "The Foreign Secretary has been accused of many things but never of being the best dressed man in the Cabinet." I do not know why I look around to see whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is with us this afternoon, but I am sure that there must be a reason.

When Macmillan resigned, Alec Home did not at first see himself as a candidate; but when it was clear that he was best placed to unite the Conservative party, he became one. As Prime Minister, he did unite the party. I believe that he restored confidence in political life. Just as he promised, people knew that they could rely on his plain, straight talking. He introduced the controversial retail food prices index legislation, which brought competition to the retail industry and lower prices for the consumer. He interrupted his Christmas holiday to take decisive action to prevent a bloodbath in Cyprus. Time after time he ensured that Britain came to the assistance of her Commonwealth partners in Africa.

The tribute to the mark that Alec Home made as Prime Minister was not that he lost the 1964 election but that he came so close to winning it. After his resignation as party leader, he served loyally under my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), in

opposition, and later once more as Foreign Secretary. His stature as an ex-Prime Minister enhanced his role across the world. After he returned to the Lords, he continued to be a source of wise counsel, and he was able to enjoy his retirement back home in the house that he loved so dearly for all his life. He was once again able to pursue the life of the Scottish gentleman that he had remained for all of his days.

Alec Home's politics are best summed up in his own words. He once said:

"I want to get away from this 'us and them'; Britain is one nation—it belongs to us all, and we belong to it".

Some have said that Alec Home was a politician of another age. The greatest tribute that I can pay him today is simply this: I profoundly hope not.

3.40 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): It is my privilege to join the Prime Minister in paying tribute to Lord Home and to send our condolences and sympathy to his family. I never met him but, like Harold Wilson, whose life we celebrated earlier this year, he was familiar to me, and, indeed, to all my generation, as one of the great political figures of our early years. If one reads any of the obituaries about him, two words recur: affection and decency. He was a straight man—genuine, liked and trusted by political foes and friends. However satirised and disparaged, and he came in for his fair share of both, his essential and transparent decency allowed him to rise above it, and people—ordinary people—had a great affection for him.

Jimmy Maxton, the Labour Member of Parliament for Clydeside, once said to him in the Commons Tea Room, "Alec, I have been thinking that, come the revolution, I'll have you strung up on a lamp post, but on reflection I'll offer you a cup of tea instead."

By making no attempt to conceal his background, and by allying it to a self-deprecating sense of humour, Lord Home turned political attacks against those making them. When challenged in the Kinross by-election in 1963 as to whether he would live in the constituency, he replied that he did not think that he would, since he had more houses than he could live in already. Most famously of all, when Harold Wilson mocked him for being the 14th Earl, he remarked that he supposed that Mr. Wilson, when one came to think of it, was the 14th Mr. Wilson.

The image that survives focuses often on Lord Home's character and the peculiarity of someone with his upbringing and apparent indifference to ambition becoming Prime Minister, but that should not cause us to overlook his substantial achievements, both as a parliamentarian and as a statesman. He entered Parliament in 1931. He secured re-election in 1935 and was, as the Prime Minister said, parliamentary private secretary to Neville Chamberlain, first when Chamberlain was Chancellor of the Exchequer and then when he was Prime Minister.

It is said against Lord Home that, working for Chamberlain, he was naturally part of Munich and appeasement and all that went with it, and I suppose that it is true to say that history has judged very harshly the motives of all those who were involved in that futile search for peace, but to my mind it is to his great credit that he never ran away from his part in Munich or ceased to defend the motives of Chamberlain. He could have disowned his leader—his own position in the affair was, after all, very minor—but he did not, and I think that that speaks volumes for his decency and courage.

When war broke out, Lord Home tried to enlist, as the Prime Minister has described, but through illness was unable to and spent almost two years in recuperation from tuberculosis of the spine. He used that time to read and to study voraciously. He dedicated himself particularly to the study of foreign affairs, becoming something of an expert on it, and when he returned to Parliament in 1945 he spoke out strongly in favour of the independence of Poland, which was a very brave and courageous thing to do. He spoke against the Yalta agreement and became a relentless and persuasive critic of Soviet expansion.

Throughout the 1950s, as Secretary of State for the Commonwealth and then later as Leader of the House of Lords, having gone there after his father's death, he argued a position with great clarity, of the dangers of Soviet imperialism, but typically combined it with a strong push for disarmament, saying that Britain would be pleased to play a substantial part in such a process provided a proper response was forthcoming.

It is fair to say that, when Lord Home was appointed Foreign Secretary in 1960, there was a total furore over the appointment. Motions of no confidence were tabled in the House; the newspapers deplored the appointment of a peer—a "faceless earl", as one called him—as Foreign Secretary. As ever, he reacted by not reacting, but getting on with the job.

With hindsight, most people would acknowledge Lord Home to have been a substantial success. He was strong in standing with President Kennedy over the Cuban missile crisis; but he was also strong in standing up against the American view when he thought it right to do so, as over Laos and the provision of a seat at the United Nations for China. That was something that Home strongly supported and others did not.

A greater prize was, of course, to come. That Lord Home became leader of the Conservatives in 1963 is a fact, but how he did so remains something of a mystery. Two things stand out, however: first, how extraordinary it was that, in relatively modern times, as a Member of the House of Lords, Home could ever have become Prime Minister. He was able to do so in part—a nice irony—because, thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), he was able to renounce his peerage to fight a by-election and enter the House of Commons. His outstanding personal qualities, however, must have impressed his colleagues for such a risk even to have been considered.

As Alec Douglas-Home wrote in his autobiography, the greatest shock that he suffered was the culture shock, coming from the other place to the House of Commons. He wrote:

"My first appearance at the Box was nearly my last. I was quite unprepared for the sheer noise and if it had not been for the solid table between me and the Opposition, I should have been seen shaking at the knees."

The second remarkable feature is, indeed, how close Alec Douglas-Home came to winning the 1964 election. He believed, and later said, that had it not been for the refusal of Iain Macleod and Enoch Powell to serve under him, he might have won. After defeat, he behaved with his usual dignity. He changed the rules for electing the Tory party leader—a precedent that I understand the present Prime Minister is looking to follow. He supported

[Mr. Tony Blair]

his successor completely—a precedent that the Prime Minister no doubt wishes was followed. He served under his successor as Foreign Secretary—a precedent that the Prime Minister is perhaps unlikely to follow.

There were two other powerful points of view that Home held and articulated. He was, of course, a "one nation" Tory; but he was one of the first to make the case for Britain to join the Common Market, and for Britain's place in Europe. Although, as the Prime Minister rightly says, he was a passionate supporter of the Union between England and Scotland, he did propose—in his committee on Scottish government—devolving limited legislative powers to a Scottish Assembly, which is of more than passing interest.

What, then, is the attraction of Alec Douglas-Home, and how can we summarise it? There is an apparent contradiction. He was a laird who lived like a laird, who owned vast estates, who loved the country sports of hunting, shooting and fishing, yet was given great affection by millions of British people who shared neither his birth nor his politics. He was someone who had all the advantages of aristocracy sometimes associated with arrogance, yet was humble in his assessment of himself and his actions. He was a person who did not need to work at all, yet worked hard all his life in the service of others.

The contradiction is resolved in this way. Alec Douglas-Home was above all a man of honour, who stayed a man of honour: a decent man who, through all the temptations and anxieties of politics, remained decent—not a man from another age, but a rarity in any age; a good servant of the people, for whose life we give thanks.

3.48 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I join in the tributes to Lord Home of the Hirsel. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) for his suggestion that, in view of our close Scottish border connections, it might be appropriate for me to say a few words on behalf of our party, and to add our expressions of sympathy to David and Caroline.

I said on the news of Sir Alec's death that he was probably the last of the gentleman politicians, motivated solely and dutifully by a call to public service. That may have made him seem, as Prime Minister, strangely old-fashioned; yet he incorporated good, old-fashioned virtues—honesty, straight dealing, hard work, lack of malice, openness and a readiness to listen. He was also self-deprecating in his enjoyment of his own caricatures, and he would have detested today's trends towards sound bites and image spin makers.

At the time, Sir Alec seemed rather set in his ways as a cold warrior, and perhaps that stemmed from a reaction to his period with Neville Chamberlain. However, he had a genuine and consistent detestation of tyranny in every form. As Commonwealth Secretary, he pursued Harold Macmillan's wind of change policy towards South Africa. As Foreign Secretary, he could easily have done a deal with Ian Smith in Rhodesia that would have been popular with sections of his party and the press but would have surrendered African majority rights. He steadfastly refused to do that.

Sir Alec's earlier experience as Minister of State, Scottish Office led him to recognise with equal consistency the shortcomings of Scottish legislation at Westminster and, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, he advocated the creation of an elected Scottish convention. Whatever its defects in detail, that could have been a step in the right direction. In the 1979 referendum in Scotland his intervention was possibly crucial when he urged a vote against the Labour Government's devolution proposals with the promise that a Conservative Government would present better ones. It was not his fault that, with a change of leadership, that promise was never fulfilled.

The Prime Minister rightly referred to Sir Alec's characteristically puckish sense of humour. He was a highly entertaining after-dinner speaker and, like us all, he had a small stock of well-used tales from his own life. I many times heard him recount the incident when he tried to butter up some truculent individual with forced bonhomie: "How's the wife?" he asked, only to receive the challenging reply, "Compared to what?"

One cold winter night, Sir Alec and I were driving together after a dinner in the borders to catch the Edinburgh-London sleeper at Berwick-upon-Tweed where it passed through at about half-past midnight. For those who do not know it, that station consists of one long windswept platform. As we drove along the banks of the Tweed and were about to pass the gates of the Hirsel, he looked at his watch and said, "We will be 20 minutes early at Berwick. Why don't we stop for a drink?"

We drove up the long drive to his stately home and I must admit that I had visions of roaring log fires and butlers with silver trays. Not so. Elizabeth was in London and the place was deserted. We went in by a side door and he blundered about the rambling basement corridor searching for the light switches. He produced a jug of beer and we went upstairs to his high-ceilinged study. The central heating was off and the grate was empty. We sat huddled in our overcoats and he raised his glass in welcome and said, "I suppose you're thinking that we would have been warmer on the station platform."

As Sir Alec's books in our Library testify, his first love was the Scottish border country. He was genuinely interested in the farming of his estates, as well as the shooting and especially the fishing on the Tweed. The Hirsel stable and coach block now houses an enterprising craft centre and rural museum. My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and I were always astonished at the way in which in his later years this international statesman, who was fully entitled to put his feet up, never found any dinner, flower show or school prize day in the borders too insignificant to attend. He was a readily approachable local figure and I can best conclude by quoting from an editorial in one of the border newspapers. It states:

> "Lord Home's traditional family values, warmth and integrity won him a special place in the affections of his fellow Borderers."

He was quite simply one of the nicest people in public life and we remember him today with gratitude.

4.53 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Sir Alec Douglas-Home's death is a sad loss to his family and friends and to all those who knew him. Our consolation is that he lived to a great age and that his was a life of

great fulfilment. My generation first got to hear of him when he came back from Munich with Neville Chamberlain. Looking back on history, it is interesting to note that he was never tarnished with the label of appeasement. Nobody ever suspected for a moment that Alec Douglas-Home would give way to pressure and agree to something that he believed to be wrong. It was only long afterwards that he admitted that he had advised Neville Chamberlain against waving the piece of paper which he resisted at the airport. However, when he got back to the balcony of No. 10, he was so moved emotionally that he gave way and waved it with "Peace in our time". It is true that Alec Douglas-Home never criticised him, but that was certainly his view of the episode.

I sometimes felt that the four long years that Lord Home had spent on his back due to illness had led to his peacefulness but, at the same time, his determination in carrying out what he wished to do. I do not think that those years were wasted years, because they created in him the strength of purpose that carried him through the rest of his life.

After the election of 1950, Alec Douglas-Home was back in the House. When the news of his father's death came through, it fell to me, as a Whip, to rush into the No Lobby where I knew that he was voting, grab him by the arm and rush him out, trying at the same time to explain to him quietly and clearly that his father had died and that if he went through the Lobby, having inherited his title, he would be liable to a financial penalty, which I thought thoroughly undesirable. I just managed to get him out in time so he did not commit the grave offence of voting in this House when he had already become a peer.

When Lord Home became Foreign Secretary, I went with him to the Foreign Office as Lord Privy Seal. Harold Macmillan realised of course that his appointment from the House of Lords as Foreign Secretary would create a great commotion. I remember that Mr. Cecil King, the owner of the *Daily Mirror*, went so far as to blazon across his paper the fact that Harold Macmillan had ignored Cecil King's advice. It was, however, a very good appointment, if I may say so.

We worked closely together for three years as I was Lord Privy Seal dealing with matters in this House. Throughout the European negotiations—our first attempt to enter the Community—Lord Home backed me to the hilt in the Cabinet, in his House, in our party and at party conferences. Of course, the same occurred when we resumed negotiations in the 1970s and were successful. In one of the last telephone conversations that I had with him, he said that he had thought about it a great deal and concluded more and more that we were absolutely right to take this country in the European Community and that that was where our future rested.

When Harold Macmillan summoned us and told us that we were both going to the Foreign Office, it was late July. As we left, Sir Alec—or Lord Home, as he then was—said that we should go to his office and that the first thing to do was to settle our priorities. I said, "Of course," and, when we got there, I asked what the priorities were. He said that the first priority was to fix the date of our holidays. I asked what he proposed and he said, "I think you ought to take yours first—you're in more need of them than I." I said, "Thank you very much. I shall go to Venice." He said that I would have to be back by 10 August for "reasons that I hope you'll understand".

While in Venice I was approached on the beach by a gentleman with a telegram from Harold Macmillan which said that we had unexpectedly had an invitation from Chancellor Adenauer to go to Bonn to discuss our entry into the Community. It said that Alec and he had agreed but had pointed out that they must leave by 8 August for "a reason that you will fully understand".

I was still on the beach when another telegram arrived saying that there was now an invitation from Mr. Fanfani, the Prime Minister of Italy, who had heard secretly about Chancellor Adenauer's invitation and wanted us to go to Rome on 16 August. The telegram said that that was of course not possible for Alec and him "for reasons that you will fully understand". It had therefore been arranged for me to go to Rome.

Then came the period after the defeat of 1964 when Sir Alec was Prime Minister. That period was controversial, as the Prime Minister said just now. I proposed legislation for the abolition of retail price maintenance which, to a certain extent, split the Cabinet. However, he backed me throughout and, when he backed one up, one knew that his backing was firm.

After the 1964 election, Lord Home made me responsible for policy, but in July he came to the conclusion that he did not wish to continue. In his book he recounts that I had nothing whatever to do with that. In some ways, I wish he had continued, but it was obvious that he was tired of it all and he firmly resolved that he would not continue because it was better that he should not.

Then I invited Alec to be Foreign Secretary in the shadow Cabinet and when I became Prime Minister I appointed him Foreign Secretary. There were never any disagreements between us, but that is not always understood. Whether on domestic or foreign policy, from 1960 onwards, when we first worked together, we always believed in the same policies and we always put them into effect. That is why there was no room in either of us for criticism of the other.

Lord Home's characteristics have been brilliantly described today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, by the Leader of the Opposition and by the spokesman for the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). One outstanding point is that whoever he was dealing with, it was exactly the same—everybody trusted him. It made no difference whether he was talking to somebody at the highest level in this country or to somebody at the lowest level in what was then Rhodesia—he was always the same. When he was dealing with foreign affairs at conferences, he was always respectful and polite to those with whom he was negotiating, no matter from which country they came.

In 1963, the two of us went to Moscow to sign the first test ban treaty. Lord Home's attitude to and relationship with Mr. Kruschev could not possibly have been faulted. The same was true when he was dealing with the Commonwealth, the colonies or other European states. He was held in the greatest respect.

Above all, Lord Home loved his Scotland. It is true that he wanted to see the constitutional development of Scotland. When I was Leader of the Opposition, I appointed him chairman of a very distinguished committee which included Sir Robert Menzies, the former Prime Minister of Australia. It recommended that there should be further development in Scotland, including an

[Sir Edward Heath]

assembly. Had we been re-elected in 1974, we would have gone ahead with that; indeed, the buildings had already been prepared. That was his view of Scotland because he foresaw the dangers of a narrow Scottish nationalism and he wanted to prevent that.

As has been said, in all spheres Lord Home was notable for his modesty, for his genuine nature, for the fact that one could trust him and for the fact that he got his priorities right on every occasion. This country, and Scotland in particular, owes him a great deal.

4.2 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): May I add a word or two, Madam Speaker? The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) and I are the only people who sat with Viscount Dunglass MP in 1950 and 1951. At that time he was in his late forties, so I do not think many people imagined that he would go on to occupy the highest offices of state. I cannot think of any major question on which I agreed with him, but his great quality, as has already been said, was that people trusted him—a phrase not often used in political comment nowadays. He was a signpost, not a weathercock.

In 1951 Lord Home became a peer and he went quite happily to the House of Lords—unlike Lord Hailsham the previous year, who had gone with some resistance. As I was absolutely determined not to allow that fate to befall me, I was responsible for bringing Lord Home back to be a commoner, which he may not have liked, and to be Prime Minister, which he did like. Indeed, in the whole of our long parliamentary history only two men have sat in the Commons, the Lords, the Commons and the Lords successively. It is what I think of as the Hailsham-Home convention—that after every election certain persons quietly indicate in which House they want to sit. Only in this country could such a subtle combination of the ballot box and blue blood be used to such great advantage by those who could use it.

Having said all that, Lord Home was a very formidable party leader—of that there was no question. He took over the fortunes of the Conservative party when it was at a low ebb, and, as the Prime Minister said, he very nearly succeeded. Only by a handful of votes did he lose. That was of course at a time when the press reported Parliament and before it began trying to replace Parliament. It was also at a time when it was possible to have passionate and serious and fundamental disagreements without the insults which now characterise and debase so much of our public debate.

In the media-orientated world in which we live, it is supposed that to succeed people have to have a good image, charisma, sound bites and a spin doctor. But like Clem Attlee before him, Alec Home had an absolute contempt for such gimmicks. He was absolutely content to be himself. I pay my respects to him because he argued his case always with great knowledge, great courtesy, great sincerity, but without ever indulging in abuse. The House might do well to follow that example.

4.5 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): It is my privilege to associate the Ulster Unionist party with the tributes that have been paid today to Lord Home. The one thing that has come across very clearly, not only in the House this afternoon but throughout the country during the past week, is the very great affection in which Lord Home was held. The words which have been used as being characteristic of him are decency, sense of duty and sense of integrity. It is because he had those characteristics in such full measure that he had such a place in the affections of the people of our country.

The thing that most typifies Lord Home's decency and sense of integrity was, after having been a successful Foreign Secretary, and a more successful Prime Minister than was generally acknowledged, the way in which he was prepared after leaving the leadership of his party to serve for so long and so loyally in opposition and later in government. He will be regarded as one of the outstanding Foreign Secretaries of this country in this century.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister have both mentioned the fact that Lord Home was a unionist—that he supported the Union and believed in the United Kingdom. That is something of which we in Northern Ireland were very conscious—then and since.

More than just a supporter of the Union, as a Scotsman Lord Home knew that this diverse United Kingdom is held together by a series of understandings about the relative weights of the parts of the kingdom and about the concern that should exist for the various parts of the kingdom. I am sure that in putting forward proposals for a modest measure of devolution for Scotland, he was anxious to ensure that the respect for Scotland as a constituent part of the United Kingdom was not lost in the simple majoritarianism of this House. It is for that sense of balance, which he displayed throughout his life, that he will be most keenly remembered.

4.7 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In paying a very brief tribute to Lord Home, may I associate my comments with my colleagues in the Scottish National party and the other nationalist parties in the House?

It may seem strange for a nationalist to be paying tribute to one who was seen very much as the epitome of the Scottish laird, but I have two things in common with Lord Home. First, I grew up in south Lanarkshire and as a very young child I remember the very high regard in which Lord Home was held by all his constituents, be they gamekeeper, landowner, farm worker, shopkeeper or whomsoever. Everyone regarded him as a perfect gentlemen who was prepared to give of his time to listen to problems which his constituents might have had and to meet with them.

Secondly, I also suffered from tuberculosis of the spine. During that long illness I was often reminded of the fact that Lord Home had recovered from it and that there was life ahead of that particularly difficult illness. It may well be that the Prime Minister regrets that I was not given the same kind of backbone as Lord Home. Indeed, our backbones are made of very different stuff. None the less, Lord Home was held up as an example and, like him, I learnt a great deal of patience.

There are many memories of Lord Home in Scotland. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale have already referred to the Scottish constitutional matter. It is my belief that from the declaration of Perth onwards there was a genuine

belief among people like Lord Home that progress should be made towards the recognition of the aspirations of the Scottish people. It is, indeed, not his fault that the Government who took over in 1979 killed off the Scotland Bill, but his intervention, "Not this assembly but a better one," is seared into many psyches in Scotland. We are still waiting for that better assembly.

I hope that as we pay tribute to Lord Home and his recognition of democracy there will perhaps be some recognition on the Government Benches of the need for the people of Scotland to have that constitutional change.

4.9 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I rise to speak because the western end of my constituency was formerly Sir Alec Douglas-Home's constituency. I believe that I speak on behalf of all the people in that part of my constituency. I vividly remember what Sir Alec—Lord Home, as he was then—said to me when I inherited with the boundary changes that large part of what had been his constituency. He said, "There are some very remote parts, some very difficult roads and you will find that in the winter months when you are required to go somewhere for a meeting you will wish that you were not in fact representing that part of Scotland. But when you get there, you will find that the people there make it all worth while, and you forget the journey, you forget the difficult roads and you forget all the problems." That was so typical of the man.

The other advice that Sir Alec Douglas-Home gave me, which I have never forgotten, was, "Bill, if you have thought something through carefully and you believe that it is right, stand by it because in time you will find that you will be shown to be right." I believe that that guide that he had for himself was a guide that all politicians could well follow. He was indeed a man who left memories that are remarkable. My constituents would wish it to be put on record that anyone could telephone The Hirsel at the weekends and speak to their Member of Parliament. How many Members in the House today living in that grand manner in that grand style would answer the telephone at the weekends in the way that Alec Douglas-Home did? It is that example and leadership that we miss very much today. We think of him today.

Prison Service

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about prison security.

I am today publishing the report by General Sir John Learmont into prison security. I am extremely grateful to Sir John and to his two fellow assessors, Sir John Woodcock and Mr. Gary Dadds, for their comprehensive and authoritative report.

Let me begin by reminding the House of the circumstances which led me to ask Sir John to conduct his inquiry. In September 1994, six exceptional risk category A prisoners escaped from Whitemoor prison. I asked Sir John Woodcock to conduct an inquiry into the escape and I presented his findings to the House on 19 December last year.

I also asked General Sir John Learmont to conduct a comprehensive and independent review of physical and procedural security in the prison service in England and Wales, and to make recommendations.

On 3 January this year, two category A and one category B prisoner escaped from Parkhurst. All three were recaptured on 8 January. I pay tribute again to the police for that successful operation. An immediate inquiry was carried out by the Prison Service director of security. As I told the House on 10 January, this immediate inquiry highlighted very serious deficiencies in procedural and physical security at Parkhurst.

I asked Sir John Learmont to extend his own inquiry to include an independent assessment of the events surrounding the escape. The report makes the most serious criticisms of Parkhurst and its management. On security procedures, Sir John found that the prison service's own security manual was disregarded and that the most basic security measures were not observed. Sir John also makes a number of criticisms of the physical security of Parkhurst, including the failure of the prison service to provide the prison with the full benefits of technology.

I am also publishing today the report of the inspection of Parkhurst by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, Judge Stephen Tumim. The inspection took place in October 1995 and the report was submitted at the end of February 1996.

Judge Tumim also makes a number of severe criticisms of the situation at Parkhurst, including weak and inadequate security, unacceptable conditions in health care, and drug dealing which pervaded the whole sub-culture of the prison. There was a reluctance by staff to assert proper control in areas such as searching and accounting for inmates. The judge considered that the problems were so serious that he wrote to the Director General, before he left the prison, with a copy to me, drawing attention to the serious shortcomings that he had found. As I told the House on 10 January, I immediately spoke to the Director General and asked for a full report. He assured me that all Judge Tumim's recommendations had been implemented.

Sir John Learmont recommends that Parkhurst should be taken out of the dispersal system as soon as possible and consideration given to its replacement by a more appropriate establishment. I accept that recommendation. Parkhurst has not in practice operated as a dispersal prison

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since April, when all category A prisoners were removed from normal location. I have asked the prison service to identify another prison in the south-east of England to take Parkhurst's place in the dispersal system as soon as possible.

Sir John's inquiry was not a disciplinary inquiry. Sir John has recommended to me that no disciplinary inquiry should be undertaken into the escape from Parkhurst. He is of the opinion that such an inquiry could finally break the resolve and commitment of many of the staff at Parkhurst, with the very significant possibility that the secure running of the establishment could be severely compromised. He is also of the opinion that it is difficult to see what a disciplinary inquiry would achieve. In considering that recommendation, I have been influenced by the fact that more than one of those concerned will not be staying in the prison service. I have therefore decided to accept that recommendation.

The Learmont report makes it clear that responsibility for the Parkhurst escape was not confined to management and staff at Parkhurst. On the contrary: the report says that "alarm bells should have been . . . ringing throughout the Prison Service".

and that many of the ingredients

"can be traced along the lines of communication to Prison Service headquarters".

In his covering letter, Sir John Learmont makes it perfectly clear that responsibilities ultimately reach the level of the Prisons Board and that that is where criticism stops. Sir John has not found that any policy decision of mine, directly or indirectly, caused the escape.

I turn next to the organisation of the prison service and its relationship with the Home Office. It is now about two and a half years since the prison service became a "next steps" executive agency. The decision to make the service an agency was taken on the recommendation of an independent inquiry conducted by Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo. Sir John Learmont does not recommend that there should be any change in the agency status of the prison service. He does recommend that someone with wide experience of the workings of agencies should undertake an in-depth study of the relationship between the prison service and the Home Office. That work is under way and I shall report on it to the House when it is complete.

Sir John's report makes 127 detailed and wide-ranging recommendations. I accept the broad thrust of Sir John's analysis. About half the recommendations endorse actions that have already been completed, are under way, or are already planned. I shall deal today with Sir John's key recommendations and I shall come back to the House with a full response in due course.

A key recommendation of the report is that there should be one maximum security prison to house the most dangerous prisoners in the system. That was a recommendation first made by the Mountbatten inquiry in 1966, and accepted by the then Home Secretary, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. However, the Radzinowicz report in March 1968 recommended against it and it was not implemented. Since then the policy has been to disperse such prisoners among a small number of high security prisons. Sir John concludes:

"The continuous development of explosives and weapons and their availability to criminals and their associates, pose a much greater threat to the security of our maximum security prisons than the Service has previously encountered."

He believes, therefore, that the most dangerous prisoners should now be housed in a purpose-designed and built maximum security prison.

That is a very far-reaching proposal, which would represent a major departure in penal policy. The report makes a strong case for it. I have already asked the Prison Service to consider the feasibility, costs and benefits of building such an establishment and to report to me in six months' time. The prison service will also consider Sir John Learmont's proposal for a single control prison to hold the most unruly and disruptive prisoners. I should welcome comments on those proposals.

Sir John also recommends a fundamental review of the system under which prisoners are allocated to different security categories according to the threat to the community and the likelihood of escape. I accept that a review of that system should take place.

Sir John also recommends that minimum physical security standards should be set for each category of prison. Work is well under way on bringing the dispersal estate up to the standard of security recommended by Sir John Woodcock. National standards exist for all new prisons. Decisions on the appropriate security standards for non-dispersal prisons will be based on the outcome of the review of categorisation.

One particular aspect that I asked Sir John to consider was the extent to which visits should be closed. He recommends that there should be closed visits for exceptional risk category A prisoners other than in exceptional circumstances. That coincides with the policy that I introduced in June this year.

I turn, finally, to Sir John's recommendations on the ways in which physical security is enhanced by activities and incentives. I told the House in December last year that the prison service would introduce a national framework of privileges and incentives. That framework is already in place and implementation has begun. Sir John recommends that a system requiring early release to be earned, not granted automatically as at present, would be a significant additional inducement to good behaviour. Last week I set out proposals for ending automatic early release and for introducing a system of earned remission.

But there are two issues on which Sir John and I must agree to differ. I reject his proposal that in-cell television should be made widely available. That would not be consistent with my view that prison conditions should be decent but austere. Nor can I accept Sir John's proposal that home leave should be more widely available. In my view, the restrictions introduced earlier this year have an important role in protecting the public; and I have no plans to relax them.

Sir John Learmont has found a great deal that needs to be put right within the prison service, spanning leadership, structure, the management chain, and the ethos of the service. He says that responsibilities ultimately reach Prisons Board level—and that the criticism stops there.

Those comments, coming so soon after the Woodcock report on Whitemoor, cause me great concern. I must be able to assure the House, and through it the public, that the grave weaknesses in the service that have been disclosed will be put right.

I have come to the conclusion, with some sadness, that that requires a change of leadership at the top of the prison service. The present director general has served in his post for nearly three years. I pay tribute to him for what he has

achieved, but I cannot overlook the serious criticisms in the report. I believe that the service requires a change of leadership to carry forward the programme of reforms that is needed and to increase public confidence in the security of our prisons.

The director general has accordingly ceased to hold his post with effect from today. The director of security will take over temporarily until a successor is appointed.

I believe that this report will be seen as a major milestone in the evolution of the prison service. I heartily endorse Sir John's conclusion that

"there is an abundance of excellent people within the Prison Service whose most fervent wish is to do a good and worthwhile job".

The changes that I have announced today will help them to achieve that goal.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I thank the Secretary of State for his courtesy in arranging for me to see the report earlier than is usual. We accept the recommendation of the Learmont report in respect of the super maximum security prison and we shall look at the recommendations of the departmental study when it is available to the House in six months' time.

The Secretary of State's statement today goes to the heart of ministerial responsibility to the House for the protection of the public and the safe and secure administration of British prisons. By every principle of democratic Government, the Secretary of State must accept that he is both responsible and accountable for the state of the prison service, yet today we have been treated to the spectacle of the Secretary of State demeaning his office, failing to acknowledge those responsibilities and instead going in for his now familiar and tawdry practice of scapegoating anybody and everybody to ensure that the buck stops anywhere but with himself.

The Home Secretary has sought consistently to evade his responsibility by invoking a wholly artificial distinction—though one very convenient to him—between policy and operational matters. He did it again in his statement to the House just a moment ago when he said:

"Sir John has not found that any policy decision of mine, directly or indirectly, caused the escape."

I cannot find any quotation in the report which, directly or indirectly, backs up what the Secretary of State said. [HON. MEMBERS: "The covering letter."] The covering letter has no such words.

It is clear that the Learmont report—like the Woodcock report before it—shows conclusively that the Secretary of State and his fellow Ministers have interfered daily in the running and operation of the prison service and that so grotesque has that interference become that, as Learmont himself complains, on the very day set aside for the director general, Mr. Derek Lewis, to give evidence to the Learmont inquiry, and while he was actually giving evidence, he was called out on a number of occasions—I understand that it was no fewer than five—to give advice to and no doubt receive instructions from Ministers.

If the Secretary of State was not interfering with the day-to-day operations of the service, will he explain why, as the report shows, during 83 working days, 1,000 documents were submitted to Ministers, including 137 full ministerial submissions? How many of those submissions were in response to requests from Ministers and how many came within the Secretary of State's definition of operations? How many were policy?

What led to a climate in which members of the Prisons Board knew that they had Ministers breathing down their necks on the smallest detail? Is not the Learmont report right to point out a high level of operational involvement in prison service matters? Is the Secretary of State aware that the report comments on the personal pressures which the competing demands of politicians, the media and successive operational incidents must have inflicted on the director general and states that the director general needs, but certainly has not received minimum political involvement in the day-to-day operation of the service?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the director general is now issuing a letter in response to his sacking in which he says:

"It is a great disappointment to me that in the thirteen months since the Whitemoor escape, you"—

that is the Secretary of State—

"have required so much paper but have paid so little attention to prisons themselves, with only some six visits to prisons—fewer than in the preceding thirteen months"?

Is not the reason, as Sir John Learmont records, why the board rarely discussed operational matters that it was snowed under with one so-called ministerial initiative after another?

As the report comments in withering terms:

"any organisation which boasts one statement of purpose, one vision, five values, six goals, seven strategic priorities and eight key performance indicators without any clear co-ordination between them is producing a recipe for total confusion".

As Ministers were interfering so much and so much pride themselves on their experience in government, why has the Secretary of State allowed that total confusion to continue? Why has he allowed "the proliferation of paperwork", as the report describes it, to reach epidemic proportions so that the then governor of Parkhurst, Mr. John Marriott, had—to quote the report—regularly to spend more than 50 hours a week coping with the blizzard of paper, leaving him only two or three hours to go around the prison?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the appendix to the report estimates that, in the 83 working days studied, a typical local prison would have received 72,000 sheets of A4 paper from the Prisons Board, thanks to the proliferation of paperwork and the overburdened bureaucracy over which the right hon. Gentleman has presided?

I will deal with the Secretary of State's first and disgraceful scapegoating of Parkhurst prison's governor, Mr. Marriott, who was removed from his post just two hours before the right hon. and learned Gentleman made his statement on 10 January. In the House and in evidence to the Select Committee, the Secretary of State repeatedly claimed that the decision to suspend Mr. Marriott was an operational one for which the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not responsible. Will the Secretary of State confirm that on or about 10 January, he let Mr. Lewis know that, if Mr. Marriott was not suspended, Mr. Lewis's job would be at risk?

Is not one of the so-called initiatives bearing down on the service that of prison privatisation, which the report suggests is a factor consistently identified as contributing to low morale? What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's comment on the report's conclusion that the number of staff on duty in privatised prisons is lower than in public sector prisons, which in turn

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"raises serious questions about the ability of private prisons to cope with major incidents"?

I want to ask the Secretary of State about geophones, about which he was wholly silent in his statement. The Learmont report makes it clear that if geophones had been in place, the Parkhurst escapes could not have occurred and that, despite building works, geophones could have been operational. Given that conclusion, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman regret that the advice that he gave the House on 10 January—that geophones cannot be installed when extensive building works are under way because they do not work effectively in such circumstances—has turned out to be wholly inaccurate? While the Secretary of State's disclaimer to the House that he does not claim any personal expertise in geophones has proved stunningly correct, does not he think that he should have been much more careful before passing on such inaccurate advice—not least since it was well known that geophones were kept operational in the similar circumstances of building works at Wormwood Scrubs?

Does the Secretary of State accept that this is the third report in 10 months to present chapter and verse for the view of the outgoing chief inspector of prisons, Sir Stephen Tumim, that there is a crisis of confidence in the prison service? Since the right hon. and learned Gentleman's party has been in Government 16 years, during which time that crisis has developed, why was there not a single line of apology for that appalling state of affairs in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement? Why was there no recognition by him of the responsibility that he and his predecessors must bear for that situation?

In eight years on the Opposition Front Bench, I have never called for a Minister's resignation. It would be highly irresponsible for anyone to call for a Minister's resignation simply because prisoners had escaped. However, the report and the right hon. and learned Gentleman's response, highlighting as it does his stewardship of his high office, raises fundamental questions about the Secretary of State's fitness for that office. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has sought power over the prison service while continually evading his responsibilities. He was right to say that a question of leadership arises from the report—but it is his leadership. Given the state of the prison service today, the way in which it has been run ragged by continual ministerial interference and constant policy changes, will the Secretary of State not now understand that if anyone is to go, it must be him?

Mr. Howard: I shall deal with the points made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in turn. He began and ended with my position. I refer him to the covering letter which is published with the report. That sets out very clearly the steps which Sir John Learmont took to send what are known as "Salmon letters" to those whom he considered subject to criticism. In that letter he states:

"I have applied a liberal interpretation of these rules to ensure, as far as possible, that absolute fairness has prevailed. Such procedures have touched as high as Prisons Board level illustrating that I have endeavoured to identify where responsibilities have ultimately reached and where the criticism stops."

That is the answer to the points made by the hon. Gentleman.

I reject absolutely the hon. Gentleman's allegations of interference. It is essential, if I am to be properly accountable to this House and to the country, that I am properly and fully informed about what happens in our prisons. That is why requests are made to those who work in the prison service for information about matters that give rise to public concern. If we did not ask for information about those matters, I believe that we would be in dereliction of our duty.

As for ministerial initiatives, there have indeed been some ministerial initiatives affecting our prisons over the past year or two—initiatives to introduce mandatory drug testing, to introduce a regime of sanctions and incentives and to reduce significantly the number of home leaves and temporary releases, as a result of which there has been an 80 per cent. reduction in home leave failures. I make no apology for those ministerial initiatives; they were absolutely essential if we were to make our prison system the kind of system in which the people of this country could have confidence.

The hon. Gentleman referred to paperwork and the documents with which those in the prison service had to deal. The report deals with that. When the hon. Gentleman has had greater opportunity to study the report, I think that he will appreciate that it is quite wrong to suggest that that paperwork emanated from Ministers.

I made it clear when I made my previous statement to the House that what I said about the position of the former governor of Parkhurst was pending the results of any inquiry. If the hon. Gentleman looks at what the report says about the condition of Parkhurst and reads what is said about the failure to follow basic security procedures, the prevalence of drugs and the failure to supervise properly health care at Parkhurst, he will find that it is difficult to dissociate those criticisms from the position of the former governor of Parkhurst.

The picture of privatisation that the hon. Gentleman has given the House is a gross distortion of what is contained in the report. I refer the House to paragraph 3.137, which states:

"Potential involvement of the private sector and the prospect of competition promotes internal re-examination. It stimulates the adoption of modern best practice and business methods. Experience has also shown that competition is likely to cut the cost of services and increase their efficiency."

That is what the report says about privatisation.

The hon. Gentleman was quite right to remind the House of the disclaimer that I made when I was last dealing with geophones to the effect that I have no expertise in geophones and that I was telling the House honestly and to the best of my ability what I knew about them then on the basis of my understanding. It is perfectly true that the Learmont report adds considerably to my understanding of geophones and probably to the understanding of many others as well.

I very much regret the step that I have had to take today. The former Director General of the Prison Service has achieved a good deal. It was with great sadness that I was obliged to take the step that I did, but I could not overlook the criticisms contained in the report—I had a duty to act on behalf of the public.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree, although there is a good deal of gloom and discouragement in the Learmont report, that the silver lining lies in the glowing tribute that the report

pays to the conscientiousness and commitment of the great mass of the prison officers and public servants in the governor grades, demonstrating that the service is fundamentally and essentially well founded? Will my right hon. and learned Friend do everything possible to capitalise on the superb asset that we have in the staff of the prison service, and pay the closest attention to the calibre and quality of the individual whom he selects to become the new chief executive?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for what my right hon. Friend says. I entirely agree with and endorse his tribute to the staff who work in the prison service. They carry out a very difficult job and, on the whole, they do it well. I am determined to do my utmost to put in place arrangements that will enable them to do it even better in future.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We support the main recommendations in this report; but how is the sacking of Derek Lewis supposed to discharge all ministerial responsibility for the appalling state of affairs which the report has revealed? Who was he reporting to—sometimes several times a day—but the Home Secretary? Who but the Home Secretary was responsible for the stream of initiatives, privatisation proposals and policy changes that led to a mountain of paper "higher than Ben Nevis", in the words of the report, and which distracted attention from security? And who but the Home Secretary is now proposing so to add to prison numbers that overcrowding will create policies of appeasement just like the ones described in the report, in an attempt to keep control of overcrowded prisons? When will the Home Secretary start carrying the can? If Ministers do not take responsibility, just as before nothing will change.

Mr. Howard: I have based my decision on what is contained in this report. It was an independent report. I asked General Learmont to conduct an inquiry into security in the prison service, and he has made an independent assessment of what he found. I could not overlook that assessment, and that is what I have based myself upon.

I have always made it clear that security has to be the first priority of the service. I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about overcrowding are far wide of the mark. Parkhurst was not overcrowded; indeed, the staff:inmate ratio there was higher than in any other dispersal prison.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that we Conservatives find the party political claptrap from the Opposition lamentable? Any reasonable person must accept the conclusions of the report, which place absolutely no blame on my right hon. and learned Friend and which say that the buck stops with the Director General of the Prison Service. They also say that prison security is so important for the protection of the public that my right hon. and learned Friend has absolutely no alternative but to require the person most responsible for it to resign.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. The decision that I came to today caused me a good deal of sadness. As I said earlier, the former director general achieved a good deal during his period of office, but I came to the conclusion that I could not overlook the report's assessment and criticisms. It was for those reasons that I reluctantly came to the conclusion that this was a step which duty required me to take.

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): The Home Secretary, referring to the Learmont report, said that alarm bells should have been ringing throughout the prison service. Had not the governor of Parkhurst, Mr. Marriott, repeatedly requested the installation of geophones and a properly manned control room? According to a report in *The Independent* on Saturday, he had also predicted the escape route that was eventually used. Alarm bells were certainly ringing throughout the prison service; the problem was that the Secretary of State did not hear them.

Mr. Howard: I reject that criticism. The report sets out the requests made for geophones and goes into the history of that matter in considerable detail. It also makes it clear that money was available for geophones and was ultimately found for them. I hope that the hon. Lady is not suggesting that the detailed allocation of capital funds within a budget—for which Ministers certainly have responsibility—is a matter for Ministers. The task of Ministers is to set the budget; the task for assessing priorities within that budget is for the prison service. Were Ministers to interfere in decisions of that kind, the problem to which the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) referred in his opening critique would be compounded a thousandfold.

Sir Peter Lloyd (Fareham): Since he was appointed director general, has not Derek Lewis reduced escapes by three quarters, accommodated a huge increase in the prison population without more overcrowding and without the use of police cells, halved the costs of providing new places and drastically cut head office bureaucracy? Will the Home Secretary acknowledge these very real achievements—and others, particularly in the area of security, the subject of this report and a statement to the House?

Mr. Howard: Yes, my right hon. Friend, who speaks with experience from his period as Minister with responsibility for prisons, is right to draw attention to those matters and to acknowledge the part which the director general has played. It was those factors that made it especially difficult for me to reach my decision, but as I have said on a number of occasions, in the last analysis I felt unable to overlook the criticisms contained in the report.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Now that the Home Secretary has announced the dismissal of the Director General of the Prison Service, can he tell us whether it will be his policy to appoint as successor someone who has management experience in the service?

Mr. Howard: I shall look carefully into the question of who should succeed the director general. A number of factors will be taken into account; the one that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned is one among those factors. I do not think it would be right to make it an essential requirement.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): The Home Secretary will be aware that many of the prison officers working at Her Majesty's Prison Whitemoor live in my constituency, and that the vast majority of them

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

were appalled at the lax regime that led to the IRA breakout and to many of the other abuses that have taken place. Is it any wonder that the people at the ground level, far from supporting the vies of the hon. Member for Blackburn on penal policy, support my right hon. and learned Friend's ministerial initiatives and leadership? Will he listen more to what they say and less to what the so-called experts in the probation service, the judiciary and the Home Office say?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think it true that a number of the measures which I have introduced have support at grass roots level among those who have the responsibility of working in the prison service. I hope that that support will continue.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is the Home Secretary aware that in my county of Gwent two defendants who were recently found guilty of serious offences were not sent to prison because their solicitors pleaded that if they went there they would be exposed to large-scale drug abuse? That is because, as one Minister has said, drug misuse is endemic in almost every prison in the country. Who is responsible for that: the prison service or the Home Secretary?

When the "next steps" agencies were set up the House was given a clear undertaking that ultimate responsibility would rest with the Home Secretary. Who is he responsible for; what policy is he responsible for; and should he not take the logical decision, given the dreadful mess in which the prison service finds itself, and resign today?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely about the seriousness of the drug problem in prisons. It is a dreadful problem and we must take action to deal with it. I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what I have done in an attempt to deal with it. I have instituted a policy of mandatory drug testing—that is the first step towards bringing the misuse of drugs in our prisons under control. It is unrealistic to suppose that it is something that will be achieved in a day, a week or a month. It is something that will take determined action over a period to achieve. I believe that we have made a sensible start on a necessary series of changes.

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the case of the so-called bicycling rapist? Last year, a convicted rapist was allowed out on day release to bicycle unattended from Erlestoke prison to Trowbridge college, which is in my constituency, to attend a course. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the wider malaise that he has described this afternoon is symptomatic of such a decision being taken? Will he accept the grateful thanks of those of my constituents who were extremely frightened at the time of the bicycling rapist for reiterating his, my right hon. and learned Friend's, views on temporary release today?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I well understand the concerns that he expresses on behalf of his constituents. The changes that have been made in home leave and temporary release were essential if public confidence in the prison system was to be maintained. I believe that home leave and temporary release had become entirely out of hand and that we had to take steps to bring them under control. I was responding to the sort of concern that my hon. Friend has voiced in taking the steps that I took some time ago.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Home Secretary accept that the implications of his pronouncements last week mean that there will be substantial increases in prison populations and that one maximum security prison may not suffice? Will there be sufficient funds to pay for this expansion? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept also that the changes in remission may mean increases in tension and violence in prisons and that there will as a consequence be public concern on a scale that will require his resignation? There cannot be any further buck-passing after this.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's last point is misconceived. At present a good deal of early release from prison is entirely automatic. Other early release is determined not by good behaviour in prison but by the Parole Board's assessment of risk. One of the purposes of my proposal is to introduce incentives for good behaviour. That will be done by introducing earned early release by remission for good behaviour, which does not now exist. The hon. Gentleman's last point is thoroughly misconceived and entirely without foundation.

As for the net effect of the proposals that I put forward at Blackpool last week, we are engaged in making a careful assessment. There are many factors to be taken into account. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will share my view that the certainty of sentences that would be one consequence of my proposals would increase deterrence.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I welcome the fact that the report endorses my right hon. and learned Friend's policy of earned early release, but has he noted that it does not seem to be so popular on the Opposition Benches? Will he accept, however, that those outside the House will conclude that Sir John Learmont is clearly a well-read man and, unlike some others, understands that historically these are matters for Parliament? It is Parliament that will decide these matters and no one else.

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. He is right. It is a point that I made repeatedly after I announced my proposals last week. I would expect it to be a point on which all Members would agree.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): If the Home Secretary is to be as accountable to the House as he says he is, will he tell us when he was first properly informed of the repeated requests from local management at Parkhurst for geophones? Does he now think it outrageously irresponsible that from January to today he did nothing to find out about the success of geophones?

Mr. Howard: So far as I can recollect, I was first told about geophones after the breakout from Parkhurst. I do not recall the matter coming to my attention before then.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the swift and firm decision that he has made following the Learmont report? Does he agree that the removal of the Director General of the Prison Service was necessary and entirely appropriate in the circumstances? In looking to the appointment of a successor, will he set out his top priority, which is the ending of the lax enforcement of the regime that was evident at Parkhurst?

Mr. Howard: I have made it clear on several occasions this afternoon that the decision that I reached in respect of the former director general was reached reluctantly and with a good deal of sadness. I think, however, that it was necessary if the general thrust of the Learmont report was to be accepted, which I did. That is why I took the step. I shall take on board what my hon. Friend has said when we come to appoint a successor.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Home Secretary seems to believe in the principle that he should take credit for everything that has gone right within the prison service and accept no responsibility for anything that has gone wrong. Does he feel that he can share with the House any examples of mistakes that he might have made since becoming Home Secretary in dealing with the prison service?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman reads the report and the covering letter he will understand how unworthy a question that was.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the Royal Navy, when a ship goes down, the captain is court martialled and no one thinks of calling upon the First Sea Lord to resign? Is he aware also that his decision to abolish automatic reduction of sentence will be widely welcomed throughout the country? It was a fraud upon the public that a man sentenced to six years' imprisonment should be released after three. In any event, good behaviour is to be expected inside as well as outside Her Majesty's prisons.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the reported remarks of the Lord Chief Justice are rather too narrowly focused? Deterrence is one of the functions of prison but other perhaps more important ones are punishing criminals for the crimes, sometimes terrible crimes, that they have committed and physically preventing them from committing further crimes.

Mr. Howard: I defer to my hon. Friend's knowledge of naval regulations but what he says seems about right to me. I am grateful to him for his support for the proposals that I announced last week. I suspect that you might get rather impatient with me, Madam Speaker, if I made comments about the Lord Chief Justice's views this afternoon.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not remarkable that whenever there is a crisis the Tory Government, and now specifically the Home Secretary, always manage to find a scapegoat to carry the can? Will this well-paid fall guy, Lewis, who was on £125,000 a year, be handing back the £30,000 bonus that he was given last year? How much severance pay or what golden handshake will he get arising from the Home Secretary's statement?

Is it not true that when the Home Secretary was given his job there were three prisoners in every cell and that within four weeks there were three on every roof? The Tories were elected to set the people free and the prisoners got out. Why does not the Home Secretary get off?

Mr. Howard: No, the hon. Gentleman's last point is not true. Compensation for the director general is a matter for negotiation.

Sir Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in considering arrangements for running the prisons the Learmont reports states:

"Such arrangements raise the question as to whether the problems at Whitemoor and Parkhurst would have arisen if the prison service had the same monitoring and audit arrangements that exist in the private sector"?

I seem to recall from a recent report of the Public Accounts Committee that the performance indicators that are demanded in the private sector are such that they are properly maintained. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is a lesson to be learned here?

Mr. Howard: There are many lessons to be learned from the report. My hon. Friend has rightly identified one of the most important ones. I am sure that it is a matter to which both the acting director general and, in due course, the new director general will be paying careful attention.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Of course, Sir John Learmont does not seek in his report to apportion political blame. He knows that that is the prerogative of the House. Is not this only the latest in a series of prison scandals that have taken place on the Home Secretary's watch? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that during a conversation at the Prison Service conference in November 1994—I understand that this was referred to by Mr. Derek Lewis in his resignation letter—Mr. Lewis suggested to him that his new definition of the difference between ministerial and agency responsibilities was that the agency had to accept difficult responsibilities and Ministers accepted only the easy ones?

Mr. Howard: That is not a matter for me. It was, I think, a throwaway remark made in answer to a question by the then director general at the Prison Service conference.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that Sir John Learmont made a fundamental criticism of the management of the prison service, in their failure to react quickly enough to the lessons learned from the Whitemoor breakout in time to be able to stop the breakouts from Parkhurst, and that he made criticisms all the way up the line of the whole management of the prisons, who failed to react quickly and failed to implement the changes that had already been pointed out to them?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend's analysis of the report is correct; those are the conclusions reached by Sir John Learmont, and are the conclusions that led me, with his general assessment and criticisms, to the decision that I have had to take.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on responding to the considerable public concern about security in our prisons, but also on having had the courage to appoint a strong-minded officer, such as General Learmont, who was always likely to bring out a very tough and critical report? Is not it worth reflecting that a hypothetical Labour Government would not have had the guts to have the report and, if they had, would have swept it straight under the carpet?

Mr. Howard: I shall not follow my hon. Friend on that hypothetical path. I chose Sir John Learmont to carry out this inquiry because I knew that he would produce an independent report that would investigate matters and reveal the truth as he saw it. I believe that that is what he has done.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the report by Sir John Learmont underlines that the prevailing ethos at Parkhurst

[Mr. John Marshall]

was quite unacceptable, and that is why the governor had to go? Will he further accept the congratulations of most hon. Members and people in the country on being a Home Secretary who is willing to challenge the prevailing ethos in respect of prisons and sentencing?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. Decisions that have to be taken by the holder of this office are particularly difficult and I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the Home Secretary give an undertaking that the financial arrangements for Mr. Lewis's departure will not be conditional on his not responding to the criticisms of his stewardship of prisons that the Home Secretary has articulated in the House? Will the price of compensation or severance pay be his silence?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the report, he will see that the criticisms that have been made are not those articulated by me in the House but are contained in General Learmont's report.

Points of Order

5.2 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know that you are aware of the tragic and fatal accident that took place at Thoresby colliery last Thursday, 12 October. It is essential that we identify the cause of the accident, learn the lessons from it and reassure people who work in the coal industry. When British Coal was in the public sector, we might have expected a statement to the House. Now that the industry is in the private sector, no statement is to be made. I wonder what steps should now be taken to ensure that the House and all those who are connected with the coal industry have access to a clear, open and honest account of the accident.

Madam Speaker: The accident to which the hon. Gentleman refers is indeed a tragedy for the community he represents, particularly for those families who are directly affected by it. I have had no request for a statement on the matter and have not heard from any Minister that a statement is forthcoming. Therefore, I have to leave it to the hon. Gentleman who represents that area to attempt to raise the matter in another way. I shall be sympathetic to that if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In today's Order Paper, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) describes himself as the Deputy Prime Minister. In the Order Paper that was published over the summer, he was described as the First Secretary of State. Indeed, when I went to the Table Office and sought to table a question to the Deputy Prime Minister, I was advised that the description was the First Secretary of State. I wonder who caused that change in description. Will you advise me as to which term has the highest status?

Madam Speaker: That is certainly not a point of order for me, as I have no responsibility in allocating the titles of Ministers. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I had nothing to do with the allocation of title to the right hon. Gentleman to whom he refers.

Defence Estimates

[First Day]

[Relevant documents: The Defence Committee has reported on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995 in its Ninth Report of Session 1994-95, HC 572. The First Report from the Defence Committee on the Defence Estate, HC 67; the Fourth Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 318; the Fifth Report on Defence Costs Study Follow-up: Defence Medical Services, HC 102; the Sixth Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 641; the Sixth Report on Defence Use of Civilian Transport Assets and Personnel, HC86; and the Seventh Report on Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance and Target Acquisition, HC 319.]

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

5.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995 contained in Cm. 2800.

It is an honour for me to open this debate on the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995". The Government will take this opportunity to respond to the Defence Select Committee's report.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on becoming Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, in succession to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), whom we also congratulate.

We ended the last Session with a debate on the former Yugoslavia. In July, things looked pretty desperate. The Bosnian Serbs had overrun the United Nations safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa. Our television screens were full of harrowing images of death and destruction. Gorazde, where British soldiers of the Royal Welch Fusiliers were based, was threatened. Much has changed.

At the London conference, called by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we achieved what until then had seemed impossible. The international community found a new resolve. The Bosnian Serbs were told in clear terms that further attacks on the United Nations safe areas would be met with a decisive military response.

The UN Generals Janvier and Smith took timely action to reduce the vulnerability of the UN forces. Their success in withdrawing the Royal Welch Fusiliers from their exposed position in Gorazde was a particular relief to us all.

Following the Bosnian Serb attack on Sarajevo marketplace, NATO began an air campaign. British planes carried out a significant share of the bombing raids. Let us hope that the Bosnian Serb generals now understand and will not again doubt the resolve of the international community.

The improved position on the ground has enabled the UN Secretary-General to reduce the size of UNPROFOR. As a result, we will bring home most of 24 Air Mobile Brigade later this month, but we shall leave their heavy equipment and some maintenance personnel to facilitate a rapid return to theatre if necessary. The presence of the brigade has played a vital part in making clear to the Bosnian Serbs our determination to enhance the effectiveness of UNPROFOR and to provide additional protection to British troops.

We would not be where we are today without the continued commitment of UN and NATO forces from many countries. The House will wish to pay tribute to their courage and professionalism.

Our special tribute must go to the British forces—the front-line troops deployed in hazardous locations, such as Gorazde; those on Mount Igman, with the multinational brigade, where our batteries have been involved in action in defence of the Sarajevo safe area; all the key supporting forces and the Royal Navy ships in the Adriatic; and the air men and women of both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, who have served with such distinction, particularly those who played a part in the air campaign and who have flown humanitarian aid into Sarajevo. Quietly, sensibly and steadfastly, they have been getting on with what needs to be done in the former Yugoslavia.

I should like to recall the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), who told the House on 29 April 1993 that the Government's key aims were to prevent the conflict from spreading, to relieve humanitarian suffering and to provide a framework for a political solution.

We have met those objectives. We have prevented the conflict from spreading into a wider Balkan war. We have reduced the killing and made a major contribution to relief, and we have played a leading role in the peace process, notably by our membership of the five nation contact group.

The United States initiative launched at the end of August may have brought us to the brink of a peaceful settlement. I congratulate Dick Holbrooke and Carl Bildt on their tireless efforts leading to the ceasefire of 12 October.

The alliance may now face a new challenge. We are already engaged in planning for a peace implementation force. It will be NATO-led, and NATO forces will provide the core; but we would expect other nations to play their part. Russia, in particular, should have a substantial role. Good progress was made in discussions between NATO Ministers at Williamsburg earlier this month.

The headquarters of the Allied Command Europe rapid reaction corps—the ARRC—will play a key part. As NATO's only deployable corps HQ, it is vital to the success of any ground operation. Britain provides the commander and some 60 per cent. of the staff. I am confident that General Sir Mike Walker and his team will rise to the challenge.

NATO's role in Bosnia helps us to focus on the alliance's development in the future. The Government welcome the very useful report recently produced by the Defence Select Committee.

The NATO Defence Ministers in Williamsburg had a good discussion on NATO enlargement. NATO has recently published the results of its work on the "how and why" of enlargement. These are now being presented to partners, and Defence Ministers will collectively consider the next steps at the NATO meetings in early December.

Those will be important decisions. History teaches us that we should not give security guarantees lightly. Furthermore, operations in the former Yugoslavia have shown NATO's unique central role in the maintenance of

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

security and stability in Europe. Nothing should be done that would undermine the alliance's military effectiveness. We cannot afford ambiguity or political gestures. We must say what we mean, and mean what we say.

There are other complex issues. NATO's relationship with Russia, the relationship between France and the alliance are important matters that need to be discussed frankly. I hope that the debate will not be sidetracked into theological argument. We should take note of developments on the ground. I welcome the involvement of French forces in operations in the former Yugoslavia, including in the proposed NATO implementation force; and I welcome the close co-operation between NATO and Russia, to the point where discussions are under way with the Russians on their possible participation in the implementation force.

In other words, the former Yugoslavia problem is obliging NATO to find practical solutions to the involvement of French forces, and to the question of relations with Russia, even though some of the institutional arguments remain unresolved.

At the time of this debate last year, the ceasefires in Northern Ireland had only just been announced. The security situation has improved dramatically since then, and the progress made during the past 12 months gives us hope. Every day without bombs is a gain; every month without bloodshed is a blessing. It may be that, month after month, the quiet momentum of peace will become unstoppable, and all men of good will must hope for that.

However, we cannot relax our guard. Terrorist organisations continue to train their members, and have significant stocks of weapons and explosives with which they could resume the violence at short notice. Nor has violence disappeared altogether from the streets of Northern Ireland: punishment attacks go on, and intimidation continues unabated in some areas. The marching season showed us that relations within the community remain highly volatile. There were arson attacks on churches, chapels and Orange halls throughout the Province. Those incidents are not to be compared with the large-scale terrorist atrocities of 18 months ago, but they cause fear in the population. They are not acceptable in a civilised society.

As always, the armed forces have adapted to the demands made of them in this sensitive period. Our first duty is to ensure the safety of the people of Northern Ireland. We have been able to respond to the improved conditions by relocating two major units to their home bases, and more relocations may become possible if peace continues to develop. Troops will accompany the RUC wherever it may encounter hostility, but in areas where routine support for police patrols has ceased many soldiers have now returned to barracks. That has allowed them to take part in exercises, both in the UK and abroad, and to train for their primary roles.

IRA-Sinn Fein has said that peace may break down if it does not get its way. If it does break down for that reason, IRA-Sinn Fein will not be forgiven. Our service men and women have done an outstanding job in Northern Ireland, and have shown great bravery and dedication. The task has fallen mainly to the younger soldiers—corporals and lance-corporals—who have had to make split-second decisions on which people's lives have depended. The qualities that they have displayed—discipline, self-restraint and sheer professionalism—bring distinction to our armed forces. They will continue to work tirelessly in support of the RUC, and we shall remain vigilant until a secure and enduring settlement is in place.

The five years since the end of the cold war have been years of upheaval, as we, with our allies, have adapted. Nuclear exchange today is much less likely, but we face increased uncertainty. We can expect continuing calls on the United Kingdom to support conflict prevention, peacekeeping and humanitarian aid missions—and, on occasion, to join a coalition to reverse unacceptable aggression. Those crises may arise with little or no notice. We cannot predict with certainty who will be involved in the response, but we can predict that those missions will arise some distance from the United Kingdom.

Over the past five years, we have reviewed our defence strategy. This year's statement sets out our intention to set a steady course for the future, building on the changes that we have made. It does not propose, as the Opposition motion does, another defence review. My Department has clear aims and objectives, which are set out in this year's statement. They are to ensure that we have in place the strategy and the defence capability needed to protect our security and that of our dependent territories; to contribute to the promotion of British interests overseas; and to help to maximise our international influence and prestige.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The Secretary of State speaks of the need to safeguard British interests overseas, and also of the need for adaptation. Since I last asked him about it, has he reflected further on the serious problems that arise from our country's disproportionate commitment to the export of arms? Has he considered the miserable humanitarian consequences, and the destabilising geopolitical effects? Has he also considered the dangers to our economy of our shrunken manufacturing base being so dependent on a particular sector of the export market, which is itself shrinking? Will he accept Labour's proposal for a defence diversification agency—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know that an intervention consists of one question, not six.

Mr. Portillo: I note that the hon. Gentleman has become no less verbose following his transition to the Opposition. We are discussing the qualities, such as loyalty, that characterise our forces and it is interesting to see the hon. Gentleman rise in his place. I have reflected upon Britain's most successful industry in terms of exports, upon the rights of countries to provide for their self-defence and upon the marriage of those two interests. I have spoken about the right of countries to buy arms to defend themselves and a country that is well able to export defence material to them.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The Minister speaks about Britain's successful arms industry. Does he regard as part of that success the fact that this country supplied arms to the former Yugoslavia which were almost certainly used in the recent conflict?

Mr. Portillo: Of course arms will be used by people when they think that they have to protect themselves—that is an inevitable consequence. I do not know whether

the hon. Gentleman is one of the 37 signatories to the Opposition motion that calls for the cancellation of the Trident programme and the reduction of British defence spending to the average of the European Union. It was noticeable the week before last when the Labour party stage-managed its conference that it was able to avoid any debate on these matters. But as soon as Labour Members get back to Parliament the wild men take over. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and his many allies in the House for showing the true face of Labour and its wish still to be a unilateral disarmer.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Before the Secretary of State leaves the subject of nuclear weapons and Trident, would he briefly explain to the House and the country why we are spending up to £30 billion on nuclear weapons that can destroy life and humanity as we know it? Against whom are these weapons fuelled and aimed? What is the great threat to this nation that requires a weapon that can destroy the planet?

Mr. Portillo: If it were within the rules of the House I would happily cede all my time to the hon. Gentleman to make a speech about nuclear disarmament so that our people could clearly understand that the policy of a vast tract of the Labour party is to get rid of nuclear weapons. There are now nuclear weapons states in the world and there will be more in future. Britain has provided a nuclear umbrella not only for her own defence but for the defence of Europe. Many countries have benefited from that umbrella and have enjoyed a peace that they would not otherwise have had. I should like the hon. Gentleman to make as many speeches as he can proclaiming that the true policy of the Labour party is to do away with that unilateral nuclear defence.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): While my right hon. Friend is reflecting on the Government's successful defence policy, and in particular the nuclear component of that policy, will he say whether the Government will continue to support our position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council? Will he also reflect on the fact that that lot on the Opposition Benches would put that in jeopardy?

Mr. Portillo: Of course I support continued membership: this Government always will. It is appropriate that Britain should play such a part in world affairs. It brings us great prestige and influence and heavy responsibilities which we are happy to fulfil.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Portillo: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who has been rising for some time, and then I should like to make some progress.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As the Secretary of State is concentrating on the nuclear issue and as the Government are signatories to the non-proliferation treaty, will he tell us in simple terms the Government's attitude to the French nuclear testing in the south Pacific? Do they have a yes or no attitude? I ask that particularly in the light of the Minister's scepticism towards Europe.

Mr. Portillo: If the world is to benefit from the nuclear umbrella that is provided by the taxpayers of Britain, France and the United States, it is important for the world to know that nuclear weapons are effective. That is how deterrence is achieved. We in Britain do not feel a need to test our weapons to have certainty about that, but we make no judgment about whether the French are in the same position. However, we applaud the fact that the French have made clear their intention to sign, after this series of tests, the comprehensive test ban treaty.

This year's statement gives a full exposition of the policies about which I have been speaking. It makes clear that the proposals for restructuring our front-line forces under "Options for Change" are complete. To implement our policies, the fighting strength and capabilities of our front-line forces need to be maintained. If their commitment is reduced, we intend to use the resources that are released to help to reduce overstretch, to increase training for war and to support other high-priority tasks.

The Defence Select Committee rightly expressed concern about overstretch in our armed forces, drawing particular attention to the operational tour intervals in the Army and especially in the infantry. The Army is currently heavily committed to operations. Some 23 per cent. of the field Army is deployed on operations with another 10 per cent. preparing for or recovering from them. Because of that, this year we shall not be able to meet our target of an average operational tour interval of 24 months for infantry battalions. On the basis of current commitments, the average for 1995-96 will be 20 months.

I am conscious of the impact of that change on soldiers and the effect upon them of separation from their families and of uncomfortable living conditions. It is a tribute to our armed forces that those deprivations are endured without affecting morale or operational capability. But we are not complacent and our target for average tour intervals remains 24 months. I recognise that it would never be possible rigidly to enforce such guidelines. None the less, I hope that the House will welcome the assurance in this year's statement that even if, as we hope, the Northern Ireland situation allows us over time to reduce our commitment to the RUC, it will not lead to cuts in fighting units. The Government intend to commit to defence the funds that are needed to preserve and properly equip our front-line capabilities.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): My right hon. Friend spoke about overstretch. He will be aware that one of the paradoxes of "Options for Change" was that while we were reducing the number of regiments we were concerned about demographic change and the reduction of about 30 per cent. in the age group pool from which we recruit. Even at the lower levels there could be considerable problems with recruitment, and recent news shows that that could continue to be a difficulty. Will my right hon. Friend or the Minister of State for the Armed Forces say what the Government intend to do to meet that recruitment challenge?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend the Minister of State will be happy to deal with that but I should like to comment on it. There is a public perception that because the number of men in our armed forces has been reduced we do not need new recruits. I should like to take this opportunity to correct that impression. We do need recruits because we are not getting enough of them at the moment and the armed forces continue to offer a wonderful opportunity for young men and women. I hope that that opportunity will carry across the airwaves to young people who are thinking about a career in the services.

[Mr. Portillo]

My Department continues to drive down costs, eliminate waste and improve efficiency. Headquarters staff numbers will continue to decline dramatically. "Front Line First" will save more than £1 billion a year by the end of the century, and the Department's efficiency programme has produced over £3 billion of efficiency gains in the past 10 years.

The changes that have been set in hand will continue to have their effect over the next few years. There is exemplary commitment by the services and civil servants to driving down costs and a willingness to embrace change, even though it can be personally disruptive. We must grasp enthusiastically the opportunities to manage our defence effort better. "Front Line First" has shown how a rigorous approach can enable us to invest in modern and capable equipment.

The Tomahawk land attack missile provides a vivid example of the enhancements in capability that were made possible by the savings achieved through "Front Line First". I am pleased to announce that the required approvals have been granted by the United States Administration and Congress and that we are therefore today placing an order for the missile. Tomahawk offers a capability that is suited to the world that we now face. It can carry out long-range precision attacks against selected targets with minimum threat to our forces and a low risk of collateral damage. Its long range and high accuracy will give us a highly effective means of persuading a potential aggressor to desist from unacceptable activity.

Last July we announced our intention to establish a joint rapid deployment force. I can now provide some more detail. We foresee a greater demand in future for operations mounted quickly to demonstrate our national purpose or the will of the international community, to stabilise a rapidly deteriorating situation or to protect the interests of our people. The joint rapid deployment force will be a key part of that and we have set a number of goals for the force.

The force will be joint, bringing units from all three services together in an effective formation of up to reinforced brigade strength with supporting naval and air components. It will be able to undertake a broad spectrum of missions and will be capable of being used either as part of a national response to a crisis or as part of an international coalition, whether brought together by NATO, the Western European Union or the UN.

The force will be able to respond quickly, with units held at the necessary readiness and, in responding, it must be able to bring the right range of skills to bear. Those goals are demanding. Units assigned to the JRDF must be manned, trained and equipped to meet them. Most of all, they will need clear leadership—leaders who are able to bring together a wide range of skills with new ways of thinking and working where required.

An implementation team will be set up under a Royal Marines brigadier to establish the JRDF by 1 August next year. The force, once formed, will be under its own chief of operations. It will be based on a core formed of 5 Airborne Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade. It will be underpinned by our national contingency forces, from which units will be assigned to the JRDF in rotation.

Speed of deployment and mobility in theatre will be vital. The JRDF will be able to draw on RAF transport aircraft, assigned support and battlefield helicopters and our specialist amphibious shipping. We shall examine possible enhancements to that shipping and also the charter, lease or purchase of suitable civil shipping and cargo aircraft. The new force will greatly improve our ability to respond quickly and effectively to contingencies. Our goal is to create a force with the power to influence events.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): What my right hon. Friend has said is welcome, but will he elaborate a little on where the resources—manpower and money—are to come from? Is it simply a case of the existing forces of the three armed services having yet another role to perform?

Mr. Portillo: Clearly, I am not in a position today to make announcements on resources. I am talking about the process of bringing our armed forces up to date to meet the new range of threats in the world and ensuring that we train and man existing units for rapid deployment. Making available to our armed forces units that can be assigned quickly and deployed in theatre seems a welcome step forward.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that, if the new rapid deployment force is to be headed by a brigadier of the Royal Marines, there could be no better place to locate that force's headquarters than at the Royal Marines school of music in Deal, which, it has been announced, might be closing next April? Will he accept that Deal is probably the nearest place to any future theatre of war in which to locate such a headquarters and the fact that we have an airport—Manston airport—just up the road? It is a former RAF airport and could therefore be expanded and improved in times of emergency to deal with the activities of the Royal Marines—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should hope that an hon. Member who expects the Marines to come back to his constituency will respond to a little discipline occasionally.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has been assiduous in representing his constituency on military matters and I congratulate him on getting in his bid so early.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I wish to pursue a little further the matter of the rapid deployment force. Does it involve the use of forces already stationed in Germany as part of the rapid reaction corps?

Mr. Portillo: I had not intended that.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The Secretary of State cannot dodge the question asked by two of his colleagues. We are dealing with defence estimates yet he says that he cannot state whether there are to be new resources for the rapid reaction force or whether we shall be recycling soldiers, sailors and airmen who are knackered.

Mr. Portillo: I answered the question but the hon. Gentleman was too busy preparing his next question to listen.

I have spoken of NATO's role in the former Yugoslavia. NATO is, and will be, the bedrock of our security. No other organisation can provide an effective security guarantee backed by the political and military structures to put it into effect. NATO has made it plain

that its forces are available to support United Nations missions and it provides the vital link between Europe and North America.

For NATO to work well, European countries must show their ability to work together and to pull their weight—*[Interruption.]*—as I said at Blackpool last week. There are numerous European contributors to United Nations operations in Bosnia. Again as I said in Blackpool last week, we have found ourselves in combat alongside excellent forces from France and the Netherlands on the slopes of Mount Igman.

Organisations other than NATO have much to contribute. This is an important time for the Western European Union, which is being developed to take on the tasks defined in the 1992 Petersburg declaration—humanitarian crises, disaster relief, peacekeeping and other crisis management missions. For this, we believe that the WEU needs to develop its operational capabilities so that it is able to mount effective operations. That will be a priority during our presidency of the WEU from next January.

The arrangements that are put in place must not, however, undermine NATO or the transatlantic link. Our goal is to build WEU capabilities that are compatible and not in competition with those of NATO. Those capabilities must be credible to the outside world and we must be able to rely on them to work in practice. We have therefore adopted an approach to the development of the WEU that examines tasks of which it should be capable and addresses the gaps that need to be filled. We want to build genuine military effectiveness.

We sincerely hope that the debate on defence at next year's intergovernmental conference will not get side-tracked into theological debate. Institutional tinkering cuts no ice with aggressors. No Bosnian Serb militiaman will be deterred by abstract talk of European defence vocations and perspectives.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles) *rose—*

Mr. Portillo: I want to finish my point.

The Government's aims for the intergovernmental conference are clear in terms of what we want and what we cannot accept. Our yardstick will always be what is in the interests of Britain's and Europe's security. What we want is an intergovernmental conference which promotes a European Union that is outward-looking, not introspective, and which helps to build a practical European defence capability so that all European countries can take on their proper share in building security in their continent and further afield.

As the Government say on page 17 of the defence estimates, however, what we cannot accept from the intergovernmental conference is a merger of WEU into the European Union. The European Union includes countries that are neutral, and it would be positively damaging to Europe's wider interests if we put in place new defence hurdles for prospective EU members in central and eastern Europe.

Nor, again as we said in the defence estimates, should there be in defence matters any of the involvement of the European Commission or the European Parliament that occurs elsewhere in the Union's structure. Decisions on the deployment of British armed forces must be taken by the sovereign British Government. No decisions should be taken that would limit our freedom to act in defence of British national interests. There is no justification for separate European armies which would be wasteful and which would undermine NATO.

Britain has a leading role to play in the world, for the benefit of our own people and for the good of the international community. We are a global power and an important European power. We can and will use our position to influence the development of Europe, not to create defence structures where the defence policies of individual nations are subjugated to a supranational European body, but to enable nation states to work together to build security and stability in Europe.

As we debate defence, let us not forget that our nation retains global reach. We will continue to be a major participant in world affairs, using our assets and experience for the benefit of the world community. We can draw on our long experience of political stability and a tradition of moderation. We are also a responsible nuclear power. We are a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Uniquely, we are a leading member of NATO, the European Union and a Commonwealth that covers one third of the people of the earth.

In conditions very different from that of the cold war, we may need fewer men and women under arms, but their quality, their training and their equipment must remain world class.

5.41 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'declines to support the policy of the Government as set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995; condemns the continued instability in the armed forces caused by the Government's failure to establish a long-term strategic overview; notes that this undermines the morale and operational effectiveness of the United Kingdom's armed forces and fails to prepare the United Kingdom for the challenges of the post cold war world; calls upon the Government to establish a strategic defence review; deplores the way that United Kingdom defence capabilities and installations are being run down in an unstructured way instead of the Government seeking to manage the worst effects of change on communities and individuals through a defence diversification agency; urges a positive approach in the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and the immediate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention; condemns the Government's financial mismanagement and waste in defence; congratulates the excellent work carried out by British forces throughout the world and expresses pride in their continuing presence in United Nations peacekeeping operations.'.

I want to begin my comments in this annual debate on defence in a consensual manner and pay tribute to the men and women who have worn the uniforms of our armed forces with such distinction. I want to link with them the civilians who work with the Ministry of Defence, but whose work so often goes unrecognised. In paying tribute to the skill, resolution and sheer professionalism of those men and women, I am conscious that they operate in 24 countries throughout the world and also in Northern Ireland, and that they are away from their families for too long a period.

I am especially conscious of the good work that those men and women have done in Bosnia. Like the Secretary of State, I have witnessed that, but many people in this country are not aware of the value and extent of their work in bringing together communities and helping new civilian regimes to emerge. I know that at this moment,

[Dr. David Clark]

when they are likely to swap their blue berets and helmets of the United Nations for the steel helmets of NATO, their task may become even more dangerous—but that task will be all the more necessary if we are to effect a peace in that nation.

This year of 1995, as we recall the victories in Europe and Japan against fascism 50 years ago, is an especially poignant year. The ceremonies marking VE and VJ days gave us all an opportunity to express our thanks to those who played their part in securing those victories. It is appropriate to remind ourselves that we have a duty to ensure that the sufferings and sacrifices were not in vain.

Indeed, as we view the events of 50 years ago from our modern day vantage point, one fact is often overlooked, even though it is so strikingly obvious—that for centuries until 1945, European countries had fought each other as a matter of course. Now, it is inconceivable that Britain would go to war with Germany, that France would wage war with Spain and that the people of Belgium, Holland and Denmark would fear the military might of Germany. The reason for the changed position and the current stability is, quite simply, the creation of international institutions such as NATO and the EEC, now the European Union.

That may be an obvious statement, but I regret that the Secretary of State appeared not to take it on board. I thought that his speech today was largely reasoned; I thought it subdued. It was not so much a tactical retreat as a rout. I do not know who brought pressure to bear upon the right hon. Gentleman, but certainly wiser counsels have prevailed and the House has benefited from that.

However, I must make the point that at last week's Conservative party conference, the Secretary of State caused offence to and angered many people in this country. In his speech he delivered what I regarded as one of the most disgracefully nationalistic rants that I have ever had the great displeasure to hear. I was simply appalled to learn that his speech had not only been approved by the Prime Minister, but had his full and enthusiastic support. The Prime Minister must take the blame for the damage caused by that speech, both at home and abroad.

That speech did do damage. At home, it attracted criticism from Lord Howe, Sir Leon Brittan and the former Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Carver *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) may laugh at the former Chief of the Defence Staff, but the Opposition believe that his opinion is worth listening to. Abroad, there was criticism—some might say expected—from the European Commission, through its President Mr. Santer. However, I recall that it is the same Jacques Santer who was the Prime Minister's chosen man—the right man, at the right time, in the right place. He is the Prime Minister's chosen man, but he could not take the Secretary of State's speech.

I know that the right hon. Gentleman has tried to excuse his speech as a knockabout conference floor piece of oratory, but that cannot obscure the menace and danger that it harboured. We needed only to listen to his jingoistic tirade to realise how misguided is his idea of the role of the armed forces.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that during my period of service I never met any British service man who was doing other than serving for Britain. I never met any French service man who was doing other than serving for France. The same was true for other countries. Indeed, the German prisoners who were under me also said that they were fighting for Germany.

Dr. Clark: I do not really follow the hon. Gentleman's point. We are objecting to the way in which the Secretary of State abused his position and twisted and abused the values of patriotism that are held dear by Members on both sides of the House. It is an affront to the House to see the national flag of this country used so recklessly to further the political ambitions of one man.

Mr. Portillo: I was waiting for the hon. Gentleman to come to the point because I was not sure to which part of my speech he was objecting. I have now discovered that it is his view that I abused patriotism. I did not make the sort of speech made by the Leader of the Opposition about VJ day. I did not stand up and say that on VJ day I observed many veterans on the march calling out that they were Labour supporters. I would have thought that any man who aspires to be the leader of this country and attends a major national ceremony, but who comes away from it to tell his conference that he saw only Labour voters—where the rest of us saw veterans and heroes—has a lot to learn.

Dr. Clark: The right hon. Gentleman should realise that patriotism does not mean that we hate our enemies and it does not mean that we are anti-foreign.

It is not only the Opposition, eminent people and the general public who have been offended by the right hon. Gentleman's outburst; the armed forces are seething about his speech. One senior officer is reported to have described it as a prostitution of the armed forces reputation in the name of short-term political gain. To try to hijack the courage and commitment of the SAS for the right hon. Gentleman's self-seeking Rambo-style propaganda shows the depths to which he will go.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): The hon. Gentleman said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had raised nationalistic issues concerning European defence and the formation of a European army. Does he agree with the remarks by Chancellor Kohl on 20 September when he said that he intended that there should be a defence union in Europe by 1999? Does he consider that to be a relevant threat?

Dr. Clark: Chancellor Kohl has nothing to do with the British Labour party. He is more closely linked with the Conservative party, I may say. The leader of the Labour party said in the House on 1 March—I shall speak slowly for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman—that the possibility of a European army was not on. He said:

"We do not—

the leader of the Labour party said this—

"We do not favour a European army".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1995; Vol. 255, c. 1059.]

Is that clear? I hope that it is.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: Perhaps I could continue.

Not only were the armed forces and the general public offended or sickened; what really got home to most people was the attempt by the Secretary of State to claim patriotism for the Conservative party. The right hon. Gentleman needs a history lesson before he tries to wrap that around us. We in the Labour party are conscious of patriotism. We accept that no one party has a monopoly on patriotism. But does not the Defence Secretary recall those dark days of 1940, when our backs were up against the wall, and we had the war Cabinet of Attlee and Greenwood from the Labour party, with Halifax and Chamberlain from the Conservative party, and, of course, Winston Churchill as the Prime Minister? In May 1940, in a critical situation, the proposition came before the Cabinet of whether to sue for peace with Hitler. Two Cabinet members in favour—

Mr. Mackinlay: Rab Butler. *[Laughter.]*

Dr. Clark: I could do without the comments of my hon. Friend. With Chamberlain and Halifax from the Conservative party, by three votes—those of Churchill and the two Labour Members—to two, it was decided that this nation would not bow to the yoke of fascism. We do not need any lessons on patriotism from this Government. We have never used such information before, but if they ask for it, we will use it.

I return to the main point that I am trying to make. I hope that I have got it across to the Defence Secretary. It is simply: we in the Labour party accept that men and women of all political persuasions, of all political parties, gave up their lives so that we—the right hon. Gentleman and myself and every other hon. Member in the House—may live free from the shadows of fascism and the Nazis. Ever since then, this House has been united in protecting that freedom. Successive Defence Secretaries from all parties have argued for it, because we have been determined that those shadows should never darken Britain again.

Partly to try to ensure that such events did not happen again, over 50 years ago we formed the Atlantic alliance. The Secretary of State will be slightly embarrassed because the headquarters of that organisation is based in Brussels. That organisation brought the peoples of North America and Europe together, and upon that stability our freedom has been built. We had the same aims of security, stability, unity and freedom. It is a sad day when Britain, which has for so long been a major player in NATO, has a Secretary of State who does not seem to appreciate that point.

Mr. Key: The interesting ramble that we have sat through has merely served to point out—the hon. Gentleman quoted his leader in affirmation of the point—that the leader of the Labour party agrees with the Secretary of State for Defence. That seems to be the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. When he says that nobody is interested in or believes in what the Secretary of State for Defence said, I wonder whether he has spoken to any one of his constituents over the weekend. My constituents have not being telling me how upset they were with the Secretary of State—absolutely the reverse.

Dr. Clark: Well, we will see when the election comes what the hon. Gentleman's constituents are actually thinking. We have talked about history, but let us talk about current affairs and the leader of the Labour party. We have made it quite clear that we are not in favour of a European army, nor will we give up Britain's right of veto on defence and security issues. I hope that that is clear. May I read out the document which was passed at our conference? I shall read it very slowly and I shall say it only once. It said:

"Labour does not support the establishment of a European army or proposals to give the European Union a military competence."

Is that clear? I do not think that it can be made clearer to anyone who has anything between their ears.

Mr. Portillo: But if the situation is so very clear, why did Pauline Green, the leader of the socialists in Europe, Labour Member of the European Parliament for London North, table a motion, which was voted for by Labour Members of the European Parliament, calling for the application of qualified majority voting to foreign and security policy? Why did all Labour Members of the European Parliament vote for a merger of foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs into the main structure of the European Community, where of course the European Court and the European Parliament would have influence? If that is the policy of the leader of the socialists in Europe, why is it so very different from the policy of the leader of the Labour party?

Dr. Clark: The right hon. Gentleman knows that his own party, the European People's party, supports the social chapter, yet he does not accept it.

I stand by what I said. The party conference and the Labour Front-Bench team have said quite clearly that we do not support the establishment of a European army or proposals to give the EU a military competence. I hope that that is clear. I wish that the Secretary of State would stop tilting at windmills that do not exist. He is simply becoming the Don Quixote of British politics by so doing.

I know that the Secretary of State will claim that he was being patriotic. He was not. He was being xenophobic and nationalistic. I am minded of Richard Aldington's comment. He said:

"Patriotism is a lively sense of collective responsibility. Nationalism is a silly cock, crowing on its own dunghill."

That is something which the Secretary of State may well take on board.

One thing is clear, in spite of the Secretary of State's views, his professed patriotism does not extend to procurement decisions facing Britain. He is all words and little action in that respect because in recent years the Conservative party has shown that it prefers to buy foreign equipment wherever possible. It has bought planes from the United States, ammunition from Israel, fuses from Italy, bribes and all. That has been this Government's record when it comes to supporting the British defence industry.

I sometimes wonder what the Government have got against the British defence industry. For example, why have they got such an obsession against Land Rover?

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose—*

Dr. Clark: I shall give way in a moment. Why did the Government go against the bid for light vehicle replacements from Land Rover in preference to the Reynolds Broughton RB44? The Australians went for the British Land Rover and it has been very successful. What did we buy? We bought Reynolds Broughton. Will the Secretary of State confirm that all 846 of those vehicles are unroadworthy? They have had to be taken off the road.

[Dr. Clark]

Not one of them can be used, yet they were chosen in preference to the British Land Rover. Will he also tell us how many Austrian vehicles he has had to buy to replace and make good those 846 vehicles which he had to take off the road? That is the sort of behaviour that we get from the Government when it comes to procurement from British defence companies.

Mr. Jenkin: If the hon. Gentleman is going to make a speech on behalf of the British defence industry, is not it incumbent on him to distance himself from the comments of the party's newest recruit, who seems to be part of the old Labour party, determined to wage a vendetta against the defence industry by preventing it from exporting legitimately? Would the hon. Gentleman make it quite clear that the Labour party would not wish to restrict sales of arms overseas, which are a great export earner and provide significant employment in my constituency?

Dr. Clark: We have made it clear that, so long as one accepts article 51 of the United Nations charter, every country has the right to self-defence, so they obviously have the right to acquire weapons for that purpose. We have said that, but equally we are not in favour of selling arms to repressive regimes and we are not in the business of selling arms that might be used against other countries or, indeed, against our soldiers. If the Government and their Conservative predecessors had been more transparent, we would not have had the Scott inquiry or the difficulties that resulted.

The point that we are trying to make is that we need a strong British defence industry if we are to match our national and international commitments. I happen to believe that, if I ask a British man or woman to go out and serve in a United Nations force on behalf of Britain, those people have the right to the best equipment. I happen to believe that in many cases, that best equipment is British. It is sad that the Government have no strategy for the defence industry and, indeed, actively threaten our ability to protect British forces.

The United Kingdom defence industry is facing a period of unprecedented change. The Government have done nothing to try to help it to manage that change. The social price is enormous: 350,000 defence redundancies in recent years. They were all unplanned. There was no attempt to manage the change. Thousands of people with high-tech skills which we as a country can ill afford to lose have simply been thrown aside. The Government's complacency shows in how little esteem they hold the defence sector and the communities that are dependent on it.

It is because we believe that it is in Britain's national and economic interest to have a defence industrial base and because the Tories have inflicted such damage on it that we have launched our own strategy for a secure future for the defence industry. Opposition Members believe, unlike the Government, that the British defence industry is a strategic part not only of our defence effort but of our manufacturing capability. We will work with the defence industry to identify technologies in which we lead the world and to ensure that they realise their potential.

I sometimes fear that we have missed so many opportunities. The liquid crystal display unit on all lap-top computers and calculators was invented here in Britain by the Defence Research Agency, which is publicly owned. Yet there was no one to realise its potential. Billions of pounds and thousands of jobs have been lost to Britain because of that failure. That is why we will establish a defence diversification agency funded from within the existing defence budget which will make a significant contribution to realising those opportunities. We believe that there is a future for British industry.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has just said. He said that he was working with the defence industries. Is he aware that not one single defence manufacturer supports the idea of a defence diversification agency?

Dr. Clark: I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman has obviously not read the evidence from GEC to the Trade and Industry Select Committee. It came out openly in favour of a defence diversification agency. The hon. Gentleman nods his head. He can go and look in the records. It is clearly stated in the evidence to that Select Committee. Other companies have told us that they support the idea.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): My hon. Friend has been generous in giving way. Would he like to remind the Government party that it is not the Labour party which has dissipated all the industrial base of the Royal Ordnance factories and, for the first time since King Charles, left us without state ordnance?

Dr. Clark: I am grateful for that intervention. I know how much my hon. Friend fights for her constituents who work at the Radway Green plant and how much she has fought not only for her constituents but for Britain. It is much appreciated. I know that it is a matter of regret that so many jobs have been lost at that plant.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I know that GEC has said what the hon. Gentleman has reported that it has said to the Select Committee, but has the Labour party studied what has happened in the United States of America? It has thrown $300 million at the funding of a diversification agency and got nothing in return.

Dr. Clark: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands. The American experience was to establish a defence diversification commission. It was not to be a permanent body. It was a commission to determine how the rundown of not only the defence industry but defence bases should be managed. I must say that the USA has managed the change much more successfully than we have in Britain. I happen to believe that we can learn a great deal from the work of Secretary Gottbaum and the people in the department.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No, I am not prepared to give way. I have given way on so many occasions that I am not prepared to give way again.

I have set out Labour's ideas for the defence industry. I should now like to raise an issue which has come to prominence in recent weeks; it is the Secretary of State's decision to examine the possibility of leasing or purchasing F16s from the United States to replace our Tornado F3s. In parenthesis, I am conscious that we lost about 18 of our F3s at St. Athan when the privatised

company wrecked them. I am also conscious that in turn we are to lease 24 to the Italians. Nevertheless, we understand that the Secretary of State is considering that particular option.

It appears that the plan was considered some time ago, but was rejected on the ground that it could lead to the demise of the British aerospace industry. However, its author seems to have resurrected the plan, which appears to have found fallow ground with the new Secretary of State. That should not be surprising, given the fact that Mr. David Hart produced the report and Mr. David Hart is the Secretary of State's independent adviser. He has made no secret of that.

It would appear that the decision is not the only procurement decision in which Mr. Hart has taken an interest. For example, in 1993, in an article in *The Spectator* magazine, he expressed his views clearly. It made uneasy reading for the UK defence industry because it argued that British defence firms should become little more than metal bashers for United States companies. In the same article he unfavourably compared the men and women of the Royal Air Force with those of the Israeli air force. So it is little wonder that the armed forces are seething about the influence of the so-called independent adviser—Rasputin, as I gather he is called within the Department.

Does the House think that Mr. Hart's remarks rest easily with the patriotism and commitment which the Secretary of State enounces so much? The point that I want to get out of the Secretary of State is simply this. A number of people are deeply concerned that Mr. Hart has access to confidential information from British defence companies. I wrote to the Secretary of State just a month ago on this very issue, as he knows. He has replied to me only today. It is a helpful reply as far as it goes. I asked what security clearance Mr. Hart had. The Secretary of State wrote:

"Mr. Hart has been subject to the checks necessary to permit him from time to time to have access to classified information. Mr. Hart fully understands the need to safeguard all information given to him in his Departmental role and that this should not be used for any other purpose. Mr. Hart provides independent advice to me in only a small number of areas where the Department is in negotiations which may lead to a procurement contract. If he were to have a financial interest in one or more of the firms in negotiation for such a contract, I would expect him to declare it and would reach a view on his involvement in the light of this declaration."

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Very cosy.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend says, "Very cosy." I find that the letter has been written with circumspection. It does not contain the guarantee that I and the House would want on the matter. Has the gentleman signed the Official Secrets Act? Is he bound by it? Does the Secretary of State guarantee that this man uses information only for the purposes of the Department? We have a right to ask that question and to have the answer to it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

I presume that the appointment of independent advisers such as Mr. Hart is justified on account of their business experience and business skills, but I am afraid that, on examining the Government's record, one finds that they do not appear to have been very successful.

Let us consider the record. Let us take, not our figures, but those of the National Audit Office. In May this year, the National Audit Office major projects report analysed 25 of the Ministry of Defence's largest projects. Twenty-three of those projects had forecast cost increases of £645 million. Ninety per cent. of the projects had failed to reach their original in-service date, with an average slippage of three years. That is the business efficiency of the Government—and we could go on and on.

One example is the official services residences, to which the House drew attention. Curtains alone in one house cost £33,000. We know that the service man was scapegoated and sacked, but the budget holder of that specific project was not even disciplined. We might consider other matters, such as the £4 million spent on the other 11 residences.

We might take as an example the collapse of the Government's privatisation of married housing stock. That privatisation fell apart, but only after the Government wasted £5 million on management consultants. Or we might consider the privatisation of the royal dockyards in Devonport and Rosyth and the fiasco there. Only two bidders emerged to tender—the two companies that were already operating the sites—and that after £6.7 million of our money had been spent on management consultants. It is not business men who are running this country; it is management consultants.

I hope, before I leave the subject of the two dockyards, that the Secretary of State or his Ministers will reinforce the commitment today to a two-dockyard solution. I urge the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to confirm later that past promises made about pensions, redundancy entitlements, conditions of employment and work load in the event of the sales going ahead will be honoured. I also wonder when those contracts will be signed.

We expect more from the Government. However, if we consider the Secretary of State's Blackpool outburst—using his words, stripping

"away all the waffle and fudge"—

he represents the real agenda of the modern Conservative party. It is a highly dangerous agenda. Whereas Conservative and Labour Defence Ministers since the war have tried to achieve security, the present Government only add insecurity.

The Secretary of State mentioned another defence review. Well, I wish that there had been a defence review; there simply has not been one. We are about the only country in the modern world that has not had a full defence review since the end of the cold war. We Opposition Members are committed to having one, because we believe that, if one is trying to plot and measure what is needed from our defence forces, one needs to have a review that is based on defence inputs, not on Treasury inputs.

In 1993, the Ministry of Defence established the defence costs studies. The Secretary of State is quite clever. I noticed what he said today. Interestingly, he has changed the terminology—he is back to "Front Line First" again. It used to be called defence costs studies. That is the official title—not defence needs studies, but defence costs studies. He knows, better than anyone else does, because he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time, that that was a Treasury-induced defence project. The tragedy is that we have no long-term planning for our military.

The former Defence Secretary, Sir John Nott, provided a damning indictment of the existing system's failure to undertake long-term planning when he described the Ministry of Defence as being

[Dr. Clark]

"like a huge super-tanker, well captained, well engineered, well crewed, its systems continuously updated but with no-one ever asking where the hell it is going."

Where the hell is it going?

Now that the cold war is over, it is crucial that that MOD supertanker has a new captain and a redefined sense of direction. That is why we need a strategic defence review, and that is why the new Labour Government will establish such a review. We shall do so because it is necessary if we are to protect the long-term national security of Britain.

We find that the only opposition comes from Conservative Members. The military say that they are on our side; the experts are on our side; almost everyone is, because they understand the logic of the case. The only people who disagree are, of course, members of the Conservative party.

I shall now discuss the Government's failure in another respect—the lack of an international outlook. I ask them, when will they bring forward for ratification the chemical weapons convention? I make the promise that I have made in the past: let them bring it forward and consult with us. They will have a fair wind from the Opposition. It need not take a long time to do that.

Similarly, why do the Government persist in opposing a ban on the trade in anti-personnel mines? The Secretary of State knows that the international conference broke down last week and he knows the damage and injury that those mines cause. Why will he not support a ban in the trade of those anti-personnel mines?

Now I shall discuss the biggest piece of hypocrisy of all, concerning nuclear testing. As the House knows, we have a long-standing commitment to end all nuclear testing and we have pledged to take a positive attitude towards negotiation of a truly comprehensive test ban treaty. We argue that because we know that nuclear testing is unnecessary. The work can be done by laser testing and in laboratories, and it is for that reason that President Clinton took his brave stand recently.

Unfortunately for Britain's interest and international security as a whole, Ministers have not been enthusiastic about that. Indeed, they have been obstructive and negative and came round to the opinion to support a comprehensive test ban only when President Clinton told them that they could not test in the United States.

Only a few years ago, the then Defence Minister in the other place condemned President Clinton's moratorium on nuclear testing, calling it unfortunate and misguided. That is not the way to approach international negotiations. It is not the way to achieve the objects of SDE95, when the Government are committed to working towards a nuclear free world. That is not the way to achieve it. We wonder why the Government have had to be brought kicking to the table. We believe that the Government should drop their obstruction on the issue of nuclear testing.

As the Secretary of State knows, recently the issue has been strongly brought home to us by the French Government's decision to conduct testing. They have completed two nuclear tests in the south Pacific. Almost universally, the international community has rightly condemned the French test in the south Pacific. What response did we hear from the Government? A muted,

"This is a matter for the French Government".

We, almost alone in the world, refuse to condemn the French testing programme. Britain's silence is a betrayal of our position in the international community and especially a betrayal of our friends in the Commonwealth in the south Pacific. Britain's shameful silence is nothing but an insult on top of the injury already done. It must be the first time that the Secretary of State has refused to take the opportunity to condemn one of our European allies. It is obvious that the Government will not take an international approach to our security.

The security of Britain can no longer be achieved by pillboxes situated at key points round our coasts, prepared to repel invaders. National security may need to be underpinned by military hardware, but it requires a wider perspective. Security can be achieved in the modern world only by international co-operation with our allies and the development of confidence-building measures with others.

With the end of the cold war, that needs vision. It is obvious today that the present Government lack the will and the vision, and that only a new Labour Government are fit and able to handle our security through into the new millennium.

6.19 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I was with the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clarke) 100 per cent. when he began his speech. I had hoped that, as he applauded all that our forces were doing overseas in the defence of freedom, today's debate about the defence of the realm would prove constructive and would rise above party politics. I had hoped to prove that in that regard hon Members on both sides of the House agree more than we disagree. But, alas, it was not to be.

The hon. Gentleman criticised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for too much patriotism and too much party politics. That is nothing new at a Tory party conference. I would hardly criticise my right hon. Friend for that. It seems to me to be rather better to wave the Union Jack at one's party conference than to sing the "Red Flag".

It is significant that the hon. Gentleman spent very little time speaking to his amendment. That is hardly surprising when it bears only six signatures in support. I think that the House and the world at large will be much more interested in the other amendment on the Order Paper standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), which has 37 signatures. It proves that the true heart of the Labour party is alive and well.

Today's parliamentary proceedings will not be remembered for the defence debate—they will certainly not be remembered for the speech by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields—nor do I think that they will be remembered for the statement on prisons. It is much more likely that we will remember today as the day that we paid tribute to an exceptional politician and statesman, Lord Home.

I remember moving a vote of thanks to Lord Home after he had spoken in my constituency. On that occasion, I said that it is often said of great men that

"some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them".

I said that Lord Home must be the only man who embodied all three and I think that the tributes paid to him today prove that.

I think that we should hear cries of, "Author, author!" in this debate. Where are they? The defence estimates statement for 1995 was published bearing the signature of my right hon. and learned Friend, the present Foreign Secretary, the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). The Defence Select Committee's response to that statement was prepared when my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) was Chairman. Both my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend have now moved to new responsibilities, and may I be the first to pay tribute to the work of my right hon. and learned Friend as Secretary of State for Defence.

This year's defence statement is robust and readable and it allowed the Select Committee plenty of time to comment upon it before the summer recess. My right hon. and learned Friend has already demonstrated his skills as Foreign Secretary and I am sure that he will be a most worthy successor to the distinguished line of statesmen who have held that very important office.

I have almost always spoken in previous defence debates, but today is the first time that I speak as Defence Select Committee Chairman. I thank my colleagues on the Committee for electing me to succeed my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster. I think that he will be a very difficult act to follow. As a direct descendant of Nelson, I rate him 100 guns-plus in his role as Committee Chairman. I certainly enjoyed the farewell party that we held in his honour, but I was glad that my name was not Hardy. We wish him well in his role as Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Defence Select Committee will sadly also be saying au revoir to our Clerk, Mr. David Natzler, who has kept us very well informed—and generally very amused—for six years. We welcome Andrew Kennon as his successor.

A number of other recent Defence Select Committee reports and Government replies that are relevant to today's debate are listed on the Order Paper. I mention in particular reports about the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Defence Medical Services, the Ministry of Defence estate, the defence use of civilian transport assets and personnel, and the reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance and target acquisition project. We are also conducting a joint investigation with the Select Committee for Trade and Industry into our defence industrial base, and it will report quite soon.

It is important to remember that today's debate may be the last opportunity for hon. Members to discuss defence matters before the 1996 intergovernmental conference. I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say today that it is now "steady as she goes", and I hope that we will enjoy a period of stability as the option decisions work their way through the system.

Mr. Mackinlay: I take the hon. Gentleman's point that this is probably the last opportunity that we will have to discuss defence issues before the intergovernmental conference commences. Therefore, is it not a pity that the Defence Committee's report entitled "The Future of NATO: the 1994 Summit and its Consequences" and the proposed extension of NATO do not appear technically on the Order Paper today, despite the fact that the extension of NATO is referred to in the defence estimates White Paper?

Mr. Colvin: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. However, there is nothing to stop hon. Members referring to that report, copies of which are available from the Vote Office. I certainly intend to refer to it later in my speech.

I cannot believe that the Opposition are serious about wanting to plunge our armed forces into another full-scale review. That is why I shall certainly not support the Opposition amendment as it appears on the Order Paper. It will take time—probably two years—for our armed forces to weather the turbulence of the current redundancies and to settle down to the new streamlined structures. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Pentlands said when he gave evidence to the Committee:

> "The big decisions have been taken. The Government now intends to inject a period of stability into defence planning—and funding".

I trust that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will note the word "funding" and let us hope that the White Paper lives up to its title: "Stable Forces in a Strong Britain".

Despite what my right hon. Friend has said, our Committee is still very concerned about the degree of overstretch in our armed forces. The Army's 24-month target for intervals between operational tours is barely achieved as an average, let alone a minimum; Her Majesty's ships regularly fail to meet the Royal Navy's harmony targets; and the First Sea Lord has expressed concern about the difficulty of regeneration. That has an effect on recruitment, which has been discussed previously.

The Committee is particularly concerned about how the Army and the Royal Air Force will recruit more people in the near future. We believe that there is currently a shortfall of more than 2,000 in Army recruitment against a target of 11,200, and I know that there is press speculation that the figure is more like 5,000 short. I hope that my hon Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will inform us of the true position in his wind-up speech this evening.

We have also noted reports of front-line undermanning, and we will be watching those matters closely. I endorse wholeheartedly what has been said already about our forces which are currently deployed on the front line in former Yugoslavia. They are performing a very difficult task with courage, skill and humour. They are undoubtedly the best troops in theatre. As to recruitment, the Committee is relieved to note that the Ministry of Defence's excessive reliance on job centres as proposed in the defence costs study has now been modified significantly.

I do not wish to steal hon. Members' thunder on equipment issues when they may have closer constituency interests than I represent. However, I want to mention four matters. First, I refer to the EH101 medium support helicopter. We stated in our report on the White Paper our concern, following MOD information conveyed to us, that the helicopter might not meet its "genuinely necessary minimum requirements". I am now quite satisfied that it does, and so too is the Royal Air Force. I am sure that the helicopters will give sterling service to the RAF and to the Army. I am pleased that in May, just a week after our Committee met the Italian Defence Minister, Italy at last ordered the aircraft.

[Mr. Colvin]

Secondly, we have long expressed impatience over the slow rate of replacement of the old Royal Fleet Auxiliary tankers. I was delighted, therefore, to see in the Department's 13 December "Contract Bulletin", which is obligatory bedside reading for the Chairman of the Select Committee, that the MOD intended to issue an invitation to tender for the design and build in the United Kingdom of two large auxiliary oilers, presumably to replace the old O class vessels. Perhaps we could be told whether those two are to be followed by others and how the future shape of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is envisaged.

I hear what my right hon. Friend said about the joint rapid deployment force, which is a welcome and an essential military development in today's uncertain world. How will the force travel to its destinations without delay? We cannot always rely on thumbing a lift from our American allies. The "Defence Estimates" say on page 30 that in order to reduce deployment times the Government are

"taking measures to improve the readiness of specialist shipping."

It about time they did that. When I went to the Marchwood military port in my constituency to see off the dispatch of equipment supporting the 24 Air Mobile Brigade to Bosnia, it was travelling in American military vessels. Do we not need more LSLs, landing ships—logistics, such as Sir Tristan and Sir Galahad, costing about the same as an Apache helicopter? Surely they could provide the specialist shipping that we require.

Thirdly, we have again expressed our disappointment at the slow progress within NATO towards a solution of the identification friend or foe issue. We found it appalling that NATO forces still cannot operate together without significant risk of fratricide. We have been pursuing the matter for several years—since the tragic case of fratricide in the Gulf war. The MOD told us that in May that the United Kingdom hoped to make a formal decision on air IFF by the end of the year. I should like to know whether that is still on course.

Fourthly, there is RISTA—reconnaissance intelligence and target acquisition. Considerable publicity has been given to the problems of the Phoenix drone system that we set out in our report. We can only hope that, after years of scandalous delay and mismanagement, it is eventually delivered to the Army. If it is not, we expect the Ministry of Defence to seek some compensation for the waste.

We are also disturbed to discover how long it has taken for the long-outstanding requirement for a ground surveillance system to begin to be met. The United States deployed its new J-STARS aircraft during the Gulf war and there has been considerable pressure on the United Kingdom and our NATO allies to buy into that system. Is it being fully evaluated, and what is the United Kingdom's position?

I have already touched on personnel and, as usual, our report devotes a chapter to it. I have nothing to say on the Bett report as that document is out for consultation, nor on the sad saga of official service residences.

Our principal concern is services housing. We set out in paragraphs 8 to 10 the rather curious tale of how the idea of a housing trust foundered on arcane points of Government accounting. It seems that the plan is for the married quarters estate to be sold and leased or rented back. There is considerable anxiety throughout the services as to how it will work in practice to ensure that families have suitable housing to move into when necessary at rents comparable to those currently charged.

The Committee spent considerable time and effort examining the far reaching implications of the defence costs study. We have reservation about defence medical services and the Royal Naval stores capacity, but generally the defence costs studies have been a success and nearly on target at £720 million of savings for 1996-97 and £1 billion per annum savings from the end of the decade onward. I am glad to see that around 90 per cent. of the savings already made will be added back to the armed forces converting waste into weapons rather than being plundered by the Treasury.

We were glad to be told that the new tri-service command and staff course will have 327 instead of only 240 students, with 98 from overseas instead of 60. I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm those numbers.

Our report on the Ministry of Defence estate called for a more rapid assessment and disposal of surplus properties and land holdings; and I hope that the new Defence Estate Organisation under its chief executive, Mr. Hurst, will bring that about. I also trust that our call for greater use to be made of private land for training is indeed being heeded as well as our conclusion that the use of publicly funded set-aside land for public purposes such as military training should be encouraged.

On disposals, I welcome the MOD's acceptance of the need for a flexible approach to timing, but I am anxious that the phrase in paragraph 31 of the Ministry of Defence reply to our report that the MOD is not funded to aid economic regeneration.

Defence land, as we stated in our report, is public land. We noted that simply seeking the highest price might well not be in the broader public interest. I hope that Mr. Hurst is empowered to permit sales in the public interest but may not raise the maximum cash return.

Finally, on the subject of the intergovernmental conference, may I draw the attention of the House to the memorandum on the United Kingdom Government's approach to the treatment of European defence issues at the IGC next year. It states that NATO should remain responsible for the defence of NATO territory under article 5 of the treaty of Washington and that the WEU should concentrate on strengthening the European pillar of the North Atlantic Alliance through the so-called Petersburg missions and I certainly support that policy.

Although there are initiatives to strengthen the WEU, the organisation should not duplicate NATO. Instead, WEU-led operations should be backed by existing NATO structures and resources under the proposed combined joint task force concept. In its report on the future of NATO, our Committee recommends that no country should be admitted to membership of the WEU until it is a full member of NATO and properly integrated into the NATO military structure. It is also significant that our Committee has WEU next on its list for inquiry.

I have no doubt about my right hon. Friend's robust views on national sovereignty over our defences, but the position of him and other Ministers at the IGC would be greatly reinforced by the backing of the House which I have no doubt they would get if we were given the opportunity to debate the matter specifically.

My right hon. Friend has got off to a good if rumbustious start. Nevertheless, no one doubts where he stands on European defence policy and I agree with him

on that. Attacking federalism is not the same as attacking our partners in Europe. I believe that he will find that most people support him. His philosophy and his policy, even if not some of his polemics, are with the grain of British public opinion and time will prove him right.

6.39 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is a pleasure to follow the new Chairman of the Defence Select Committee. I thought that he was a bit party political at the beginning of his speech. If he continues that way, he will have difficulties in the Committee. However, I am sure that we will be able to proceed in a constructive way.

For the second year running I have spent part of the recess driving a truck in a humanitarian aid convoy to Bosnia run by Edinburgh Direct Aid. I want to speak about peacekeeping operations with particular reference to the former Yugoslavia and to examine wider aspects of European security.

I was in Bosnia from 21 August until 14 September, which was a particularly interesting time to be there. We have all seen the television images of wrecked communities and ethnic cleansing, but I can tell the House that it is something else to come face to face with the women, children and old people of Srebrenica who endured three unspeakable years under siege in what was supposed to be a UN safe area before being overrun, terrorised and driven into refugee camps around Tuzla. I mention women, children and old people because there were not many men of working age in evidence. We can only speculate on what happened to them.

It is something else again to hear incoming artillery in the densely populated town of Tuzla and to be exposed to sniper fire in the capital of Sarajevo. For me, it was bad enough to share the deprivation of electricity and water with the besieged people of Sarajevo for just two days. The fortitude and dignity of the long-suffering civilians of Bosnia—Moslems, Croats and Serbs alike—is truly awe-inspiring. I had been in Bosnia before but not as close to the sheer brutality of the conflict. I had the good fortune to be on the spot on and after 30 August, when the United Nations and NATO finally set about destroying the heavy weapons that had been randomly massacring people in the UN safe area of Sarajevo for the past three years. It was an exhilarating experience for me and it was even more exhilarating for the local people. They cannot understand why we waited three long years while 11,000 people died in Sarajevo, including 37 as recently as 28 August.

It remains to be seen whether western Governments and the British Government in particular have the commitment to see that action through to a proper conclusion. I found it utterly bizarre that Britain, a member of the UN Security Council, announced the withdrawal of our 24 Air Mobile brigade from Yugoslavia on the very day that Richard Holbrooke announced a ceasefire settlement that requires a substantially larger peacekeeping force.

The House will remember being recalled from the Whitsun recess on 31 May to debate the deployment of the rapid reaction force. We were told that the UN would get tough with the chetniks and that the new force would secure the road to Sarajevo, defend the remaining safe areas and protect humanitarian aid supplies. We all supported that proposal unanimously.

As a member of the Defence Select Committee, I hoped to see something of the British contingent in the rapid reaction force while I was in Bosnia. For whatever reason, nobody from that force could meet me officially—although I did catch sight of elements from time to time, including the 29 vehicles that were held up at a BiH Bosnian Government checkpoint at Gornji Vakuf for 17 days, which seemed to indicate a lamentable lack of liaison with the Bosnian Government.

I had a personal reason for wanting to know about the deployment of the British rapid reaction force artillery on Mount Igman. Our convoy was planning to drive into Sarajevo by that route, so I contacted the Secretary of State's office to say that we were looking forward to having the benefit of British protection on the Mount Igman road in accordance with the clear ministerial statement about the purpose of the deployment of 19 Field Regiment—the Highland Gunners—on Mount Igman.

I was truly amazed when the Secretary of State dispatched a Ministry of Defence civil servant to deliver a letter to me in Split, telling me that the Igman route should not be used by aid convoys but that we should take instead the route through chetnik checkpoints—where it is standard practice for the Serbian siege forces to impose outrageous delays and to steal up to half the aid consignments on convoys. If I had taken that advice, I would have been a prime candidate to be taken hostage when the air strikes started nine days later.

The Secretary of State, having deployed an artillery regiment on Mount Igman to protect aid convoys, was telling us that the British force would not protect that British aid convoy and that we should submit to delay and depredation by the chetniks. I was left with the impression that the Highland Gunners had been marched up Mount Igman by a worthy successor to the grand old Duke of York and that it would not be long before they were marched back down again.

Happily, that was not the end of the story. The UNHCR told us that it was keen that we should go to Sarajevo by the Igman road and that such convoys were routinely escorted by French UN forces—as they had been for some considerable time. I was able to drive 10 tonnes of food over an extremely bumpy and steep mountain track that had recently been a free-fire zone for chetnik gunners, and where Edinburgh Direct Aid had suffered casualties in April.

It was impressive to see American aircraft in action overhead and French tanks and guns firing at threatening positions. It was extremely reassuring to have a French armoured personnel carrier escorting every one of our trucks. But as a British Member of Parliament, I was left puzzled about the disposition of our own forces on the mountain. I know from personal conversations with British soldiers that they are keen to be as tough with the Serbs as they have been with the other parties, to help resolve the conflict. I pay tribute to all the British battalions that have served in areas of confrontation between Bosnian Government forces—the BiH—and the Croatian HVO forces. I say that with particular feeling because I know that the Croats are in many cases the unsung villains of the conflict.

The Bosnian people whom I met were extremely sceptical about the British commitment to a fair settlement. There is a feeling that the British Government want to appease the chetniks. I am beginning to fear that that suspicion may be well founded. My overall

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

impression is that the impetus of the British presence in UNPROFOR is not what it was during my previous visits to Bosnia. On the one hand the task of peacekeeping between the BiH and the HVO has largely succeeded and can be relaxed, which is welcome. On the other hand, the British contingent in the new rapid reaction force gives me the distinct impression of playing second fiddle to the Americans in the air and the French on the ground.

Why did the Secretary of State go to such lengths deliberately to mislead a British aid organisation about UN policy on the delivery of supplies to Sarajevo? Are the British Government in the business of appeasing the Serbs and backtracking from support for the UN mission in Bosnia? That might be consistent with some of the noises coming from Conservative Back Benchers in recent debates.

The conflict in Bosnia is a humanitarian catastrophe and represents a serious threat to that part of Europe. We cannot blame the Americans for finding it difficult to understand what is happening and being unwilling to commit ground troops. The fact that we have waited three years, while 200,000 people have died, for an American-led peace initiative is an appalling indictment of the European powers. Whether or not we like it, there are likely to be more and more problems in and around Europe in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse—problems that will be seen as European rather than Atlantic responsibilities. The time has come for a European security structure. If the Secretary of State thinks otherwise, he must be an idiot.

As national forces—particularly our own—get smaller and military equipment becomes more high-tech and expensive, there are greater and greater constraints on what can be achieved by national forces operating independently. This may not be the most propitious moment to say nice things about the French, after their outrageous tests in the south Pacific, but I believe that Britain and France are the obvious prime movers in a new European security structure. Perhaps it is natural for me, as a Scot, on the 700th anniversary of the "Auld Alliance".

The time has surely come to recognise that Napoleon Bonaparte died in 1821 and that Britain was closely allied with France in both the major conflicts of the 20th century and in the cold war. French and British military forces have a lot in common because of responsibilities inherited from their imperial past. The French have particular experience of short-warning, small-scale, long-range deployments to a wide variety of terrains and climates and France was the first European country to develop a rapid reaction force. That experience and history of willingness to intervene demonstrates a lot of common ground with our own forces.

I know that the armed forces of both countries would be keen to co-operate more closely for European security and UN-type operations. Indeed, I am pleased to learn from the defence estimates that French and British forces have been working together in 15 joint exercises despite the nationalist postures of both Governments. Of course, both nations are working closely together in Bosnia.

If we were in a closer military association with France, and perhaps with other European allies, we would be in a position to take the lead in areas vital for European security and to seek to co-ordinate nuclear weapons policy to reduce warhead numbers and prevent any further nuclear tests. I am confident that we will move in that direction with a new Labour Government in Britain.

However, the Secretary of State for Defence seems to want to pretend that we can opt out of the problem of European instability. He is presiding over drastic cuts in our military forces where even our remaining infantry units are 5 per cent. under strength. His outburst in Blackpool last week was the speech of a Minister who is unfit to govern and destined for a long spell in the wilderness.

The really disturbing undercurrent in the Secretary of State's speech was the return to that old Tory character flaw of English nationalism and irresponsible isolationism. Lack of concern for far-away countries of which we know little contributed to the fascist victory in the Spanish civil war and was notoriously wrong in Munich in 1938. I fear that it could aggravate the situation in Yugoslavia now.

The refusal to take part in a new security framework for Europe would be wrong, short-sighted and completely out of tune with the historic sense of responsibility and duty of the peoples of these islands. We should be taking the lead to help establish that new framework, and the sooner the better.

6.51 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I will not seek to follow the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) down the path that he took. I should like to focus on personnel issues—on the men and women who serve in our armed forces. It is appropriate to do so in view of the serious recruiting problems in the Army and the grim news that the voluntary redundancy programme in the RAF has been 100 per cent. over-subscribed.

I should like to concentrate on three points. The first is that it is essential that the Prime Minister's pledge that there should be no further cuts in defence should be honoured, and in a way that takes account of the rising costs of personnel. Secondly, the Bett report should be discarded because, if adopted, it would transfer our armed forces from a culture based on leadership and team spirit to a 1970s managerial one. Thirdly, I shall argue that we could achieve more within the existing budget if we made more use of reserves.

In the mid-1980s, defence spending averaged about 5 per cent. of GDP but by the year after next it will have fallen to 2.8 per cent. By all measures, expenditure on health and education has grown over that period, yet people talk about cuts. Social security expenditure has blossomed enormously—in fact, by more than the cut in defence spending. At a time when we spend a lower proportion of GDP on defence than does France, even ignoring the huge hidden cost of conscription in France, it is essential that we honour in full that commitment to defence spending.

Defence should be the first priority of any Government. When an angry general is topping the opinions polls in Russia, which still has 40,000 nuclear weapons, and when we hear of the proliferation of nuclear technology in unstable third-world countries such as North Korea and those of the middle east, it is time indeed to listen to the

people who paraded so proudly in the two parades this year and not make the same mistake as we made in the 1930s.

Mr. Llew Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brazier: Please let me make a little progress.

Overstretch of the armed forces has been repeatedly referred to already—for example, the fact that the Navy's tasks have increased by a third over a decade when the number of ships has fallen by two thirds.

When I visited a battalion of my local regiment in Northern Ireland, I discovered that a quarter of its men's families back in Canterbury were receiving counselling for debt or for marital breakdown. Morale is brittle. The forces desperately need stability, which brings me to my second point.

When the Government set up a commission to consider the career structure, manning arrangements and pay and allowances for our armed forces early last year, some of us were puzzled. It seemed to us that the armed forces were doing a good job on the reduced resources available. It was strange that we should consider reorganising them. When the report was published in April, appropriately close to April fool's day, it was immediately panned by the press and then forgotten. However, I understand that several dozen committees in the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces are considering its findings.

Michael Bett and his colleagues made a serious attempt to come to terms with the difficulty of the armed forces. They took a lot longer over their work than did Sir Patrick Sheehy on the police force. Nevertheless, I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to drop the report. It would be a disaster if its findings were implemented.

Ten years ago, I worked as the secretary of the English subsidiary of an international group. It had roughly the same number of employees worldwide as the armed forces, and we introduced proposals very similar to those that Michael Bett and his colleagues recommend. It was all there—performance-related pay, individual job appraisals and career banding.

Much of the civilian world is moving away from that approach to life. I remember the petty jealousies that resulted from the endless job assessments and the problems that were caused in that organisation. The impact of such proposals on the armed forces would be much worse.

The great Roman general Scipio said:

"Of all factors that make for success in battle, the spirit of the warrior is the greatest."

My God, where would we be if we introduced such proposals into our armed forces? The commander of a ship or regiment is not some skilled technocrat who must be appraised each year to decide how much to pay him. He is a leader and a team player. That is illustrated by the Sandhurst motto, "Serve, to lead".

We have to remember that the armed forces are not there simply to do a job. Their ultimate purpose is not even tested in peacetime and involves self-sacrifice and the willingness to give all in a war. The young fighter pilots who risked their lives in the desperate weeks of 1940 while Britain teetered on the edge of the precipice into which the rest of Europe had fallen were not driven by performance-related pay and job assessments.

There is more to the Bett report and it is difficult to exaggerate how much damage it would cause. A throwaway line in the report admits that the proposals to settle service families would be incompatible with the regimental system in the Army. Are we to tell the Black Watch, which is currently serving in Pirbright, that it will now be regionally based in Surrey because there are not enough barracks in Scotland for all the Scottish regiments? Even if we adopted a regional basing policy and settled the Black Watch in Surrey, what would happen when the regiment was moved to Germany?

Let us consider applying the regional approach to the Royal Engineers. Is a sergeant who applies to do bomb disposal in Saffron Walden supposed to settle his family there and spend the rest of his career with the Royal Engineers in bomb disposal? The truth is that that approach has been used in the Royal Navy because the whole surface fleet uses two bases in southern England. The Navy can use that approach. For a committee composed of three civilians and an admiral to suggest applying that to the Army—

Mr. Bill Walker: Or the RAF.

Mr. Brazier:—or, as my hon. and gallant Friend reminds me, to the RAF, which is spread all over Britain and has a substantial overseas base, is farcical.

The Bett report is wrong, but that is not to say that there is nothing that we can change on the personnel side. One major area of personnel policy needs a big change—the use of our reserve forces. In America, half of all uniformed personnel are reservists—even excluding regular reservists—and nearly two thirds of all fixed and rotary wing aircraft crew of the American air force and army are reservists. The Chairman of the Select Committee, in an excellent speech, referred to the fact that we had to hitch a lift with the Americans to get 24 Brigade to Bosnia. I believe that I am right in saying, too, that all the planes and ships that carried our troops were manned by reservists, who cost only one fifth the price of their regular counterparts.

Ninety thousand of the American service personnel who went to the Gulf were reservists. They included tank battalions in the US Marine Corps, fighter squadrons with the US Air Guard and an artillery brigade with the National Guard which won plaudits from our own Brigadier Hammerbech. How does our performance compare? We sent one aeromedical squadron of reservists and a few hundred individual reservists.

What is the state of our reserve forces? As a former reservist myself, I must inform the House that our regular armed forces—in spite of everything thrown at them and all the new challenges with which they have had to cope, and it has been an unsettling time for armed forces all over the world—are still in good shape. But our reserves are not. Their numbers are falling fast, among officers and other ranks. We have the worst wastage rate by far in the English-speaking world.

I have visited units in Canada, Australia and America and I have been able to see their exciting new ideas, directed as they are at almost all levels by reservist commanders. In Britain, the past four years have witnessed one mistake after another. Good units in the Territorial Army have been broken up and reorganised; bad units, for bizarre reasons, have been retained and sometimes even expanded. There has been a failure to get

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to grips with the problems with trust hospitals encountered by the medical units, whose members can experience discrimination when applying for civilian jobs.

There has also been a failure here to take advantage of the opportunities available in the aviation world—opportunities that the Americans and, to a lesser extent, the Canadians and Australians have not missed. There have been slashing cuts in the training budgets of TA units, at the same time as we have maintained the costliest administrative overheads in relation to the size of the units concerned applicable in any English-speaking country—

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Nonsense.

Mr. Brazier: If the Minister disagrees, let him ask his own officials how many permanent staff instructors and civilians there are in a British infantry battalion, as compared with those in a United States National Guard battalion or a Canadian or Australian battalion. I have visited all four, and I can tell him that they all have fewer than Britain has.

If we want to turn the situation around, we need to square up to one central issue. We still have some excellent reserve units and a proud past. One thinks of the Green Jackets Brigade, which made Dunkirk possible. Two of the three battalions involved were TA. One thinks of the heroes of Kohima—the Royal West Kent territorials, who were virtually wiped out in the battle when we turned the Japanese army around. It can be done, therefore. Unlike our English-speaking cousins, however, we do not have a reservist directing our reserve forces.

Although the House has heard me make this point before, I should like to illustrate it with a small but colourful analogy. Let us liken our regular forces to the tremendous musical and orchestral qualities of the BBC's Radio Three, which is recognised worldwide for its excellence. In that case, the TA counterpart would be Classic FM. A recent survey showed that it is the radio station most listened to by Members of Parliament. It is a wonderful organisation, but run on a basis very different from the BBC's. Do colleagues really believe that Classic FM would be the success that it is if it was organised by the BBC? Of course not. Running a good reserve force, too, is a very different discipline from running a regular force.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am delighted by my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the reservists, with whom he and I have been much involved, but will he impress on the Minister the fact that if we are to make dramatic progress with the reservists—and we must—we simply must have a reserve forces Bill in the next Session of Parliament? I know that Ministers cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech, but the House should realise the importance of passing such legislation in the coming year.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to my right hon. and gallant Friend and I thoroughly agree with him. Although legislation is necessary to make more interesting deployments possible, on its own it is not enough. We cannot legislate for team spirit, for unit spirit or for fighting spirit. Other changes are necessary, and they should be directed by a reservist director, selected from the TA, with access to Ministers and chiefs of staff. That is what happens in every American state and in Australia and Canada, where nearly all the directors are part-timers with successful civilian careers.

Over the past few years the regular forces have undergone a series of unhappy reorganisations. Much of the pain has been inevitable, as it has been all over the world, following the tremendous changes and opportunities deriving from the fall of the Berlin wall. Now, what our regular forces need above all is stability. That has to mean stable funding, including provision for the real increase in personnel costs which cannot be avoided if we are to meet our recruitment challenges. It also means not implementing the Bett report, almost all of which would be harmful to the armed forces. Finally, it means buttressing the forces with high-quality volunteer forces. We have a number of such units that show what can be done, but overwhelmingly it is not.

7.6 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not in his place, because some of what I am about to say directly concerns him. I envy him, because he has one of the best jobs in the Cabinet. In his daily political life he has to mix with and be responsible for some of the most dedicated and professional people in the United Kingdom. It therefore gives me no pleasure to say that his speech last week to his party conference was not worthy of his office. In spite of his efforts today, in rather more restrained vein, his speech of last week has largely overshadowed this important two-day debate.

In particular, I believe that the Secretary of State's references to the special services displayed a gross error of judgment. He has caused grave offence not just to the Special Air Service but throughout the three armed services, whose members are punctilious about maintaining that they serve the Crown, not any political party. There are strong signs of their considerable embarrassment that they should have been associated with what was essentially a political speech.

The references to the SAS were the more inept, since it is a regiment that deliberately shuns publicity. As recently as this summer the Ministry of Defence went to court to prevent publication of material that might be thought detrimental to the SAS and its procedures. A speech containing language to the effect, "Don't mess with Britain", is a speech containing the language of the saloon bar.

In his speeches today and last week the right hon. Gentleman made much of the Tomahawk purchase, of which I wholeheartedly approve. It is an additional capability that the United Kingdom should undoubtedly possess. But the Secretary of State would have made a much more balanced speech, then and today, if he had told his audience and reminded the House that we are about to reduce our submarines' capabilities in some respects. We are going to confine our nuclear-powered hunter-killer fleet to 12. The Upholder class, only recently commissioned, is being offered around to potential buyers. There was great disappointment in the Ministry of Defence over the summer when the Canadians decided not to take up what I understand was a most attractive offer, made to persuade them to take the submarines off the MOD's hands.

The Secretary of State mentioned the Apache helicopter. Purchase has been desirable or perhaps even inevitable since its outstanding performance in the Gulf war. In the course of the right hon. Gentleman's speech to the Conservative party faithful, and during his speech this afternoon, he made no mention of Eurofighter 2000, a European project involving Spain, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom. It is vital for the Royal Air Force and for the British aerospace industry. He made no mention of project Horizon, which will provide the successor to the type 42 frigate. The project involves the United Kingdom, France and Italy. It is another European project involving co-operation between European countries.

Why in neither speech did the Secretary of State not mention the Anglo-French air group? Why was there no mention of Anglo-French nuclear co-operation? These are illustrations of co-operation with the countries of Europe. If the foundation of the right hon. Gentleman's speech is to seek to establish the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and its Parliament and he does so by reference to what he says are possible political developments, surely he has an obligation to indicate the precise terms of the treaty of Maastricht. That was not done last week and it was not done today.

The treaty states that the European Union should assert its identity on the international scene

"in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

That is a pretty inadequate foundation for the rather extravagant language of the Secretary of State.

In an assessment of the defence role of Europe, why make no effort to analyse the current attitudes of the United States, especially among members of the Congress who were elected in 1994, who do not share the same vision of the transatlantic alliance as many of their predecessors? If we want to concern ourselves with the long-term future of security in Europe, one of the fundamental issues upon which we must pass judgment is precisely what are the long-term guarantees that the United States is willing to offer Europe.

The Secretary of State has told us that his speech at Blackpool was consistent with Government policy. That is an interesting observation. If he truly means it, it appears to some of us that his speech was not as consistent as he might have wished. In May 1994, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who is now Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*. The quotation has never been withdrawn. It was to the effect that the evolution of an EC defence policy was an inevitable consequence of the Maastricht treaty.

The former Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), said during a speech to the Franco-British Council in October 1994 that discussing European defence called for

"co-operation in practice, putting our military assets, our men, women and equipment, at the service of European defence, linked inextricably as the treaty of Maastricht provides with the Atlantic Alliance."

The Government's memorandum, which was published on 1 March, recognises that there are circumstances in which Europe may have to act on its own. Indeed, at the NATO summit in February 1994, the President of the United States assented to the notion of combined joint task forces.

Nowhere is there any proposal that suggests that Brussels should control the domestic defence policy of the United Kingdom. No political party in the United Kingdom is arguing for that. Above all, no one is telling Britain when and when not to fight. Instead of unfounded assertions about us being prevented from retaking the Falklands had some such policy been in place in 1982, perhaps the Secretary of State would have done better if he had told the Conservative party conference whether we would still have the capacity to mount an expedition of the same strength to retake the Falklands as we had 12 years ago.

The Secretary of State talks as if we have total independence. Everyone knows that the success of the Falklands campaign was based fundamentally on the intelligence resources of the United States, which were made available to the United Kingdom. Without those resources, the campaign could not have succeeded. The emphasis of political activity in north America and south America was an endeavour to persuade the United States not to make such resources available to the United Kingdom.

We should be having a discussion about the funding of defence budgets in Europe. There is a good reason for that. The United States wants to know precisely what contribution to burden sharing Europe will make if the continuing reduction in defence budgets continues. We should be asking ourselves how it will be possible to preserve a full range of capability. Does common procurement, force specialisation or financial burden-sharing provide a way of contributing to the maintenance of a full range of capability?

The truth is that we are not wholly independent in defence terms. Even as we speak we have given up our sovereignty. How have we done that? The answer is that we have entered into the treaty that establishes the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, article 5 of which provides that we are under an obligation if any one of the other 15 members is attacked to go to the support of that country, if necessary using nuclear means to provide that defence guarantee. That obligation extends to Greece and Turkey. If NATO were to expand further to the east, it would involve an extension of the guarantee to any country that joined the organisation.

That seems to reflect a substantial concession of sovereignty to NATO. Members of the Government lose little time, with some justification, in pointing out that NATO has been the most successful defence and military alliance of all time.

Mr. Llew Smith: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that in certain circumstances he would accept the use of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Campbell: I have made clear, as have Opposition Front Benchers, during defence debates over the past two or three years, that the nuclear deterrent remains part of NATO's defence policy. It is a nuclear deterrent that is governed by the two principles of minimum deterrence and use as a weapon of last resort. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me to repeat what I said a short time ago, I should say that any country that becomes a member of

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NATO becomes subject to the NATO nuclear guarantee. That seems to be a pretty substantial concession of sovereignty.

I think that it is well known that for the foreseeable future I regard a nuclear deterrent as a necessary part of the United Kingdom's defence. But two practical questions arise that we might hope to hear something about. First, what steps have been taken in relation to the overspending at Faslane to ensure that it does not happen again? I note that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) is nodding her head. Secondly, what is happening at Devonport and Rosyth? Unconfirmed reports over the past two or three months have led to a great deal of uncertainty, which is deeply damaging to the morale of both communities.

When the Government tell us that they alone have been the proper guardians of nuclear defence policy, we are entitled to remind ourselves that back in 1988 they were arguing that we had to have a follow-on to Lance. They told us that we had to have a new generation of short-range nuclear weapons. The Opposition argued against that. What happened? The answer is that our view prevailed.

Even at the beginning of this Parliament, the Government argued that we had to have a tactical air-to-surface missile with a nuclear warhead. The Opposition argued against that, and the Government had to concede. Only in the course of the past 12 months, after the acceptance that Trident could provide a sub-strategic nuclear system, did the Government concede and accept the argument of the Opposition that there was no further requirement for the free-fall bomb.

Like others, I find the Government's silence over the French nuclear testing in the south Pacific difficult to understand. If the Secretary of State did as I understood him to do in the concluding part of his speech and to refer to that great association of peoples which is the Commonwealth, I wonder why it is that we have allowed ourselves to be so estranged from our Commonwealth partners, notably Australia and New Zealand, whose response to French nuclear testing has been robust and vigorous.

Mr. Corbyn: I am pleased to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman's loud condemnation of French nuclear testing, but not two minutes ago he was saying that he supported the retention and holding of nuclear weapons as part of an overall defence package. Does he not think that it is time to get rid of all nuclear weapons, and that the logic of all the opposition to French nuclear testing is also opposition to the existence of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Campbell: The logic of the opposition to French nuclear testing is that it is unnecessary. The degree of nuclear co-operation that already exists between Great Britain and France almost certainly makes it unnecessary. If I have persuaded the hon. Gentleman that we should embark on a campaign of multilateral nuclear disarmament, I have succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is unlikely to bring about an overall reduction in nuclear weapons, which put the world in great peril. I have argued—if the hon. Gentleman had been here on other occasions, he would have heard me do so—for a third strategic arms reduction treaty and for the UK to take a lead in multilateral nuclear disarmament. Indeed, I have argued as vociferously as any that there should be no more warheads on Trident than on the Polaris system that it is to replace.

Mr. Llew Smith: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: No, I wish to make progress.

Central to the Government's stated policy is a desire to provide United Kingdom forces with the best equipment. That aspiration must be shared by every hon. Member, but it entitles us to ask some questions. When will the Royal Air Force get its first fully combat capable squadron of Eurofighter 2000? What is the up-to-date estimate of the cost of each unit? Is it true that consideration has been given to the leasing of F16s from the United States? What is the reason for that, and what would the cost be? What is the Government's prediction of the effect that such action might have on the possibility of exports? Will the decision to resume involvement in the future large aircraft programme be maintained? When will the next order be placed for type 23 frigates, and will all yards capable of building them be permitted to compete?

It was clear that the joint rapid reaction force, announced last week to a flourish of trumpets, was no different from that announced by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands last year, and, indeed, which is referred to in the White Paper that we are debating this evening and tomorrow. There is a vital question to be asked and the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, asked it, but I should like to reinforce it. Who will provide the capacity for the heavy lift of that rapid reaction force? As we have heard, 24 Air Mobile Brigade experienced considerable problems in deploying to Bosnia. Is it true that more than half its helicopters were self-deployed—that they had to fly from the UK to Bosnia?

There is hardly a senior officer in all three services who will not tell one that morale is brittle. The services desperately need a period of stability. Some of "Front Line First" and "Options for Change" will not be fully implemented before 1999. I think that there is a universal view in the House that there should be no more reductions in defence expenditure. I say again what I have said on previous occasions: Northern Ireland and a political settlement in Northern Ireland should be no excuse for a further raid on the defence budget.

The right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands said, in justification of "Front Line First", that it was an effort to cut costs, not defence. But, for whatever reason, many Army units are now operating substantially under strength. Each of the 41 infantry battalions is under strength. In particular, they lack senior non-commissioned officers, the very backbone of infantry battalions. It is estimated that, by the end of the year, the Army will be 5,000 men and women short in the infantry, cavalry and artillery regiments. How many of those units have been earmarked for the rapid reaction force? It will not be much of an effective force if the units that make it up are depleted in number.

We hear also that the Parachute Regiment may be required to enlist Gurkhas because of its failure to attract sufficient recruits. If that happens, I hope that there will

be no distinction made in rates of pay and that they will be paid precisely the same as anyone else who serves in that regiment.

There are cries of early retirement among specialists in the medical services. We all know that naval overstretch, which is referred to less frequently perhaps than Army overstretch, has become a significant problem as a result of the Royal Navy's commitments in the Adriatic.

My central criticism of the Government remains that they have still failed to place their defence resources in a proper strategic context. We must ask ourselves what are our long-term political objectives and what is the defence means by which we shall best achieve them. We need, therefore, a proper assessment of both foreign policy and defence policy. Labour Front Benchers, who offer on these occasions the expression, "a fundamental defence review", should take account of the fact that, in service terms, this raises considerable apprehension and does little for morale. I think that more explanation of what is involved and over what period would certainly be in the interests not only of Labour Front Benchers but of the armed services themselves.

Fundamental to all of this is the view that we must provide adequate resources and, if necessary, be willing to increase expenditure. That would have got a bit of a cheer at Blackpool, but the fact that the Secretary of State did not say it tells us rather more about the Government's position than all the rhetoric that brought him a standing ovation.

7.26 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Much has happened since the House went into recess. The commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war were a fitting tribute to the hero generation who saved the world from Hitler.

One month before VJ-day, I drew to the Prime Minister's attention the scandal, as I saw it, of the derisory £100 annuity accorded to the holders of the Victoria and George Crosses in recognition of their acts of heroism. He was shocked to learn of this and undertook to consider the matter. How typical of the Prime Minister's caring nature and his patriotic instinct that he should move so promptly to rectify that injustice, and I should like to express my thanks on behalf of the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association for his prompt action in dealing with it.

In Bosnia, where Her Majesty's forces have served with such distinction over the past three years or more, for once things seem to have taken a turn for the better and the chances of putting into effect a peace agreement seem to be better today than they have for a long time. The United States, at long last, has taken it upon itself to play a significant role, underpinned by its determination to use air power when required, in securing an agreement between the warring parties. I should like to pay a special tribute to Richard Holbrooke for his tireless work and exertions, which appear to be bearing fruit at the present time.

In Bosnia, in recent months, it has been shown how far a modicum of courage goes. The Serbs have been confronted with force, backed, for once, with determination by the United Nations and NATO, and it has been demonstrated that they are not 10 ft tall. We were told by armchair strategists, here and overseas and, indeed, I am sorry to say, by Ministers of the Crown, that we could not use the air power deployed to the Adriatic and in the Bosnian theatre because it would be vulnerable to Serb missiles. When it was pointed out to them that, of course, the obvious preliminary was to take out the Serb missiles, we were further enjoined that that would not be possible because that would be taking sides in the conflict, that it would make the Serbs very angry, and that they might take the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), among others, hostage. That would indeed have been a serious matter.

That none of those predictions was justified was shown when we finally abandoned the futile policy of flying top cover with NATO aircraft. That did precisely nothing for months on end, except burn expensive fuel and waste the time of the air crews. When they were used, it was in singletons or as pairs in a very limited and ineffectual way. When eventually, in recent weeks, air power was used as it should be, it had a powerful and persuasive effect on the Bosnian Serb leadership. Now the surface-to-air missiles have been destroyed and air power has been demonstrated to be an important factor, alongside the deployment of effective artillery around Mount Igman for the protection of Sarajevo. The faint hearts who predicted that the results of such a strong policy would be disastrous have, I am glad to say, been proved wrong.

What a pity that the path of courage and the judicious use of strength was not taken months, even years, ago, at the outset of the conflict. The federalists of Europe might well ponder why it is only since the United States has taken a leading role in the conflict that we have had, as an alliance, the courage to use effective force.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: If the steps that the hon. Gentleman has outlined—I agree with what he has said—had been taken, say, three years earlier, what would have been the likely outcome?

Mr. Churchill: I happen to believe that, had the initial Serb aggression been recognised for what it was—aggression backed by Serbia—and had a firm policy been adopted of tackling the Serb military installations and command centres, many lives would have been saved and much misery would have been avoided.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has been accused—not least by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—of making a controversial speech in a place called Blackpool. It must be admitted that some of my right hon. Friend's statements were deeply shocking to certain individuals. Let me quote some of them.

My right hon. Friend said:

> "By now I trust no one doubts that Britain, who has the patience to feed the hungry, has the will to confront the aggressor. We taught the Bosnian Serb generals that the slaughter of civilians will not go unpunished."

To some, that will be a shocking message: the idea that we should actually identify the aggressor and go for him, rather than standing ineffectually between the two sides and imposing an equal embargo on the victim of aggression and the aggressor.

My right hon. Friend also announced—this must have shocked those who would like us to be propelled on a federalist course in Europe—

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"to the European Court of Human Rights, who criticised the SAS action in Gibraltar, we send another clear message: don't give comfort to terrorists."

That sentiment will be echoed not only on these Benches, but in the country at large.

As for our partners in the European Union, my right hon. Friend said:

"We will not allow Brussels to control our defence policy."

Is the hon. Member for South Shields saying that a Labour Government—if the misery of one were ever to be inflicted on us again—would allow Britain's defences to be controlled by Brussels? I thought that he was at some pains to say that that was not the case.

My right hon. Friend said:

"With a Conservative Government, Britain will not join a single European Army . . . the foreign and defence policies of this country will not be dictated to us by a majority vote of a Council of Ministers."

The Labour party's policy is to move towards majority voting—and no one has any confidence that it would resist the introduction of majority voting in the field of foreign policy and defence.

Dr. Reid: First, we are opposed to majority voting on defence. Secondly, we consider this an intergovernmental issue, not an issue for the Commission. Thirdly, we are opposed to a single European army, and will not move in that direction.

Despite the hon. Gentleman's pathetic attempts to defend the vitriolic anti-European speech of the Secretary of State for Defence, none of it has any basis. Everyone is surprised: who in the House of Commons actually wants this European army? The truth is that it was the camouflage for another anti-European speech by the Secretary of State. All that amazes us is the fact that the right hon. Gentleman feels a compulsion to go around the country like a small boy telling adults that he is not frightened of the bogey man, proving to everyone that he is more British than everyone else. Unfortunately, whatever his compulsion, he ends up merely being more anti our allies than anyone else, demeaning his party and bringing the country down in regard to the great issue of our allies in Europe.

Mr. Churchill: It seems to me that the burden of what the hon. Gentleman has tried to say is that he would like to persuade the country that a Blair Government would be as stalwart in fending off the intervention of Brussels in these matters as my right hon. Friend. I do not know why he is complaining about my right hon. Friend's speech; he ought to support it. Certainly, the overwhelming majority of people out there in the country would whole-heartedly endorse my right hon. Friend's sentiments: they would not be in the least shocked by the idea that British soldiers should fight for British interests. It is difficult to envisage the day when British soldiers will die for Brussels—and I do not believe that the House will allow British forces to be sent into battle on the say-so of majority voting in Brussels.

Dr. Reid: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify one point? When British soldiers are fighting for NATO and risking their lives, where are the orders coming from, geographically?

Mr. Churchill: When British soldiers are fighting alongside our NATO counterparts, they are doing so on the authority of the sovereignty of this House of Commons. That is the way in which we intend to keep things, for so long as there is a Conservative Government. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I think that the House knows my views on seated interventions, particularly from the Front Bench.

Mr. Churchill: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When "Options for Change" and the cuts involved were implemented, Ministers assured the armed forces and the House that thereafter there would be stability. Since then, we have seen the introduction of "Front Line First". That has a long way to go before its final full implementation. It is causing enormous upheaval and turmoil. Even while those changes are still in the pipeline, the stability of our forces is threatened still further with the Bett report.

I strongly share the view of my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on what the Secretary of State should do with that report. I recognise that much time and effort has been put into it, and it may be possible to use a few of its recommendations. The broad thrust of the report has no place in the future of Britain's armed forces. I strenuously counsel my right hon. Friend to heed the old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The regimental system of the British Army, about which I do not need to lecture my kinsman and colleague on the Treasury Bench, is the envy of the world and it would be madness to tinker with it.

I warmly welcome the order for Tomahawk missiles and the earlier order for attack helicopters, but the manning and equipping of our armed forces are disturbing. In *The Times* of 12 October, Vice-Admiral Sir James Jungius stated:

"Senior officers tell us the fleet is dangerously overstretched. The Army would find it impossible to put a full strength division in the field without robbing the remaining units. The Air Force has no aircraft that are not obsolete and many are long overdue for replacement. Its only fighter aircraft, the Tornado, has significant deficiencies in that role. Reserves are at laughably low levels."

A former Parachute Regiment Colonel Commandant, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Gray recently said:

"The Army is being stretched to breaking point. Units being sent to Bosnia are an amalgamation of various regiments because they don't have enough troops of their own."

That is a serious problem that will not go away and needs to be addressed. No element is more crucial to the stability and strength of the armed forces than the stability of funding. In 1978-79, we spent 4.5 per cent. of GDP on defence. It rose to 5.3 per cent. in 1984-85 and this year it is down to 3 per cent. Two years from now it will be 2.8 per cent. While Government expenditure overall has increased by a staggering 70 per cent. in real terms since 1979, including a 108 per cent. rise in personal social services and an 82 per cent. rise in social security, defence expenditure has fallen in real terms.

It is reliably reported from Blackpool that the Chancellor is on the prowl for major budget cuts, across the board. Any socialistic equality-of-misery doctrine would be wholly inappropriate and unacceptable in the case of defence. There have already been deep cuts in the fabric and strength of our armed forces and I trust that those who hold high office in the Ministry of Defence will not tolerate any further reductions in the defence budget. Cuts will have to be sought elsewhere and I should be obliged if those holding defence portfolios will tell that to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

7.42 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I can tell the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) that socialists do not believe in equality of misery: they believe in the relief of misery and equality of opportunity, which are entirely different matters. I congratulate the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on his election as Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence. Since his election, he has been doing a splendid job, but he only borrowed my vote and if he continues to be beastly to my old Friend the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who is also my constituent, I might take it back.

I also congratulate in his absence the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who was a superb Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence and a credit to the House. I wish him well in his new appointment and I have written to him privately on those lines.

I whole-heartedly appreciate the efforts of the men and women of our front-line defence forces. I again agree with the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier)—this is becoming boring—because his comments on the Bett report were extremely well founded. I remember being in the fort at Crossmaglen when the discussion document finally got through to the men serving there. They did not like the prospect at all and, what is more, there was no place I could run to from that fort because the helicopter was not due back for two hours and we were not allowed out on to the street. It was only a marginally worse experience than having to tell my wife that I had been to Crossmaglen in the first place. She comes from Northern Ireland and the House should have heard what she had to say about my experience.

I should like to comment on the Government's procurement policies and outline my fears for my constituency. It is only just over a year since Gordon Foxley, a defence civil servant, was jailed for widely based corruption. Just one of his scams was that he managed to persuade the Army to stop acquiring artillery fuses from the Royal Ordnance factory at £6 each and to start acquiring from Junghans the DM111A fuses at £14.40 each. He also managed to persuade it to acquire the Borletti fuse from Italy. That fuse did not work in the rain and it could not work under battle conditions. We lost £12.9 million on the Junghans fuse and £15 million on the Borletti fuse. Much more important was the fact that 300 jobs were lost at a Blackburn factory, and those jobs have not been replaced. They were exported by the Government to Germany and Italy at great cost, a cost that does not even take into account the unemployment costs of those men and women who will not get their jobs back. That was all done in the name of efficiency of procurement.

As I was concerned about these matters, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Defence when it was suggested to me that there might be some problems with the contract for the 155 mm extended range bomblet shells. It was known that the Royal Ordnance factory at Birtley in my constituency was bidding but so were Giat of France—a wholly owned French Government company—Rheinmetall and TASS Industries of Israel. TASS Industries was successful in obtaining that order. That does not mean any immediate job losses, but it does mean that, effectively, in two years 14 jobs will be exported from Birtley to Israel. That is what we seem to be exporting these days.

I have not finished, because Birtley is one of the areas of highest long-term male unemployment in the north of England, which means that it has one of the highest unemployment areas in the country. Those people and their families are unfortunately destined to be a burden on the state for the foreseeable future. That means that you and I will have to pay to export those jobs to Israel when they could have been kept in this country. Birtley has such bad long-term unemployment that, although the employment office there fell under the Department of Employment's directive for office closures, I was able to persuade the then Secretary of State not to close it. My argument was based on the fact that it has such a high rate of adult male unemployment.

I now come to the bit that really worries me. I should like to quote from *Jane's Defence Weekly* of 2 September. An article by Carol Reed it is states:

"Privately owned RO and state-owned Giat are negotiating a merger of the bulk of their businesses, notably in ammunition, guns and vehicles and small arms, under a 50:50 joint venture."

Why did I spend so many hours on the Standing Committee that examined the Bill to privatise Royal Ordnance when it looks as if half of it is about to be handed over to the French Government for nothing? It will not be done at no cost, because as a result of the merger factories will close.

As early as the middle of last year, a draft letter involving Mr. Chiquet of Giat and Mr. Weston of BAe Royal Ordnance showed that Chorley would be closed at a cost of £7.2 million and that the work would be transferred to Tarbes in France. Faldingworth will close at the cost of £2.2 million and will go to Montpertius in France. Birtley in my constituency will be closed at a cost of £21 million and the work will be transferred to Tarbes and Rennes. In France only two factories will be closed. I pity the poor people of Le Mans, where closure will cost £7.1 million, and of Salbri, where the cost will be £11.9 million. That means a total cost of £33.5 million, but that is only the cost to the Royal Ordnance factories, not the cost to the British taxpayer, because, as I said, Birtley has a very high long-term unemployment rate.

I have some questions for the Government. I think that every hon. Member received a copy of a statement from British Aerospace Royal Ordnance, which states:

"The MOD continues to take the view that ammunition as a commodity can be bought freely on the open market and does not consider the retention of a comprehensive domestic capability as a necessity."

Does the MOD agree with that?

We are an island nation. I remind the MOD that during the Gulf war Ministers had in a similar act of folly transferred the production of 155 mm ammunition from Birtley to Rheinmetall in Germany, which could not make it and sold the contract on to a Belgian company. The Belgians would not supply our gunners with 155 mm ammunition for political reasons. The Government seem to be aiding and abetting British Aerospace in selling British jobs to France. What is more, they seem to be putting us in a position where we shall not be making bread-and-butter 155 mm ammunition for our guns—that means all our guns since the Abbot has been taken out—or tank ammunition if Birtley goes.

What contact has there been involving MOD civil servants or Ministers in connection with the proposed Royal Ordnance deal? What is the present status of the proposal? What will be the long-term cost caused by the

[Mr. John McWilliam]

resulting unemployment? Will the Minister assure the House unequivocally that all categories of ammunition used by our armed forces will be obtainable from British manufacturers in the United Kingdom?

If I do not receive a positive answer to the latter question, it will mean that the Secretary of State or one of his Ministers will stand at the Dispatch Box and admit that, despite the jingoistic speech that the Secretary of State made at the party conference last week, he is happy to give away our strategic defence capability. Although it might be an artillery man who fires the shell at the enemy, that artillery man would not have the shell if it were not for the men and women in our factories making the shells or the men and women who transport those shells to the front line.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman and my sympathies are with him and his constituents. Does he think that he is making an anti-European speech?

Mr. McWilliam: I am not making an anti-European or pro-European speech. It happens that under the Maastricht treaty we are entitled to self-determination in defence matters. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields made the Labour party's position perfectly plain and I agree with it. My speech is geographical—we are an island nation and, if we are entitled to our own defence capabilities, we must be able to procure our own equipment. If we cannot make it in this country, we cannot guarantee its procurement from somewhere else. The last time a Conservative Government landed us in a position where we had to do so, we could not get it and had to borrow equipment from the Americans.

To judge by the Government's track record, we have a Government who have presided over a Ministry of Defence procurement system which, according to the courts, was corrupt—Mr. Foxley is in gaol. The contract to which I referred is the only one that I have been able to find out about; I do not know what else he was involved in. Ministers did not admit to any job losses, although they were obvious. The system was corrupt and inefficient and was not run in the best interests of the United Kingdom's defence. I am concerned only with defence.

I have no doubt that the Israeli shells were cheaper. It suits the Israeli Government to keep their factories open; it is necessary to do so because of the strategic position. I can understand why the Israeli factories would make a good, keen offer and undercut British jobs. However, I cannot understand a Government who say that it is simply a matter of market forces and inevitable—they are the Government who presided over the market forces which put Gordon Foxley in gaol and which provided the incentive for him to be corrupt in the first place. If procurement had been taking place under the normal procurement systems that preceded the open market—"buy it from anyone and to blazes with British strategic capability"—this would not have happened.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Davyhulme, especially when he referred to what my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields had said. I can come to one of two conclusions—either the hon. Member for Davyhulme had written his speech before he heard what my hon. Friend said or someone has fitted the hon. Gentleman with an implant that inverts the sense of everything that anyone says. What he said that my hon. Friend said was the exact opposite of what my hon. Friend had in fact said, which is strange.

I welcome the part of the Secretary of State's speech that dealt with Northern Ireland. As someone who has family there and who spends a fair bit of time there I know that the change to a more normal society is to be welcomed and encouraged. Anything or anyone who interferes with the peace process deserves the condemnation of every Member of Parliament. However, we are not there yet.

We have to pay tribute to the forces serving in Northern Ireland. Oddly enough, they are serving in worse conditions than before. They are confined to barracks; they are getting some training, and that training is good, but it is not what it used to be and it is a trial to them. To hear the Secretary of State say that the emergency tour interval will again not average 24 months because manpower is not up to it must be dreadfully disappointing.

I stress that people are fed up with the implications of the Bett report, which is nonsense. I remember Sir Michael Bett when he was merely Mike Bett of the British Telecom board and I know some of the stunts that he tried to pull then.

Let us permit the morale of our troops to rise. Let us remove the threat of Bett, give them a period of stability and afford them with the dignity and support that they deserve for their splendid work for this country.

7.57 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): We have heard one whinge after another about defence procurement and the lack of equipment. Following "Options for Change", we began to cut our defence forces, as many other countries also did. We then heard speech after speech saying that it was wrong and wicked, and there was the usual flannel about a defence review. "Options for Change" was a defence review.

Dr. David Clark *indicated dissent.*

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Yes, it was, and I shall tell the hon. Gentleman why it was. General Vincent and others master minded that very good review of the needs and strategy of the British armed forces and the tactics that would be required in a period following the end of the cold war. He revealed something vital; that we did not need such large forces—the country would not stand for it—and needed to reduce the manpower. In so doing, however, we had to end up with a force which was capable of being flexible and providing a rapid response and a force that was much higher tech. That scenario was replicated by the NATO chiefs of staff about a year later. There could not have been a keener or finer analysis of the needs of the armed forces of a democratic power playing a useful and important part in NATO.

We hear much praise of our armed forces' ability to respond, their courage and bravery, their equipment and the way in which they use it. That is not to say that there are no deficiencies. I had not intended to go into great detail about the equipment on order but I do not recall some Opposition Members arguing against the completion of the Vanguard Trident programme; nor did I note that they criticised the 1994 order of type 23 Duke class frigates.

In 1994, there was a substantial order for 44 Merlin helicopters. There was the order for the Army this year of the Apache helicopter. That was not done on the cheap. We bought it from abroad, but we made very sure—as we always do with procurement—that there was plenty for British manufacturers to contribute. There was also the order for the Army of Challenger tanks. Some of us do not agree that we need that number of tanks and would rather have more helicopters, but the order certainly provided plenty of jobs in Leeds. There is the update of the Tornado aircraft and the mid-life update of 142 support helicopters. There are also the 35 support helicopters ordered in 1994 and, of course, the Eurofighter programme.

On the question of procurement, I do not simply want to know the procurement practices for purely British forces, which are based on our own analysis of what we need out of our own resources—I want to know about procurement that we believe can be done on an international basis, such as the European fighter aircraft. We get into the awful position of the costs being shared between three or four nations, which leads to the sort of inefficiency, over-cost and bad development that there is with the EFA. A squalid row is developing between the Germans and ourselves about who should pay what and how much each should get from the sales of the aircraft when it is finally in production. I hope that the Government will concentrate on that area, rather than on all the other twaddle that we have heard today.

On balance, we have a pretty good record, but that does not mean that there are not some grounds for criticism of some of the impacts of the reduction in defence expenditure. I warmly support many of the courageous comments, made on the basis of detailed knowledge, by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), which was reflected in the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). I strongly support the concerns that they expressed about the impact of overstretch. I have little doubt that that is having a serious and growing effect on morale. That is why today I welcomed enormously my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement that he understands the problem well and that there should be a period of stability to digest the problem. I also support the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury about reservists.

The two main themes running through our debate today will have a vital effect on our strategy and on our future defence estimates. By chance, those themes were discussed by NATO parliamentarians at their annual autumn session between 6 and 9 October in Turin. That session attracted delegates from central and eastern Europe and from Russia. The first theme is European membership of NATO and the construction of the European pillar. The second is the enlargement of NATO to involve countries from central and eastern Europe.

There was a time when people questioned whether NATO had a future. However, I am sure that we all agree that since the end of the cold war NATO has proved itself to be remarkably flexible. Of course there have been mistakes, such as cost overruns, but NATO's flexibility is truly amazing. It has a future, but anybody who believes that also knows that national sovereignty is mixed in with that. What sort of loss of national sovereignty would there be? We know that in the changed world that we now face our North American allies will not always wish to be involved in what we call non-article 5 military operations in Europe. They concede that there will be activities that European nations will want to conduct on their own—but, we hope, with the support of the supreme command.

European countries need to be better able to act together in peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and crisis management. That is why the Government support the strengthening of the Western European Union operational capability—something I strongly support—not as a separate organisation, but separable when it wishes to act in the interests of what we perceive to be basically a European problem. That is quite sensible.

Given the obvious limitations of the defence resources of all countries, if we in Europe are to act as the European pillar of NATO—acting on what we believe to be the interests of European countries—it does not make any sense to try to build up an organisation separate from NATO and which replicates the assets available to NATO. No continental western European country, whether or not in NATO—France not being in NATO—would be willing to support the resources that would copy what NATO already has. That is where the problem starts.

Some countries, in seeking a more distinct European identity, envisage a European pillar that would be separate. Some of them see the role of the European pillar drifting, in time, towards a tie-up with the European Union. Some see it as a federal tie-up. From the speeches by hon. Members on both sides of the House, it is clear that no one wants a federal tie-up. Why, then, is there an argument? The French—certainly the Frenchmen I meet—always argue that in the end the extent of any sovereignty they surrender or any military activity in which they become involved must be a matter for France. Of course, in many ways the French want some significant reorganisation of their relationship with the European pillar of NATO. I think that, in the end, they would regard it as moving towards a European pillar of a united European Union.

What about the Germans? They take the view—perhaps this is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is suspicious—that, although their Defence Minister has said, without America stability never has been and never will be available; and the German commander of the Eurocorps has said:

"There is no intention of building up an autonomous European military structure in parallel with NATO."

The German-American relationship is very strong at the moment. Nevertheless, as their Chancellor Kohl has said, Germany is pressing for a more federal defence structure.

I can understand why those who are suspicious of a move towards a federalist structure should make statements critical of such a move. They do not think that it will work. That is the distinction between those who say we should never discuss these matters in purely sovereignty terms and the impression that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gives that we want to act unilaterally. There was nothing in his speech to suggest that. He simply implied that there are people in Europe who want to move closer to a European Union that eventually would be dominated by a federal structure, which would be the end of the intergovernmental way that we structure our common defence responsibilities.

Whatever view one may take about the language—and I do not intend to go down that road—we blind ourselves if we think that there are not people in Europe who want to resist that process, just as there are people who want to

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

move down that road. Therefore, we must argue the case for our belief that a federal tie-up is the wrong way to go about matters. I do not doubt for one moment that a federal defence system is on the cards in the foreseeable future—perhaps within decades. We would have to go well down the road towards co-operation on a wide range of issues, and probably in a rather different world than we have today, before we could accept that sort of structure—one that was eventually accepted in the United States.

That is especially true as we have the system proposed by NATO, an example of its flexibility, of joint command task forces. As we have seen in Yugoslavia, such a force would enable the allies to work together more successfully—including, I might say, a French general.

If one goes to the NATO headquarters near High Wycombe one finds a stalwart commanding presence of a French senior officer. Obviously he does not want to work in the integrated command of NATO, but he is there, he goes through all the simulated exercises, and in due course one hopes that the French will work happily in that direction with us.

If we want to accept a joint command task force, it must be recognised that the ground rules on how to bring them into operation on a European-NATO basis, so that they could help the Western European Union, must be settled. We have to settle the dispute that still reigns and must still be decided about to what extent the supreme allied commander—an American soldier—has the final right of veto. I think that we can solve that problem, but I tell the House that one can talk until the cows come home trying to convince a Frenchman of it. We must overcome their suspicions on that score. We have to solve the problem, because, if it hangs over us for too long, it can only sour NATO and European relationships.

My final point concerns enlargement, which I think is broadly welcomed by hon. Members of all parties, but which also has its own problems. It is absolutely right that we should try to keep up the momentum. I know that the United States wants that. Certainly, as a prerequisite, we must work out an agreement with Russia. However I accept that we are not ready for enlargement. The worst thing that could happen would be to jump into the process too quickly. That is beginning to be appreciated by some of the central European countries which see that the partnership for peace proposals are not a placebo to compensate them for delaying entry.

One only has to consider the list of activities to promote closer military ties, facilitate transparency and national defence planning and peacekeeping to recognise the importance of partnership for peace. I received a note from the Hungarian embassy this morning. There are at least 23 areas in which the Hungarians have co-operated in the partnership for peace processes which were launched in 1994.

The future of the European defence identity and enlargement provide difficult problems for us, and they will be considered very carefully by our American friends. What concerns me more than anything is not the challenge to our statesmanship but the attitude of the new generation of Americans, especially the new arrivals in the Congress who have grown up since the reasons for NATO were established and acted on.

The American Government, their politicians, economists and business men, who I meet regularly, the guy in the street too, expect Europe to act more positively and to do more—not more as they did in the cold war, by spending more money on arms and putting more troops on the ground, but by doing more to work out our priorities, to prepare plans on crisis management, for peacekeeping and for peace enforcement, and for Europeans to settle their differences. It is a tall order, but so was the alliance in the making.

8.12 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Although I am glad to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), my speech will concern my constituency.

RAF Sealand in my constituency is now the RAF's only deep avionic repair asset. It supports the majority of the aircraft electronics critical to all three of our armed services, down even to a level as deep as that carried out in industry. During the Falklands and Gulf wars, and today in our operations over Bosnia and Iraq, RAF Sealand has played a crucial part in keeping our aircraft in the air. Time and again, the existence of RAF Sealand has proved crucial to our national interest. Yet it appears that the Government are hellbent on risking all of that by offering Sealand up to industry—possibly to the lowest bidder that comes along.

The debate on the market testing of Sealand has been going on for at least three years to my knowledge, and it will take at least another year to complete. There are clear signs in my constituency that that is causing enormous hardship and great uncertainty among those working there. That is their only reward for loyal, dedicated and very efficient service to the Crown. The uncertainty is also having a major impact on gaining future business from the many foreign manufacturers keen to use Sealand as their repair agency. It is all due to the long, bureaucratic and wasteful market-testing process, which is costing the taxpayer a large amount of money and reaping no obvious benefits at all.

RAF Sealand has a long history of continual improvement. I ask the Minister why such a strategic asset is not being set savings targets, benchmarked against industrial best practice, instead of exposing our armed forces to the risk, and the taxpayer to the expense, of such a flawed market-testing programme. I report that the unease and the anxiety at RAF Sealand is corrosive. There we have the jewel in the crown of the RAF avionic repair assets. We have a world leader in my constituency in Wales—why risk it? Why such an auction? Why risk a strategic national asset on the altar of what appears to be political dogma only? The Government must be faulted in this respect.

In our local newspapers over the past weekend, an advertisement was printed which affected the 1,500 uniformed and civilian employees at RAF Sealand. The advertisement said:

"Personnel for Support Contract RAF Sealand".

It was inserted by Brown and Root Services. In effect, it was asking the people who work at RAF Sealand to apply for their own jobs against the decision on market testing which we know shall not be taken until next year. So

members of the work force, of whatever kind, are angry. The advertisement is scandalous and it has angered everyone at RAF Sealand.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My hon. Friend may recall that, in a debate on the Air Force earlier this year, I suggested to the Minister that the Air Force should keep sufficient capacity to be able to serve as an intelligent customer. Would it not be reasonable to suggest that the one thing which should be retained is Sealand, not least in view of the fact that three years ago I challenged the Minister to visit my hon. Friend's constituency following a visit that I paid to Sealand?

There I met personnel who had managed, in a matter of days, to produce a gadget that allowed our Tornados to fly to the Gulf. The process would have taken at least 15 or 16 weeks in the private sector. If they had come from any other source, each of the gadgets produced by the men at Sealand over one weekend would have caused those Tornados to be delayed for 17 weeks. Is it not utterly irresponsible to take such action with regard to RAF Sealand?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority on RAF matters and I know that the House knows that he is no mean navigator after spending some years alongside the RAF in one of the courses that he undertook. I was glad of his intervention, and his visit to RAF Sealand was well received.

Still with RAF Sealand in mind, I would like to refer to the astonishing possibility of our own Ministry of Defence leasing United States F16 aircraft. I hope that in any subsequent winding-up speech there will be some rebuttal of that possibility. None the less, all 1,500 in the work force to which I have referred are very worried that such leasing may take place. If a decision is made to lease American F16 aircraft and withdraw F3 Tornado aircraft from front-line squadrons, there could be a reduction in the work load at RAF Sealand which could lead to dozens of job losses if no replacement work is forthcoming. RAF Sealand could lose Tornado avionic work consisting of the electrical, instrument, radio and radar elements which make up the Tornado avionic package.

Leasing American F16s or other aircraft could be more expensive than the Tornado mid-life update when all contributing cost factors are accounted for. So I would expect a full financial cost analysis and appraisal as well as listing of the unemployment costs of the loss of work and other social costs brought about by the cessation or severe curtailment of the Tornado work load.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No. Time is of the essence. I shall not give way in this constituency speech.

Britain's European partners in the Tornado project and especially the Italian air force, which is about to take delivery of its first Tornado F3, would not take too kindly to the British withdrawal from continued development of the aircraft. It must further place in doubt the commitment to the EF2000. The loss of the EF2000 would also spell the end of the British aircraft industry as designers and builders of original and indigenous aircraft.

Indirect costs associated with leasing such as pilot and ground crew training, necessary ground and support equipment required to operate the aircraft and spares provision will all need to be taken into account. RAF Sealand's particular concern is whether the new aircraft's avionics will be serviced by the RAF to third-line level or, as is more normal with leased equipment, returned to the American manufacturer for servicing work. I urge the Government to make a speedy statement so that my constituents at RAF Sealand may be put out of their misery and anxiety.

The Minister will know that the Ministry of Defence flies some 25 British Aerospace 125s. He may also know that they are made in my constituency. He may not know that the Raytheon jet aircraft workers who make that machine face the loss of their jobs. Two years ago, the then British Aerospace workers who made the 125 were sold lock, stock and fuselage by British Aerospace to Raytheon, an American company. Now we face a desperate struggle to hold on to the remaining jobs at the factory where the 125 was and still is produced.

Instead of producing an aeroplane in the future, we have been asked to plan to be the servicing centre for the 125. Since the Ministry of Defence has more than two dozen 125s in its ownership, I suggest to the Minister most sincerely that the contract for the servicing of those aircraft should come to my constituency. After all, it was the British Government who permitted the sale to an American company of a British company which made a British aircraft. The consequence of that is not only a loss to Britain but the loss of many jobs in my constituency. Those jobs are arguably the most skilled and the best paid in Wales. Certainly, there could be no more loyal, able, co-operative and productive work force in the land.

I believe that I make a reasonable proposition to the Minister. I hope that, at an appropriate time, I can bring a deputation from my constituency to see him. I hope that it may be at the soonest possible time that is mutually convenient. The Minister nods assent. I am grateful to him. Will the Secretary of State for Defence or the Minister of State consider visiting the plant to see this magnificent machine now in production? If they did so, we would be very grateful.

I wish to make a point about the future large aircraft. It may not be known that my constituents are employed to the tune of 2,200 at British Aerospace Broughton, where they make the wings of the airbus. They were utterly disappointed when Her Majesty's Government decided to buy the Hercules rather than the FLA. I want an absolute guarantee from the Government that the FLA will be favoured in the next RAF tranche of transporter purchases. That would be a boost to my airbus workers, who assuredly would make the wings of the FLA, as they now do for the very successful airbus family.

If the Ministry of Defence backed the future large aircraft, my airbus constituents would have a very secure future. I want the Government to say that they will rejoin the FLA programme, without any ifs or buts. I remain anxious about the impression that we give to our French and German partners. They are sceptical about our commitment to the FLA. My fear is that France and Germany might exclude Britain from the FLA programme if we dither further. I hope to hear from Ministers a decision that would be helpful to British airbus workers. After all, it was Britain's Government who decided not to buy the European attack helicopter. That left our European allies somewhat dismayed.

Will the Ministry of Defence keep the British aerospace industry alive? It has the power of life and death over that industry. The industry has more skills and more

[Mr. Jones]

employees than any other British industry. The British aerospace industry has a magnificent record in exports, but without the Eurofighter 2000 and the FLA it is conceivable that the industry will bite the dust some time early in the next century. Our great rivals, the United States companies, have fatter research subsidies and a bigger internal market. It is a wretched prospect for Great Britain not to be able to continue to manufacture complete aircraft. It would be awful if we were reduced to subordinate parts manufacturers. That is a real prospect if decisions are not taken by Ministers in the near future.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made some remarks, with which I agree, about the speech at Blackpool of the Secretary of State. What I found astonishing about that outrageous speech was the presence and attitude of the British Prime Minister alongside the Secretary of State as he made it. I was astounded when I saw our Prime Minister leading the applause. I wondered what the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), would have done had he been sitting alongside such a Secretary of State making such a speech. I believe that he would have pulled the plug. We have talked of Lord Home, who was truly a gentleman. I believe that, had he been sitting on the platform, he would have received that speech with icy contempt. Surely, all of us in the House will acknowledge that the Secretary of State did the defence industry and the interests of Britain a grave disservice.

8.28 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): For the past two or three years I have been hors de combat in terms of speaking in defence debates because I was parliamentary private secretary to the Defence Secretary. It is a great relief to be able to speak again in a defence debate. During that time, there have been tremendous changes, starting with "Options for Change" followed by the defence costs study. We have had a period of great instability. I believe that now we can look forward to a period of great stability. We shall soon be able to say that we have smaller, but far better, armed forces.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) went through the forward equipment programmes for the Army. He mentioned Challenger 2, Apache and the AS90. He went through the forward equipment programme of the RAF and spoke about the European fighter aircraft. As for the Navy, he mentioned the landing platform helicopter, landing platform docks, Duke class frigates and the Horizon project.

Anyone who considers the defence equipment procurement programme will notice that there is a great deal on order, a great deal is arriving, and there is a great deal to look forward to. I therefore completely reject the remarks of some of my colleagues and some Opposition Members who said that the procurement budget has been very adversely affected. Quite the reverse is the case, and I am sure that, when the Minister for Defence Procurement replies to the debate tomorrow, he will say precisely that.

In my constituency, I have the chance to meet service men and women regularly, especially at RAF Marham. Marham is now a centre of excellence. It is the headquarters of the Royal Air Force's reconnaissance capability. At the moment, 2 Squadron is on duty in Turkey at Incirlik on Operation Warden. No. 13 Squadron is on standby to replace it. Day in, day out, 39 Squadron flies over Bosnia, with its high-level photographic equipment. Those airmen have very high morale because they have jobs to do and they get on with those jobs.

If one looks round RAF Marham, as I do regularly, one sees for oneself the amount of investment that has gone into that air base during the past few years or so. Since the reconnaissance capability has moved there, two new reconnaissance intelligence centres have been built. There is now a mobile Tornado reconnaissance exploitation facility. I understand that, next year, a new tactical armaments squadron of 80 personnel will be set up at RAF Marham.

When one looks at any military base, one sees a great deal of change taking place, but much of it is in new infrastructure, new buildings and new tactics and techniques. If one goes down a road in my constituency one reaches RAF Sculthorpe, which has had a big question mark hanging over it for a long time, since the United States air force decided that it would be surplus to its requirements. I am very relieved that 24 Air Mobile Brigade will be using Sculthorpe as part of its training infrastructure, so it will not be too long before Apaches are flying in and around Sculthorpe. It will be a very positive military presence on that base.

Our local regiment, the Royal Anglians, has been in Bosnia recently. It has been in Northern Ireland and wherever it goes, it distinguishes itself substantially, and follows in the traditions of the Royal Norfolks.

Like every other hon. Member, I had a chance to attend a VJ-day parade in my constituency. On parade were very many Royal Norfolk veterans who had been prisoners of war in the far east, and to see those men who suffered so much during that period of captivity was greatly moving. It was especially moving to notice the complete lack of bitterness or resentment. Of course those former prisoners will never forget, but I find extraordinary what they have forgiven already, and the extent to which they have got on with their lives.

I also find it strange that although the Japanese Government made a small provision for the former prisoners of the allied powers—that was back in 1948—since then, nothing has been done although the Japanese economy has become incredibly powerful and strong. I do not think it is asking too much of the Government to put strong pressure on the Japanese Government to pay up just a little bit more to surviving prisoners of war and to widows of prisoners of war, because there are not many in this country and a small amount would go a long way to relieve their suffering.

Mr. Mackinlay *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bellingham: I am very pleased to see the hon. Gentleman nod his head, because I believe that there is all-party agreement on that issue.

The morale and the commitment of the service men and women who are based in Norfolk or who come to Norfolk is high. I often wonder what they think of politicians, and I believe that most service men and women are deeply cynical and sceptical of politicians. If they have a look at the Treasury Bench, they see a young Secretary of State who, within weeks of going into that position, found himself having to take very difficult decisions in Bosnia.

Because of the competence and leadership that he showed on that occasion, he did himself no end of good and built up a great deal of support in the armed forces.

We have a Minister of State for the Armed Forces who is without doubt the most popular person in that job since the job was created and we have as a Minister of State for Defence Procurement a Member of Parliament who is probably the brightest person in the House, and someone of great competence.

Mr. Mackinlay: He does not have a seat, though.

Mr. Bellingham: He has very fortunately secured a nomination for a seat in Hampshire, which I am sure he will win handsomely at the next election, and he will remain in the job that he does so well after the election.

If those same service men and women have a look at the Opposition Front Bench, what do they see? They see four Members of Parliament who I think are committed, who are keen to do their best for the armed forces. However, I believe that they have difficulty in getting away from their past. One cannot run their names through the police computer, but one can run their names through the *Hansard* computer. If one has a look at the *Hansard* computer, one sees that they all do have a past.

Two of them, the hon. Members for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), were fully paid-up members of Labour Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. All four of them have signed various early-day motions in the past, on Nicaragua, attacking America.

Early-day motion No. 202 of December 1988, which the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) signed, sympathised with the demonstrations in Malta and Australia against the British aircraft carrier Ark Royal because it was apparently carrying nuclear weapons. He has signed endless early-day motions.

We look back and we read speeches that those people made in the House. In 1986, the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was demanding that the Opposition proceed without delay in its national campaign against Polaris, Trident, cruise missiles and United States nuclear bases in Scotland. If one examines their past, one repeatedly finds previous convictions.

There were far too many signatures on wild EDMs, there was far too much support for zany, politically correct causes, far too much outspoken conduct in favour of anti-American organisations and too much in the way of misjudgment. However much their hearts may be in this now, one has only to point members of the armed forces at what those Members of Parliament have done in the past.

Mr. Corbyn: I am most grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. Before he gets completely carried away with his trip down memory lane of early-day motions—I could quote many back at him—perhaps he could tell us what the Trident submarine system is for, why this country insists on possessing nuclear weapons and against whom they are aimed. The public as a whole need to know why so much of their money is being wasted on these appalling and, frankly, useless weapons, which can do nothing but enhance the insecurity of the world.

Mr. Bellingham: I am very interested by what the hon. Gentleman says. He ought to have referred to the document that I have in my hand, which we are debating tonight, "Stable Forces in a Strong Britain", the defence estimates. It sets out the arguments for having an independent nuclear deterrent, for procuring Trident, in very great detail. I shall not repeat what is in the document, but I think that the hon Gentleman's questions should be addressed to the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen.

Those spokesmen ought to have a close look at a letter that was in *The Guardian* recently, from one Frank Allaun, who is president of Labour Action for Peace, and one Ron Huzzard. They were querying in great detail the announcement that the Government were going to spend money on the Eurofighter. They were asking questions about the Bowman contract. They were asking questions about the Trident contract and they were saying what the hon. Gentleman was saying. Their letter said:

> "Who is the new enemy that justifies so much of this country's public expenditure being used for military purposes"?

It is not very difficult to look behind the facade of the Labour Front Bench and to see people such as the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and his friends such as Ron Huzzard and Frank Allaun.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am sure that the whole House will appreciate the avid research that he has carried out to identify pacifists, conscientious objectors and anti-militarists. I commend to him page 25 of the biography of one of his colleagues, the Secretary of State for Defence. I shall briefly read two sentences:

> "Malcolm Rifkind was the first Tory defence secretary never to have served in any of the armed forces, even as a conscript."

Then it continues, on the basis of the evidence:

> "Michael Portillo may well be the first former conscientious objector to be placed in charge of the nation's defences by a Tory Government."

Can we look forward to the Secretary of State being outed as a conscientious objector by the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Bellingham: There are sinners around who have repented, and my right hon. Friend has obviously repented through years of service to his party and to his Government. However, there are people behind the hon. Member for Motherwell, North who have not repented; they are nagging at his shoulder and trying to undermine all that Opposition Front Benchers are doing. Whatever Labour Front Benchers say about their beliefs now, I remind them that, while it is very easy to give up what they have believed in the past, upon coming to office it would be even easier to give up those things which they have taken on board recently and in which they have said that they believe.

However difficult the changes have been and however destabilising the last few years, members of the armed forces know that they can trust the Tories on defence. One of the reasons why they cannot trust Labour is that, in the past few years, we have seen Opposition Members waging a malicious and spontaneous campaign to undermine some of our military traditions. Time and again, Opposition questions on the Order Paper refer to service men and women and their sporting activities and official service residences, and to the boarding school allowance. The questions refer to officers in the armed forces who, for example, ski for their regiments, who play polo or golf on Royal Air Force bases and who might even enjoy a day's hunting in their own free time.

[Mr. Bellingham]

The hon. Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Leeds, Central have put down hundreds and hundreds of questions about extra-military activities, and those questions have cost the Ministry of Defence thousands of pounds to answer. I think that that reveals a "little Englander" attitude. I believe strongly that, if members of the armed forces do not have those extra-military activities, their morale will suffer. I do not think that it is any coincidence that those regiments that win the live firing contests in Canada or those units in Germany that take on other NATO forces and beat them hands down are the same regiments that win the European Army skiing championships and polo and riding competitions. If we take away those extra-curricular activities, we shall undermine the morale of the armed forces.

That is why, when push comes to shove—as it will at the next election—I think that members of all three branches of the armed forces will realise that they cannot trust Labour. That is why I do not intend to trust what Labour has said tonight. I trust what is in the defence estimates, and tomorrow night I shall vote with Her Majesty's Ministers.

8.42 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I regard some of the criticisms levelled at Labour Front Benchers by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) as compliments, and I shall probably refer to them later in my speech.

I believe that it is correct that one of the first issues that we should debate in depth after the recess is Government defence expenditure, which this year is about £21.5 billion. However, if we examine the total figure since 1946, we are talking about defence expenditure of about £990 billion at current prices. The Government's defence expenditure is one of the most important issues that we face.

The debate will highlight the shortcomings of many Government statements, which will surely follow in the months ahead, announcing cuts in public services and welfare benefits. Each time such cuts are announced, hon. Members should ask why they are necessary. How can the Government justify their present defence expenditure while they inflict savage cuts in public services upon which the most vulnerable people in our community depend? Do the Government not realise that investment in those services would make life far more civilised for not just the most vulnerable but for each and every one of us, while investment in the nuclear weapons industry destroys that opportunity?

That opinion is shared by many senior Labour figures who five years ago voted against the leadership's desire to slow down the pace and scale of the arms cuts. My hon. Friends and others wanted to see those resources redistributed to social priorities instead—and that is the argument that I am putting forward tonight. The victims of the nuclear arms race are not just the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but everyone who could have lived in a more civilised and dignified world if that money had been spent differently.

We should consider also the skills, talents, creativity and sweat that have gone into producing nuclear weapons for war. Those precious human resources could have been used to make life on earth far more dignified. We could develop medical science to combat horrendous diseases, find more efficient ways of feeding the hungry and develop energy forms that do not pollute but work in harmony with the earth. The list is endless. They are not mere dreams but a recognition of what is possible and necessary. A world that is threatened continually by a nuclear holocaust—which we can only begin to imagine—can never be free.

If our friend Bob Cryer had been alive today, he would certainly have participated in the debate. In 1981 he posed a question on that subject to which he did not receive an answer, so I am sure that he would want me to raise it again tonight on his behalf. He asked the Minister whether he could explain how nuclear weapons defend freedom and liberty when their use will be undertaken by a small elite and will lead to the mass extermination of the people of this nation and elsewhere. That question was not answered in 1981 and it deserves and demands an answer in 1995. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) later advanced an alternative view. In 1986 he was reported at a book launch as saying that at the next election there would be a choice between two versions of patriotism, with the Conservatives willing to spend money on the Trident missile system and Labour dismissing the nuclear deterrent as obsolete.

I was recently privileged to address a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament rally in Trafalgar square. It was a privilege for me because CND—perhaps more than any other organisation—has campaigned consistently for a nuclear-free world. If any hon. Members wish to join it in that struggle—or if the membership of any of my hon. Friends have lapsed—they can do so by writing to 162 Holloway road, London.

The CND rally that I addressed was held to protest against French nuclear tests. One of the placards carried at that demonstration read "Liberté, egalité, fraternité" and those words were replaced with "Arrogance, selfishness and indifference". Those words apply not only to the French nuclear tests but to those countries and individuals whose actions in supporting nuclear weapons—sometimes in the name of freedom, national security or whatever slogan seems appropriate at the time—threaten our beautiful world.

Editorials in the *Observer*, *The Independent* and *The Scotsman* have admitted to being somewhat perplexed about recent developments. *The Scotsman* stated:

> "There has still not been any satisfactory answer to the question why Britain continues to enhance its nuclear potential with the Trident missile system, at a time when the major nuclear powers are engaged in a process of cutting down on their arsenals. Even by its own logic, Trident is a system without a purpose . . . there is no potential aggressor against whom such a system could be used.
>
> Indeed, nuclear weapons in general have been signally unsuccessful in preventing conflict".

That was recognised as long ago as 1984 when Labour's NEC appointed a working party which published a sensible pamphlet entitled "Defence and Security for Britain". It included the following words of wisdom:

> "We require a true defensive deterrence . . . a moment's thought would show that nuclear weapons which are the most provocative and aggressive weapons ever invented by man could have no part in such a genuine defence policy.
>
> We can take our own independent stance of de-escalation. Cancelling the absurd and dangerous programme is one such step."

Of course that was right. If nuclear weapons are a deterrent, by definition they should deter, but how have nuclear weapons deterred all the wars since the end of the second world war? It is estimated that 25 million people have died in those wars. How have nuclear weapons deterred the war in the Falklands, the war in the Gulf and the present conflict in the former Yugoslavia?

Even if I thought that there were enemies in other lands plotting some nuclear confrontation with us, I could never agree to the use of nuclear weapons. Although I am not a pacifist, I do not believe that I have the right to take away from my children and, I hope in years to come, my grandchildren the opportunity of avoiding the mistakes of our generation and creating a better world.

I am interested to hear whether both Front-Bench spokesmen are willing to make similar declarations, and if not, why not. The editorial I mentioned in *The Scotsman* concluded:

"In this year of all years—the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—Britain should consign Trident to where it belongs, to the past."

Others have arrived at similar conclusions. They include Sir Ronald Mason, the former chief scientific adviser to the MOD who chaired the working group that originally advocated Trident, and Sir Nigel Bagnall, former Chief of Defence Staff, who came out in opposition to Trident. The former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, apparently told Field Marshal Bagnall that he was wrong to criticise Britain's heavy investment in the nuclear industry when he raised the matter with her as long ago as 1985. Field Marshal Bagnall was right then, and he is right today.

It is worth putting on record how a large nuclear weapons programme can get completely out of hand if Parliament is denied the right to retain close scrutiny over expenditure on a regular basis. It should not be forgotten that the financial cost of Trident will not be £11.682 billion, as quoted in the Defence Select Committee report, but a figure perhaps five times greater after operating, refitting and decommissioning costs are taken into consideration. I made that point in last year's debate.

Any hon. Member who doubts that should consider what Sir Ronald Mason pointed out—that the lower construction cost figure ignores the lifetime cost which he put at between £40 billion and £50 billion. Can the Minister explain the massive discrepancy between that figure and the MOD estimate of £17.7 billion? I was interested to read an answer given in 1981 by the then Defence Secretary, now Sir John Nott, who said that the cost of the four Trident submarines would be between £4.5 billion and £5 billion.

I wish to make some comments on the role and the problems of the MOD Atomic Weapons Establishment, now contracted to the American company Root and Brown. On 14 August, the MOD made available to hon. Members via the Vote Office a document entitled "The Atomic Weapons Establishment—contractual indemnities". That is not a particularly exciting title, but the contents make interesting reading. The document states that the MOD could not find a satisfactory private insurance company to cover the operation of AWE, so it asked Parliament to approve the extension of indemnities to AWE to the year 2000 in four separate areas.

I object to the further attempt to dump on the taxpayer the cost of nuclear weapons and to my not being able to register my objection to the minutes, as they were made available to hon. Members during the recess.

Not only do the Labour party, campaigning organisations such as CND and Greenpeace and I have no faith in nuclear weapons, but neither does the insurance industry. In the past, some of my hon. Friends and I have often been critical of the insurance industry, but we know that it recognises a good deal when it sees one. Even the insurance industry has reached the conclusion that nuclear weapons are a bad deal.

I suggest that the Government have reached similar conclusions, or why did they choose to make the minutes available in the recess when there was no opportunity to debate and to scrutinise the figures? If no one has any faith in nuclear weapons, why do we not scrap them?

At the end of the month, the International Court of Justice will decide the legality or illegality of nuclear weapons. If that is not a good enough reason to scrap nuclear weapons, 24 October is the 50th anniversary of the birth of the United Nations. What better way would there be to recognise that day and to celebrate that anniversary than to scrap nuclear weapons of war?

Earlier this year, the 170-odd member states of the non-proliferation treaty agreed to extend that treaty indefinitely as part of a bargain whereby the nuclear weapons states agreed to show the utmost restraint in testing nuclear weapons before a nuclear test ban treaty was completed next year in order to convince non-nuclear states to agree to make the non-proliferation treaty permanent. China's restraint lasted for a full three days, and for France it lasted four months.

Since then, millions of people have signed petitions protesting against those French nuclear tests. Will the Minister take the opportunity to condemn those tests, and if not, why not? Some of my hon. Friends and I met the French ambassador to lodge our objections to the test. We asked the ambassador how the French could continue testing nuclear weapons. This also applies to the United Kingdom. How can we continue to maintain our nuclear weapons yet tell other countries that they should not go down the same road?

Does the Minister accept that, like the French, we are breaking the non-proliferation treaty by not engaging in meaningful discussions and negotiations towards nuclear disarmament as highlighted in the non-proliferation treaty? Our hypocrisy does not end there. Governments shed crocodile tears when they witness the victims of war abroad, but we often supply other countries with the arms to conduct those wars. The former Yugoslavia is a classic example.

I offer my congratulations to Professor Joseph Rotblat on being awarded the Nobel peace prize, having campaigned against nuclear weapons since 1944. The chairman of the prize committee said that the award recognised Professor Rotblat's campaigning work, but was also a way of highlighting the committee's opposition to not just French nuclear tests but nuclear weapons. The fact that the British Government launched the third Trident submarine last weekend is an insult to the Nobel peace prize and to the people of this world. I urge all hon. Members to vote against the defence estimates and, by so doing, to show their support for the winner of the Nobel peace prize.

8.59 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this debate. I hope that the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) will forgive me if I do not follow his particular path, which is profoundly and blindly misguided. However, the hon. Gentleman's speech was sincerely made, and I compliment him on it.

I identify with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir. G Johnson Smith) and with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) in respect of the Bett report. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench agree that, whatever the merits of some of Michael Bett's suggestions, it is one thing to run our defence services in a businesslike fashion but quite another to run them as businesses.

The pleasure of speaking in this debate is somewhat marred for me by the knowledge that this year's defence estimates represent a further fall in defence expenditure, from £22.32 billion to £21.72 billion, at a time when our commitments show no sign of easing but rather the reverse. The world seems a more dangerous and unstable place with each passing year. A simple analysis reveals that whereas in 1978-79 we spent 4.5 per cent. of our gross domestic product on defence, now we spend only 3.3 per cent.—a further fall of 0.3 per cent. on 1993-94. By comparison, we spend 13.4 per cent. of our GDP on social security—£90.6 billion or nearly four and a half times more, and half that figure, or nearly two and a half times as much, on health.

A nation that no longer has the will to find the funds necessary to defend itself is not a nation but a collection of communities. A nation that spends so much more on social security than on national security in its broader sense—I include part of the area that is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—is a nation that has lost its will to survive, not just its pride and sense of purpose in the world. That ultimately risks making the people of our nation the most healthy and well cared for slaves to other people's desires.

Despite that further fall in funding the White Paper emphasises that after five years' upheaval, retrenchment and cuts the Government are committed to a period of stability. The White Paper is helpfully entitled "Stable Forces in a Strong Britain"—a noble title if it could be but true. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was Defence Secretary, he stressed

"the Government's commitment to inject a period of stability in defence planning and expenditure."

He went on to say that he had the Prime Minister's assurance that there would be no further budgetary cuts this side of an election or for a foreseeable time beyond. No less a person than my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave ar assurance that the period of reorganisation and retrenchment was behind us and that we could foresee a period of stability in our fighting forces and in defence spending.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will be able again to give that public assurance and that they will fight hard to ensure that those public undertakings—especially that of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's—will not be compromised by a Chancellor with apparently little interest in this particular area looking for further cuts. I repeat my right hon. and learned Friend's words:

"to inject a period of stability in defence planning and expenditure."

No debate of this nature would be complete without mentioning our commitment to Bosnia and the dangerous but valiant work done by our forces there. Many of my hon. Friends have touched on that matter. My own doubts about the wisdom of our original involvement are a matter of record. I do not hanker after the failed League of Nations as Labour Members do. I see only British lads laying their lives on the line for humanitarian reasons, when no real British interests are involved and no side in that brutal and uncivil war is conspicuous for its humanity. Bringing our forces out safely again has worried me from the start and continues to do so. I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's announcement to the House that he will be able to bring back at least some of our troops.

However, the continuing need for our military commitment, which will perhaps become more pressing should the present ceasefire hold and develop, brings to light some operational aspects on which I should be grateful for comment from my right hon. and hon. Friends when they come to wind up. The first and most obvious, given the stalling of the peace process in Northern Ireland, is the pressure that that commitment is placing on—and the shortages it is highlighting in the strength of—infantry units. That matter has already been referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith).

The pressure will be exacerbated by the slump in recruitment figures and I have no doubt that my hon. Friends will have devised a strategy to deal with the problem which I hope that they will share with the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has referred to the matter but some elaboration would be appreciated.

From a different perspective, Ministers will know that I was fortunate enough to spend some time, together with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), with the Royal Navy as part of the armed forces parliamentary scheme. Some of that time was spent in the Adriatic. Does my hon. Friend agree that the need to provide timely air support over Bosnia, unfettered by the uncertainties of host nation support and the vagaries of the weather, has again shown the flexibility, mobility and reach of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers, at least one of which has been on station in the Adriatic since 1983?

Would my hon. Friend like to take this opportunity to assure the House that he plans sufficiently to fund the Royal Navy to permit the eventual replacement of the Invincible class and its Sea Harrier jump jets which, though much modified, were designed some 35 years ago. Would my hon. Friend go on to assure the House that the impact on the Royal Navy of having a carrier, frigates, destroyers and support ships constantly on patrol off Bosnia has been addressed in the Ministry's plans to build new ships, not forgetting the replacement of Fearless and Intrepid for other duties?

My hon. Friend has reported that the Royal Navy's pre-eminent prowess in anti-submarine warfare may have slipped due to the demands of NATO and United Nations duties, which has meant that sailors spend up to 16 months in a two-year cycle away from home. Does my hon. Friend agree that the aircraft carrier Ark Royal, which I visited on its way to be mothballed in Portsmouth, might now be reactivated?

I wish to make both a specific and a general point about procurement. As hon. Members know, such points often have constituency elements. I stand four square behind the Procurement Executive's value-for-money, best-for-the-job competitions and procurement decisions. A number of those decisions have been recently awarded to the American defence industry, some rightly so, and most recently, Tomahawk cruise missiles for the Royal Navy, the C130J Hercules replacement and more controversially, given the £200 million of taxpayer's money invested in Trigat, the decision to go for the Apache helicopter.

The history of offset is not one of which the Ministry can be proud and I question the way in which the two-way street with the Americans is working and the way in which the American Government have launched frankly scandalous anti-competitive protectionist legislation at Lucas for trying to compete in their market. That makes one question the wisdom of further invitations to tender from American companies. To hear that my hon. Friend's Department is now considering leasing American F16 warplanes gives great cause for concern to Conservative Members, too.

I hope that my hon. Friend will consider in any review the greater interest of the future of the United Kingdom aerospace and electronics industry as a major net exporter. He may also consider the loss to the MOD of the valuable export levy on UK-funded defence projects. I hope that my hon. Friend will think long and hard on these lines as he considers the replacement of the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft or indeed the replacement of the Army battlefield communications system. He should not forget the way in which the Americans have treated British companies competing in their markets.

Finally, on a constituency note, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reconsider the Army ambulance replacement order and consider well the overwhelming advantage of the revised Land Rover submission—not the original version tested but that based on the X-D, which has already satisfied the most rigorous testing and is likely to be the mainstay of the Army's light truck fleet in the future. It is cheaper to buy, cheaper to run in terms of fuel, lighter for helicopter lift and preferred by the medics who will have to work in it. To buy from a foreign supplier, from a formerly neutral country which has yet to be integrated into NATO command and supply mechanisms, would send all the wrong signals at a time when even the Germans, important NATO partners of ours, are already buying Land Rovers for Interior Ministry duty—and will possibly go further, given the change of ownership.

I should like to end on a strategic note which I have already mentioned in the past. I refer to the case already made by one of the Minister's predecessors for an anti-missile defence system to deal with the Club Mad brigade who might aim such missiles at us. I hope that tonight the Minister will be able to give us some assurance that serious thought is being given to this and that research and development are taking place to equip us with such a system in good time to meet any threat that may eventually arise.

9.10 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and to support his comments about the Navy and the armed forces parliamentary scheme.

I have strongly agreed with those who have talked of the need to bring about a period of stability and to set a steady course for our armed forces and for the civilian industrial defence workers who have experienced massive change in the past few years. I too put on record my praise for all involved in the defence of our country and for the way in which our armed forces continue to set standards to which the rest of the world aspires. Wherever I have gone, to Plymouth, Rosyth or the Adriatic, I have found a strong feeling of insecurity among members of the armed forces—a feeling of anxiety not just about their families but based on uncertainty about the exact direction of the Government's defence policy and about precisely what role is envisaged for them.

I accept that we cannot just wave a magic wand and bring security and stability to the world, but I believe that we need a fuller debate on certain key issues such as the future roles of the United Nations, of NATO, of the Western European Union and of Partnership for Peace. We need, in short, a strategic overview.

I shall be brief because I am aware that some hon. Members have been sitting here for as long as I have today. First, I want to mention Rosyth naval base, which has had its full share of uncertainty and insecurity, compounded by the continual delay over the decision as to who the successful bidder for the base will be. I hope that the Minister will be able to give the base some good news, preferably by the end of this week, and that any decision will recognise that the site of the base is a public asset and that economic regeneration prospects should be considered alongside value for money.

Constant uncertainty has surrounded the future of both dockyards, which still await important decisions that have yet to be announced. So secondly, I would hope that the Minister can tell us today when he will be able to make an announcement; that by so doing he will be able to introduce some stability; that he will reaffirm the vital importance of both dockyards; that he will restate the workload guarantees given to both dockyards; and that he will reassure the work force that the promises concerning pensions and redundancy entitlements will be kept. I hope that he will state also that no change will be made to conditions of employment without negotiation and agreement.

That brings me to my third point, which concerns the whole future of our defence industry. The Government's refusal to adopt a specific industrial defence policy has chopped away work and led to economic devastation in defence-dependent areas. Are the Government prepared to recognise—they are, after all, the industry's major customer—that the defence industry is crucial both to our defence and to our general manufacturing base? Will they recognise that unless they act we may one day find ourselves without any competition, buying from a monopoly market and having no option but to buy off-the-shelf products?

Despite what is set out in the estimates some big questions still need to be answered given the turbulent world in which we live. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc has not led to more security. Russia is riven by all forms of corruption and internal conflicts. There are massive nuclear arsenals and there is the greatest fear about the extent of illegal export and

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smuggling to provide weapons to countries that none of us would support. We are seeing ethnic conflicts, territorial conflicts and social and economic tensions, as most horribly illustrated by events in former Yugoslavia. Events in that country have enlarged the future role and purpose of the United Nations and made more important the relationship between NATO forces and the UN as well as the dimensions of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

I shall be brief because I wish to make a few minutes available to other hon. Members. I think that we are likely in the post-cold-war world to be confronted by many more security problems. We have an opportunity to restructure Britain's defences but unfortunately the Government have heightened insecurity by their failure to undertake a strategic defence review. They have tended, especially with the defence costs study, to go for a short-term cost-cutting exercise rather than a review based on long-term rationale.

As I have said, the big questions remain to be answered. Let us go ahead and try to provide at long last some stability and cohesion for all who are involved in the defence of our country.

9.16 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I start by declaring an interest. I am a pilot in the RAF reserves and have been for the past 18 years. Before that I was a pilot in the regular RAF for 12 years.

It is worth reflecting on the reduced representation of the armed forces in the House. We could probably count on the fingers of one hand the number of Members who are now in the reserve forces. Probably about 15 per cent. of Members have served in the armed forces, compared with over 50 per cent. about 20 years ago.

I make that point because the armed services are in rather a special position. Unlike virtually every other body in every other profession, those who serve in the armed forces are not in a position to make their views known to the public when Governments change their minds and reduce the costs of defence or make various other changes. There is therefore a special responsibility on those who have spent time in the armed services to represent their views in the Chamber.

The lack of representation and the lack of ability of the armed forces to make their views known more publicly partly explains the lack of outcry two or three years ago when we had the last round of defence cuts. I am not talking so much about "Options for Change", which was essentially driven by the need to make changes following the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war. Although I did not specifically agree with some of the results of that review, I think that afterwards when further changes were made we got things about right.

I have in mind especially the two series of cuts that followed "Options for Change", the last of which has been termed "Front Line First". I would submit that those cuts were largely Treasury-led, not defence-led. They were Treasury-led two years ago in exactly the same way as other cuts were led 20 years ago under the Labour Government following the intervention of the International Monetary Fund.

It is slightly ironic that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury two years ago is now the Secretary of State for Defence, because clearly he is now having to come to terms with his success two years ago at persuading his Cabinet colleagues to cut defence expenditure, to cut expenditure on national security, I would submit, before expenditure should have been cut on social security. We now appear—dare I say it running up to the next general election—to be cutting social security. I wish that we had taken that view a few years ago, because then perhaps we would now have slightly larger armed forces and more realistic expenditure on social security than we currently have.

The fact, though, is that the then Chief Secretary, who is now Secretary of State for Defence, got it right from a political point of view. There was not an outcry and we have now reduced expenditure for defence. The trouble is simple. Armed service men cannot complain about what is happening to them at the time, so, as they did 20 years ago, they vote with their feet a year or two later. Precisely what happened in 1977 is happening now in 1995. I shall not go into the details, because that has already been done, but I add just one more statistic to those that have been given about the under-strength of our armed forces. The Royal Air Force asked for 2,500 redundancies in its latest programme; 5,500 people put their names forward.

The three armed services are indeed concerned about what has happened to them. They are very worried, partly because they see the possibility of a Labour Government after the next election. It has already been confirmed tonight that we shall suffer another defence review if that comes to pass, and that causes a great deal of concern. Nobody will convince me, however genuine Opposition Front-Bench Members may be about supporting the defence industries, and, indeed, defence generally, that if they should get into office there would not be huge pressure from other members of the Labour party to increase virtually every other aspect of public expenditure.

The armed services are also worried about what they see happening at present. I would like to see—I have asked for this before—a clear definition of the "front line". If we had that, people in the armed services could see where they stand. The Secretary of State for Defence, for example, sent around a signal in August pointing out that he wants to maintain and support the front line and make the necessary savings elsewhere. But if one is a member of the armed services and does not know whether one is in the front line or not—it is not quite such an obvious question as it might appear—one does not know whether one is likely to be axed next or not. We need that definition.

There also needs to be an easing of the pressure on spending over the next two years. We are already spending slightly less than the French in terms of gross national product, and we are likely, in the next five years, to fall behind other members of NATO.

Not only that, but as hon. Members have mentioned tonight, I do not think that it helps the situation very much if we revisit the various arguments, as we seem to be doing over procurement of aircraft such as the F16. We have done that already. We have seen that it is more expensive. We really should get on and have the mid-life update of the F3. I recommend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Ministers that they take professional advice from within the armed services. Although some people have said that it may, in some cases, possibly be eccentric, it may be an original solution to take views from people outside with no experience

whatever of military matters, or whose experience may have been some years ago. I do not believe that they have much to offer if we are to have stability over the next two years.

Finally, the Bett report is a good report, and there are probably lessons that we can learn, but if we intend to practise what we preach about stability, I strongly recommend that the Bett report is cast aside for the foreseeable future. The armed services are not an institution that needs huge reform. This is a sort of military Sheehy, and we know what happened to the Sheehy report. I sincerely hope that the Bett report does not go the same way.

I agree with much of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said last Tuesday about the future of Europe, but I also feel that that was not the time for him—in his position as Secretary of State for Defence—to make some of the comments that he made. He linked strong defence with an anti-European rhetoric, which I think is quite dangerous. The fact remains that the people whom he criticised are our allies within NATO and the Western European Union.

It would have been slightly better if my right hon. Friend's speech writer had referred to the European Commission rather than Brussels, for reasons that have already been mentioned tonight. In our capacity as members of NATO, we defend Brussels. I do not want to elaborate on that point; let me simply read an extract from one of many letters that I have received from service men and ex-service men on this subject since last Tuesday:

"As a former regular officer with a son about to depart for Bosnia early next year either wearing a UN beret or as part of a NATO formation, I found his remarks about 'soldiers willing to die for Britain but not for Brussels' particularly offensive."

The fact is that, if we have lowered our expenditure on defence, we must be team players in Europe in the context of NATO; and, if we have not, we cannot expect the sort of support that we have had from it in the past to continue in the future.

I have not been uncritical of the Secretary of State tonight, largely because of the representations that have been made to me by members of the armed forces past and present. I felt that, as a service man myself, I owed it to them to make their comments known. Having done so, I none the less wish the Secretary of State well. He enters his job at a difficult time, but I am sure that he has the energy and the intelligence to see it through, and I shall certainly support him in the Lobby tomorrow night.

9.26 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): That speech of the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) was perhaps the most devastating that we have heard. A loyal Back Bencher read out a letter from a constituent—probably a Conservative: I know that there are many Conservatives in his constituency—which said what many of us felt. It said that the Secretary of State is not fit to hold his current position. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] I am sure that that was the coded message that was being sent.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on his appointment as Chairman of the Select Committee, but I was rather disappointed that he did not share the independence of mind exhibited by his predecessor. I suspect that, if his word is to carry any weight in the Chamber, he will have to be a little more objective in future. It was his first speech in his new capacity, however, and I am sure that he will get the message and represent the entire Select Committee.

In a powerful speech, my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) expressed his views on Bosnia. He had spent half the recess helping innocent civilians in that sad country, so we had to listen to what he said. His point was that the British Government's commitment to British forces in Bosnia seemed to be on the wane, and that our soldiers out there were not playing the active part that many expected them to play.

The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) attacked the Government from beginning to end. I agree with much of what he said about the Bett report. *[Interruption.]* It appears that he does not realise that he was attacking the Government, but we understand.

Mr. Brazier: My attacks on the Bett report did not constitute an attack on the Government, because the Government have yet to respond to it. I was encouraging my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reject it, which is still an option open to him.

Mr. Martlew: My recollection is that the hon. Gentleman attacked the defence cuts, what was happening to the reserves and the Bett report. He did not support the Government on anything, and at one point the Minister shouted, "Disgraceful."

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made a fine speech, in which he said that the Secretary of State was not worthy of his position. He went into great detail about the present situation, as one would expect from the Liberal party spokesman. I was happy to note that he is starting to come round to our position on a defence review. I appreciate that he entered a caveat, but perhaps in future we can iron out any misunderstandings. If I remember correctly, the hon. and learned Gentleman said in a speech a year ago that it would be wrong to have a defence review.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) made a powerful constituency case, especially in the context of RAF Sealand. I know a little about that base, because I used to represent a constituency with an RAF base and three years ago we lost work to RAF Sealand. Of all our arguments, the one that we could not put was about the quality of the work force at RAF Sealand, because it is excellent. Not only did my hon. Friend say that those jobs were being put in jeopardy because of dogma, but he spoke about the British defence industry in general and the effect of Government policy on his constituency and throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) made the funniest speech of the debate, but the look on the faces of some of his hon. Friends suggested that they seemed to wish that he was still a parliamentary private secretary and unable to take part in debates. The practice of going into people's reputations and engaging in muck-raking was put to rest by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). Perhaps we shall hear more tomorrow about that.

As always, my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) made a sincere speech. I agree with what he said about the French nuclear tests and the points that he put to the Government deserve an answer.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) attacked the Government's plans for defence cuts and I think that he made a coded attack on the

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Chancellor. It is strange that, when Conservative Members talk about extra spending on defence, they always talk about cutting social security, and I think that one or two of them mentioned education and health. Nobody ever says that we should not have tax cuts so that we can spend more on defence, but perhaps that will be put right tomorrow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfermline, West (Ms Squire), who always takes part in these debates, spoke about Rosyth. There is no doubt that over the years she has put up a rugged defence of Rosyth and has been proved right. I emphasise that because of the uncertainty we need an announcement about the date on which a decision will be taken on the dockyards. I have already said that the hon. Member for Wyre made a devastating attack on the Government.

Before I really start my speech I am sure that the House would like to place on record our acknowledgement and debt of gratitude to those who were remembered in the VJ day commemoration events that were held throughout the country in August. Unfortunately the House was in recess, or fitting tributes would have been paid at the time. As a Cumbrian Member, I will never forget the service that I attended in Carlisle cathedral on 20 August. I am delighted to say that the service was broadcast nationwide by the BBC and that the dean has received many letters of congratulation on the service.

Colonel Hodgson, formerly of the Border regiment, who proposed the tribute, encapsulated the spirit, the gallantry and the sacrifice that were made by those who fought the war in the far east. I hope that that service of remembrance and commitment has helped to reduce the anguish of those people who believed that they fought a forgotten war. There is no doubt that the traditions and determination that helped them to win through are there in abundance in today's modern Army.

That has been clearly demonstrated by all three services in their commitment to securing a peaceful settlement in Bosnia. We hope that we are nearing the end of that conflict. We should take pride in what our peacekeepers have achieved as part of the United Nations. We shall have to keep troops there for many years to come. I see that the Secretary of State has arrived dressed for the occasion. Perhaps he or the Minister will say something about the number of British troops they anticipate having to be kept in Bosnia as part of a peacekeeping force and for how long.

Fortunately, over the past year the ceasefire in Northern Ireland has held, and there has been a consequent reduction in troop numbers. We fully support the Government's determination to establish peace in Northern Ireland, and we hope that further progress will be made in that respect in the near future.

In the past 12 months, we have continued to reduce the number of people employed in our services. In 1980, there were 321,000; in 1990, there were 306,000; in August this year there were 229,000; and there has been a loss of 76,000 over the past five years.

The Labour party has always accepted that there needed to be a reduction in the size of the armed forces following the end of the cold war. We were rightly critical, however, when redundancy notices were sent to people on active service in Bosnia and Northern Ireland, which no doubt did wonders for morale. We have heard several hon. Members, especially Conservatives, say that morale is brittle.

We are also worried about a Treasury proposal that could have a drastic effect on the forces' morale. It is proposed to impose income tax on all redundancy money, which would have a detrimental effect on the military and civilian personnel who have been told that they are going to be made redundant and given the job of closing their bases over the next few years. The Labour party wholly opposes the taxing of redundancy money. I hope that the Minister will take up the issue with the Chancellor, so that the proposal does not appear in the Budget.

A detailed analysis of the jobs that have been lost reveals a strange and illogical pattern. Over the past few years, the private sector has been getting rid of tiers of management, but it has been very different in the armed forces. Since 1980, there has been a massive reduction of 30 per cent. in what are termed the "other ranks", which always strikes me as a fine Tory term. The number of officers has been reduced by only 16 per cent., which does not seem to make a great deal of sense. Perhaps the Minister will explain the large difference. Is the MOD top brass protecting its own, or is the Tory party protecting the officer class?

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Do not be so wet.

Mr. Martlew: The Minister cannot resist. I understand that he has joined the chicken run. I find that surprising, but I am sure that his grandfather would have said, "Some chicken! Some neck!"

Mr. Mans: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. If one allows the private sector to carry out tasks previously performed by service men, one wants to be sure that the carrying out of those tasks is properly supervised from within the services. That may well explain the fact that the number of airmen, soldiers and sailors has been reduced to a greater extent than the number of officers in the three services.

Mr. Martlew: I see a great many chiefs and very few Indians in the British forces.

Mr. McWilliam: It is all very well for the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) to say what he did, but why are there more admirals than surface ships?

Mr. Martlew: The point is made, and the same is true throughout the services.

Another matter that concerns me and the Select Committee is the apparent inability of the armed forces, and especially the Army, to attract new recruits.

On 3 February 1993, the then Secretary of State for Defence made a statement to the House in which he said that there would be an additional 3,000 troops. I am sure that hon. Members remember that, because there was rejoicing because we had saved two regiments. We were pleased that the Secretary of State had listened to us. That additional 3,000 would bring the total number of troops to 119,000 and was to be achieved by the mid-1990s. The statement was made with a big fanfare.

It is now October 1995, so I am sure that hon. Members would agree that this must be the mid-1990s—but what has happened? Figures supplied by the House of Commons Library show that there are currently 109,000

troops in the British Army, to which we can add 4,000 Gurkhas. It is another broken promise. Instead of 119,000 troops, there are at best 113,000, leaving a shortfall of 6,000.

The Government's answer is to take on more Gurkha troops. Perhaps they think that unemployment in Nepal is worse than in the United Kingdom. It is inconceivable that with 1.6 million unemployed under the age of 30—with 670,000 of those under the age of 24—the Government cannot recruit sufficient people to fill the vacancies in our armed forces. We must ask why not. They are relatively well-paid jobs that provide good training and are as secure as any job is at present. I am sure that the answer will not be found in the Government's scheme to employ Saatchi and Saatchi, their old friends, to produce an expensive and glitzy advertising campaign, for which I understand there will not be much change from £2.5 million.

Why do not our unemployed youngsters want to join our armed forces? Do they see them as old-fashioned institutions governed by petty rules and regulations? Or did the Secretary of State's speech at Blackpool make them think that the armed forces are sexist and racist? Do they liken the armed forces to being in prison? We could understand that, because the Home Secretary has said that to reduce crime among the young, the young thugs need military discipline in Army-style boot camps. What sort of effect does that have on would-be recruits? Join the Army and be treated like a criminal. I shall leave hon. Members to draw their own conclusions.

We should be appealing to the idealism of the young. I can think of no job that would give more job satisfaction than serving in the British Army peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, Rwanda and Angola, helping to save innocent lives. However, instead of appealing to the idealism of the young, the Government simply do not appeal to them at all. We must remember that, if we do not get good—quality recruits today, there will be poor armed forces tomorrow.

I mentioned earlier that people may perceive the armed forces as racist. There is no doubt that young black and Asian Britons think that, because only 1.4 per cent. of those serving in the British forces come from ethnic minorities. *[Interruption.]* Whenever I have raised that matter in the past, the Minister has moaned, just as he did a moment ago. He has said that the Government are carrying out ethnic monitoring and investigating the success of their equal opportunities policy. That ethnic monitoring and the equal opportunities policy have failed. The results are astonishing. The Select Committee on Defence said that the most significant outcome of the survey was that only 57 per cent. of all personnel replied. Fewer than 50 per cent. of senior NCOs in the forces replied. The MOD is of the opinion that 20 per cent. of the forms did not reach the personnel. The MOD did not know where 20 per cent. of its personnel were. That does not surprise me. It is the reality.

The failure of the survey suggests that, from the very highest level of command, there appears to be at best an attitude of indifference to racial fairness, and at worst racial tendencies. That cannot be condoned. The buck stops with the Minister. If he is indifferent, nothing will change, but if he is committed we can make a start on stamping out racism in the armed forces.

I shall mention briefly another situation that concerns me greatly—the way in which the Government fail to treat people in a decent manner. Let us go back to June 1994 when 25 of our top Northern Ireland intelligence personnel flew from Belfast to a conference in Inverness. The helicopter crashed in thick fog, killing all 25 and the four crew. Even after the extensive investigation, what happened is a matter of conjecture. It would appear that the board of inquiry did not find the pilot or the co-pilot guilty of gross negligence. That, I understand, was added later by senior officers who did not sit on the inquiry. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that.

I also want to talk about the situation concerning widows and dependants of security officers. Although the Minister has expressed condolences and sympathy, the Government are still talking about capping compensation, about not paying widows and dependants the full amount that they are due under the system and still hiding behind regulations. The future Labour Government will pay the compensation in full.

Are the Government prepared to lift the cap on the compensation for those people, or are they going to hide behind regulations to save a few pennies? Are they also saying to our forces that, when they fly on RAF planes, they are to be classed as passengers and should take out private insurance? If so, perhaps we should make a special deal with Thomas Cook.

I realise that time is getting on, but I know that the Minister is not too worried. He said to me that if he had only 10 minutes in which to speak tonight he would be very happy because he has to stand up tomorrow as well. He can take as long as he likes tomorrow so I am not really speaking in his time.

Mr. Soames: Come on, get on with it.

Mr. Martlew: Indeed, he would be very grateful if I were to continue until 10 o'clock—and if he does not be quiet I might do that. His Government have failed. *[Interruption.]* I shall draw to a conclusion.

I have taken the opportunity today to point out some of the failures. The MOD has failed to stand up to the Treasury, it has failed service personnel who have given loyal and unquestioning service, it has failed its civilian workers, it has failed the dependants of service personnel and it has failed our defence industry. Yet, in spite of it, we still have the highest calibre armed forces in the world, of which we are justly proud.

9.48 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew). He is quite right to say that I did indeed agree with him that I would deal with as many points as I could in the short period tonight and try to deal with others in my speech tomorrow. I assure the House that points that are not addressed in my speeches will be dealt with by letter as we did last year. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his forbearance.

Today's debate—I dislike very much having to say this—has been distinguished by two singularly vacuous and futile speeches from the Labour Front-Bench team. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) is always extremely courteous privately, so I feel disobliging in saying that his speech was lacking in any vision or understanding and marked by a total failure to rise to the

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level of events or to deal with the big issues in defence that were dealt with by my hon. Friends and by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). Indeed, the hon. Member for South Shields failed to move his amendment, so I assume that he will not seek to press it tomorrow night.

Dr. David Clark: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I moved the amendment at the beginning of my speech. I hope that the Minister will withdraw his comments.

Madam Speaker: That was not a point of order. It was an intervention.

Mr. Soames: I withdraw no such thing, Madam Speaker. It must be that the hon. Gentleman swallowed his tongue like a bad race horse. I am grateful to him for his tribute to the armed forces and the part that they played in the VE and VJ day celebrations. Apart from that, his speech was a second-class rant on the Labour party's apparent conversion to patriotism, which, if it is true, is to be devoutly welcomed. That is from a party which for the last four elections has been entirely unilateralist and pacifist. It had within its ranks some extremely unsatisfactory fellow travellers. The last six Labour party conferences have voted for unilateral disarmament. On that, as on financial matters, the Labour party is deeply and wholly unconvincing.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will deal tomorrow night with the procurement matters that were raised. What the hon. Member for South Shields said about service equipment, even allowing for the strong, honourable and consistent views that he has held on defence expenditure on equipment, was inaccurate and untrue. As a matter of recorded fact, by and large, over most of the area of their operation and business, the services have never in their history been better equipped. That is not to say that there are not deficiencies. There will always be deficiencies; there are always things that the services need to do their job better. However, by and large, in terms of kit, equipment, communications equipment, men and machinery, they are better equipped today for the extraordinary breadth of tasks that they are invited to undertake than they have ever been.

We can go on disputing the question of defence costs studies. Several of my hon. Friends and several Opposition Members raised the matter. The studies were not about cutting defence; they were about cutting costs. Anyone who believes that the Ministry of Defence runs its business so well that it cannot and does not need to cut its costs does not understand defence. It is not good enough for the hon. Member for South Shields to bore on about the Ministry of waste every time he makes a speech yet when a realistic attempt is made to cut the tail of defence spending, which needed a sledgehammer and an axe taken to it, to complain that we have gone too far.

Not only have we not gone too far but there have been and will be further cuts and attempts to keep down the cost of the way in which we do our business. That is not cutting the front line. It is not cutting the defensive capability of this country. All my hon. Friends who raised the matter have only to look to the reassurances given in the House and elsewhere by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister about the sanctity of the front line.

The hon. Member for South Shields raised the question of the F16s. It is important that I say something officially about that. We are considering possible upgrades to the Tornado F3 air defence aircraft. As a routine part of our evaluation process, we will naturally compare the costs of other options. We have therefore asked the United States for information on buying or leasing F16s and F18s. That does not reveal any lack of confidence in the F3, which is a highly capable aircraft. We routinely examine options for improving our equipment. The current exercise is an example of that. If we did not do so, the hon. Gentleman would rightly rate us as very poor managers indeed.

The hon. Member for South Shields raised the question of a defence review, which his party regularly raises. We do not see the need for a defence review. The strategic scene is changing so quickly and has changed so quickly that any defence review of the type mooted by the hon. Gentleman and his party would be wholly out of date before it was completed. Whether or not the hon. Gentleman chooses to be wholly partisan—and not look at it objectively, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East has done—the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995" presents the Government's policy and strategy for defence with clarity and conviction. It would be impossible to do it more clear-sightedly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), whom the whole House will wish to congratulate on his election as Chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee, made an extremely interesting and valuable speech. He made many important arguments, which I do not propose to discuss now because there are far too many of them.

I shall merely mention two arguments that my hon. Friend made. First, he spoke about recruiting, and several of my hon. Friends made the same argument. Obviously—the hon. Member for South Shields is perfectly right—there are manning shortfalls, principally in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Artillery and the infantry, as a result of recruiting problems and inadequate retention of young soldiers. We are tackling the shortfalls with a vigorous recruitment campaign, and have introduced a re-engagement bounty to improve retention.

There is a great deal more that we can and will do. However, to suggest to the House, and ask us to take it seriously, that the reason for a shortfall in recruitment is that young men and young women wishing to join the services are not prepared to accept service discipline and service life and find it to be and regard it as a racist and sexist organisation is fatuous and idiotic, calculated to harm and fool. It shows the total lack of ignorance and the total lack of understanding that the hon. Member for South Shields has—[HON. MEMBERS: "Lack of ignorance?"] It shows the total ignorance and lack of understanding that the hon. Gentleman has when it comes to defence matters. He must get off that subject and try to deal with the big issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) made an important argument about the joint rapid deployment force, about the question of lift. It is the key to the JRDF. As my hon. Friend well knows, a great deal of work is being done on that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had many meetings to consider those matters. When we have resolved that tricky—and potentially expensive—issue, we shall be able to tell the House the way in which we intend to handle it.

Most important, my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside mentioned service houses. He was right to do so. Understandably, there is anxiety in the services about the future of defence housing. The Defence Housing Executive has made an important and distinguished contribution to that matter. It is already bringing stability to those affairs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues continue to examine that issue, and we hope to be able to make a detailed statement about it shortly.

I congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on his work and commitment to Bosnia. What he has done is wholly admirable. I cannot agree with some of the opinions that he expressed about the passage of what happened when he was there. We shall not go into that now: suffice it to say that I was in the middle of this extraordinary va et viens of correspondence.

As for 24 Air Mobile Brigade, it and a substantial element of it was withdrawn as part of a wider reconfiguration, at the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It remains at 72 hours' notice to return to theatre, and can be back in theatre within seven days. Its whole architecture, and its ability to operate immediately when it gets there, will remain in place. Were it to be the kind of force that will be required for the implementation force, it would be not a very difficult matter to reconfigure them in theatre.

We noted the opinions of the hon. Member for East Lothian and those of other hon. Members on both sides of the House—those who favour and those who oppose further European defence structures. NATO has already adapted, and continues to adapt, swiftly to the needs of the new security landscape. NATO, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly said in his speech at Blackpool, and again in the House tonight, remains the absolute bedrock of defence of Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) always makes an important contribution to these debates and is extremely knowledgeable about those matters, although I find myself in profound disagreement with what he said about Mr. Bett. However, I wholly agree with him about the reserves. He is quite right that the reserves have a very big role to play. We must find more and better ways to integrate them.

As a matter of fact, there are many reservists serving today, as my hon. Friend knows, on active service.

Mr. Brazier *rose—*

Mr. Soames: No, I will not give way.

Many exciting new opportunities are coming forward for the reserves with the new Reserve Forces Bill and, as my hon. Friend knows, we strongly hope to be able to have some good news for the House about that. I assure him of my personal commitment to the reserves. I take a good deal of trouble with the Territorial Army, and on Friday I am lunching with the Territorial Army colonels to discuss further some of the details. I do not recognise his description of morale in the services.

As usual, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East made an extremely well-informed speech—indeed, I rarely disagree with him.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): You are not supposed to praise the Liberals.

Mr. Soames: I know that I am not.

The hon. and learned Gentleman then made a number of points about Bosnia and Iraq, with which I have already dealt. He also raised the question of the Eurofighter. I make it plain that the Government remain wholly committed to the development of Eurofighter 2000, which will be the cornerstone of the Royal Air Force's future capability.

The hon. and learned Gentleman raised a number of points about type 23 frigates and dates of entry into service, with which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will deal tomorrow night. The hon. and learned Gentleman then asked about the front line and a settlement in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already made it plain that, were there to be a settlement—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomor ..

River Caul Bourne, Shalfleet

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

10 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to raise this subject during the Adjournment debate tonight. The concerns of the residents of Shalfleet were first raised by me on 7 June in a debate about the listing of Shalfleet bridge following the flooding of the river on 30 December 1993. Nearly two years later there has been no action for the residents, whose house contents were ruined, and in one case destroyed.

I shall deal with some of the points that arose from that debate. First, the island's only newspaper has gone to quite extraordinary lengths to give its readers the impression that I criticised Mrs. Freeman, the clerk of the parish council. It even juxtaposed a comment that I made specifically in response to a comment by the Isle of Wight council against comments by Mrs. Freeman. In the previous debate I made it plain that Mrs. Freeman was the only person from the parish council who criticised the situation. She organised the leaflets for the meeting with the National Rivers Authority, and it remains a mystery why the meeting with the NRA representative was not reported in full by the county press.

The editor has continually urged me to ask the ombudsman to use his discretion and investigate the matter. In July I wrote to the ombudsman and sent him all the relevant papers—particularly in view of the conflict between the National Rivers Authority's version of events and that of the council. Imagine my amazement, therefore, when I received a copy of a letter sent to the residents by the clerk of the Isle of Wight council expressing surprise that the ombudsman had been requested to investigate the matter.

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, that virtually no action was taken from June to September and yet the council expressed surprise that the residents should approach the ombudsman nearly two years later? I wrote to the ombudsman in a letter dated 22 September, in which I said:

"Further to my letter . . . and my secretary's telephone call with your office, I understand that you have gone back to the Council requesting a further letter setting out the position and I am now extremely concerned to learn that the Council are suggesting in their letter, a copy of which I enclose for your information, that the request for answers to the questions is a precursor to legal action by the residents and therefore the Council are effectively saying they can't take the matter any further."

I dispute that interpretation of events. I continued:

"This really is a travesty of the truth and I set out in chronological order for you the events that lead up to these questions being asked and the fact that the Chairman of the Parish Council"—

the parish council was encouraging the residents to ask those questions and to hold a meeting—

"is the Deputy Leader of the Isle of Wight Council and I believe this whole ploy is being used to try to get the Council 'off the hook'.

As the Ombudsman will know from his recent report on Gurnard, my other Constituent John Dart was actually lied to by . . . the Council and I believe there is an even more sinister situation arising over Shalfleet.

At the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday, 14 June, it was agreed that if the residents concerned set out their questions in writing, the Parish Council would try and obtain the answers for them. This they did and sent a copy to the Parish Council on the 23rd June. In a letter to Captain Jones on the 11th July, Mr. Hetherington"—

the clerk to the Isle of Wight council—

"acknowledged receipt of the questionnaire but no answers were forthcoming.

There have still been no replies to those questions and the Parish Council were asked to chase up replies to them.

The residents stated that they were happy to have a meeting with the Council, but only when they had seen the Council's replies in writing because they are so fed up with the way in which the council has tried to obfuscate over this whole matter and"—

as I believe—

"have lied to them.

The concept of the questions and obtaining the answers from the Council was entirely the prompting of the Parish Council through their Chairman, the Deputy Leader of the Council. If this is now to be turned against the residents, one can only believe that it is a ploy to prevent any further action by the residents.

You will see from the dates that it is quite implausible for Mr. Hetherington to suggest, as he does in his letter to Captain Jones of the 8th September which has been copied to you, that he is disappointed that they have sought the Ombudsman's assistance when there were meetings in the offing.

The Council has steadfastly refused to answer questions on this issue. Unfortunately our local paper has sided with the Council and it is left entirely to myself and the local residents and I can assure you we are all very upset by the treatment we are getting over this issue. I am sad that the new council isn't putting all this behind us and taking a rather more positive attitude, particularly as I have now spoken privately to the leader of the Liberal Democrat Controlling Group, Councillor Morris Barton and discussed the situation with him and had hoped that common sense would prevail.".

Since that letter to the ombudsman, the residents have been in correspondence with the clerk to the council. On 1 October the residents sent a letter that was signed by all the residents affected by the flooding to Mr. Hetherington, the clerk of the Isle of Wight council. It stated:

"We are in receipt of letter dated 8th September 1995, from which we still note that your Authority denies its legal liability. Without undermining your conclusions as to your denial we the residents still claim from the local Authority compensation for material loss as claimed in the first instance, also for the sheer upheaval to all our lives during and after the flooding. The Council, we strongly believe, had total disregard for the residents of the adjacent cottages, despite the warnings from the N R A and written confirmation from yourselves, the props used would be inspected on regular intervals and if debris accumulates between them action will be taken to clear it before a blockage occurs. If it becomes clear that this method is not satisfactory the situation will be reassessed. (letter dated 10/11/1992 signed by Mr. Smith for County Surveyor to the NRA).

The question of whether or not all or any of the resident received financial compensation by way of insurance in whole or in part is irrelevant to the response we have requested to the thirty-five questions.

There is no question of any of the residents waiving any legal rights they may have against the Authority for compensation. We would, however, take the view that openness on your part in replying to legitimate questions raised in our letter would be conclusive in resolving this long-standing dispute.".

I take that last paragraph to mean that the residents do not intend to pursue legal action. On 12 October, they received a letter from the clerk to the Isle of Wight council which says, inter alia:

"I am grateful to you and the others for clarifying the issues in the letter—this is very helpful to me.

I understand that you are seeking compensation for material loss and also for disruption during and after the flooding. As to whether or not you or the other residents received compensation from your insurers, I disagree with the view that it is 'irrelevant'. It is in fact very important as insurance companies do attempt subrogation

where it is felt that a third party might be liable in whole or in part. Additionally, now that very helpfully you have clarified exactly what you and your fellow residents seek, I will of course take the view of the Council's insurers as to how best we might proceed."

My hon. Friend will note that there were still no answers to the questions. I happen to agree with the council on the principle that an injured party cannot benefit twice, but some residents have been averaged by their insurance companies and at least one resident lost all his furniture and was not insured.

The island council's expenditure on the island's only newspaper places a special duty of care on both the council and, most especially, the *County Press*. It should have a published contract or charter with the people of the Isle of Wight, so that the readers will know what they may expect the newspaper to do in their defence. That is the last great reform required on the Isle of Wight, not for political party or factional benefit but for the defence of ordinary citizens, who feel that the system is too big for them to fight. I say that that is the last great reform because I am told that the new Isle of Wight council will shortly be publishing a complaints procedure, which hopefully will prevent such an impasse happening ever again.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will clarify the position of the National Rivers Authority in respect of the blocking of the bridge and the warning given by the NRA to the council before the flooding occurred. I ask that because my hon. Friend will know that the island's only newspaper, the *Isle of Wight County Press*, informed its readers that I have not proved my case. Isle of Wight Radio feels aggrieved about inequality of opportunity and the lack of funds that come to it by way of Isle of Wight council. I can hardly believe all that is a figment of my imagination. Does the editor of the *Isle of Wight County Press* expect us all to believe that, following local discussion on a Shalfleet bypass to avoid the bridge, it was suddenly found to be unsafe? It was propped up with Acrows by the then Isle of Wight county council.

It was the council's action, contrary to the advice of the NRA, that blocked the river and caused the flooding. Then, an expensive Bailey bridge was brought in, so that traffic could continue to flow across the existing Shalfleet bridge. All of a sudden, it was found that the bridge was to be listed by some unsung hero in Whitehall. Then it was found that the bridge was safe after all and that there was nothing wrong that a few drops of resin would not cure. If the editor really believes that that situation does not absolutely stink, he must believe that all his readers came across the Solent in a biscuit tin.

The council has led residents a merry dance. In one year and 10 months, we have gone full circle. Yet again, we are waiting on the council's insurers. The parish council either cannot or, more likely, its chairman—as the council's deputy leader—will not obtain answers from the Isle of Wight council.

The correspondence between the NRA and the then Isle of Wight county council that I have passed to my hon. Friend the Minister for tonight's debate clearly indicates to me that the authority did warn the council. Photographs taken at the time by residents plainly show that the bridge was jammed solid with rubbish as a result of the Acrow props placed underneath it. I hope that my hon. Friend will shed light on the NRA's actions and responsibilities for the river. I hope also that the clerk to the Isle of Wight council will, following tonight's debate, join me in a without prejudice meeting with residents, to see if we can resolve the situation.

One last thing. I wonder if my hon. Friend the Minister will explain, for the benefit of the editor of the *Isle of Wight County Press*, that my attendance tonight almost alone is the usual and normal practice of the House on an Adjournment debate? On the occasion of the last debate, that editor went to extraordinary lengths to try to pooh-pooh and belittle my efforts because I was not addressing a packed House. He publicly concluded, in a sneering sort of way, that it showed a lack of interest in the matter.

I say yet again to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister that 5 ft of water bursting through the front door of people's homes because the surveyor's department has made an absolute Boggins of the matter is reason enough for me to be here tonight. I hope that my hon. Friend can tell my constituents how to obtain redress in the terrible position in which they find themselves.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Tim Boswell): My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has set out his concerns and those of his constituents with his customary force and feeling. He is a redoubtable constituency Member of Parliament and much to be congratulated on the diligence with which he has looked into the matters surrounding the flooding at Shalfleet in his constituency and their confused and complex aftermath. It is much appreciated that he has come to the House tonight to discuss it. It is an index of his concern that it is the second occasion on which he has brought differing aspects of the matter before the House on the motion for the Adjournment. I am responding for the Government in view of my Department's responsibility for flood defence policy.

Flooding and the damage and distress that it undoubtedly causes is a highly emotive subject and understandably so. Even in cases where life and limb are mercifully not lost, the damage and distress that are sustained by those affected is often very severe and not just in economic terms; the experience is a horrible one. While natural phenomena such as flooding can never be entirely prevented, it is obviously right that those public authorities which are empowered to take measures to alleviate the risk do whatever they reasonably can to tackle it and are seen to do so.

As my hon. Friend is aware, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible for flood and coastal defence policy in England. At local level, responsibility for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of defences rests with one of a number of authorities, depending on the particular location and the nature of the problem. The National Rivers Authority looks after the major rivers and sea defences. Local authorities are involved with lesser rivers and with protecting their coastline against erosion. Internal drainage boards provide arterial drainage and flood relief in certain localised areas.

My Ministry makes substantial financial support available for flood defence and coast protection capital works undertaken by these bodies. In the last financial year, MAFF grant amounted to more than £60 million. It

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

is estimated that, in aggregate, this investment programme helps prevent flood damage amounting to about seven times the cost of the defence works themselves.

In the particular case raised again by my hon. Friend, the Caul Bourne stream at Shalfleet in the Isle of Wight is designated as a main river. This means that the National Rivers Authority—NRA—is empowered to carry out flood defence measures if it deems them appropriate. It also means that the NRA's formal consent must be sought when third parties propose to erect structures in the watercourse so that the flood defence implications can be assessed.

I now propose to set out the facts with regard to the flooding at Shalfleet as reported to my Department by the NRA. I understand that in November 1992, the NRA was informed by the Isle of Wight county council that the council had had to take action to prop up several weak bridges on the island, among them the Shalfleet bridge, owing to traffic loadings. In its letter, the council undertook to inspect the props used at regular intervals and to clear any debris which might accumulate. Officers from the NRA inspected the sites concerned and wrote to the council on 8 December 1992—that is, promptly—expressing some specific concerns.

My hon. Friend quoted from the NRA letter in his speech and during the previous debate. The authority's main concern is set out explicitly in the letter. It was that there was a potential flood hazard associated with the props holding up the Shalfleet bridge, particularly as a result of debris accumulating in areas obstructed by the props. The council was advised that it was essential that the site was inspected on a regular basis and inspected continuously during stormy or wet periods to prevent blockage. The letter added that the council was responsible for ensuring that no blockage took place. It also made it clear that the NRA's formal consent was needed for the works to the bridge.

It might be helpful to quote one sentence from the letter of 8 December which my hon. Friend did not mention, although he did mention other passages. The first point to the county council is made as follows:

"The extensive bracing incorporated on the bridge at Shalfleet is of great concern. The props are without question a potential flood hazard as any rubbish, branches washed down the watercourse, particularly in a flood, could get caught on them, thus effectively forming a dam".

So the NRA understood that and warned the council about it from the outset.

I understand that the NRA then wrote to the council again, in February 1993, reminding it of the authority's concern about the risk of flooding. At that time the council had not yet applied for a formal consent from the NRA. The NRA issued a consent for the permanent works involved in the reconstruction of the Shalfleet bridge in October 1993. But the NRA has informed my Department that it did not formally consent to the temporary props. Even if it had done so, the onus remained on the council, in accordance with the NRA's advice, to monitor the props and keep them free of obstruction by debris.

As we now know and as my hon. Friend has graphically described, flooding occurred at Shalfleet on 30 December 1993 following heavy rainfall. I understand that four properties were affected. I deeply sympathise with those who suffered loss or damage—not to mention distress—as a result. It is clearly right that when such events occur inquiries should be made by the relevant local agencies to establish the cause and to assess any lessons that need to be learnt for the future.

I understand that the NRA has examined the flooding at Shalfleet and considers that, although the event was preceded by heavy rainfall, debris trapped by props under the bridge was a contributory factor in the flooding. My hon. Friend will appreciate that these are difficult and complex technical matters, but I have cited a summary of the consultants' report to the NRA, which shows that the flooding was of a certain return frequency and that it was worse than anticipated, as was the amount of damage. So what might have been heavy rainfall turned into a substantial flood with damage to property.

While clearly the NRA cannot state with absolute certainty what would have happened if the props had not been there, it is considered unlikely, on this evidence, that debris would have accumulated if the bridge had been free from obstruction, or that flooding would have occurred in the absence of any obstruction.

Mr. Barry Field: If I may just explain: it is a fairly small bridge, and one might imagine that the Acrow props would be put under it so as to be in line, thus creating two channels down either side. In fact, however, props were put in across the bridge, effectively forming a series of small triangles under the bridge, thereby impeding rubbish more effectively than if they had been put in in a vertical plane.

Mr. Boswell: I thank my hon. Friend for that clarification, which forms part of the context of the NRA's warning to the county council.

My hon. Friend touched on his constituents' concerns about compensation. I hope that he will accept that this is a difficult area for me to comment on without prejudice to any legal proceedings that may be in train, now or in the future. What I can say—he has acknowledged it already—is that flooding is usually an insurable risk in this country and is covered in most household policies. There is no provision for compensation from public funds for those affected by flooding when it is an act of God, as it often is. However, if it can be shown through the normal legal process that flooding occurred through negligence or some other human agency, compensation may be sought from those responsible, but that would need to be decided in the courts on the facts of each case. I hope that my hon. Friend will reflect but will not press me further on that.

I understand that, at some time after the flooding at Shalfleet, the bridge props were removed, so the particular potential flood hazard no longer threatens. The NRA has advised my Department that it does not believe that any new flood defence works are required at Shalfleet bridge now that the river can flow normally.

The NRA has said also that, as part of its flood defence emergency response, its flood defence contractors will inspect Shalfleet bridge and other similar bridges on the Isle of Wight during times of heavy rainfall to assess the flood risk and to take any appropriate countermeasures. My hon. Friend will appreciate that there is now no question of there being the property of any other public authority in place in the river that it would have the responsibility of maintaining.

It has been extremely useful to bring these matters out into the open. My hon. Friend has performed a service to the House and to his constituents. I hope that he will accept that I have been as helpful as I reasonably can be in setting out the train of events as seen by the NRA and my Department and, indeed, documented. He will wish to consider with those of his constituents who were affected by the flooding, and in the light of my remarks, what further steps he wishes to take to bring the matter to what I hope will be a satisfactory conclusion.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCHYARD BILL
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No. 2) BILL *[Lords]*
(*By Order*)
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

1. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what estimate she has made of the number of primary school children being taught in classes of over 30 in the current academic year. [35990]

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): Figures for the current academic year are not available.

Mrs. Jackson: Figures for the current academic year are available in my constituency, because I have contacted every primary school head teacher. They show that children in 96 out of 187 primary school classes—more than 50 per cent. of them—will start the school year in classes of 30 or more. Will the Secretary of State say whether she believes that there is a link between the quality of education offered and the size of a primary school class? If she agrees that there is a link, what will she do about it—

Madam Speaker: Order. We are not in debate; this is Question Time.

Mrs. Shephard: I have said often enough in this House that I accept that a very large class may be difficult for a teacher to manage. The chief inspector of schools, however, consistently reports no link between class size and attainment. He also consistently reports that what matters is the quality of teaching. That is why I greatly welcome the recent conversion of Opposition Members to supporting improved standards in schools, despite their voting record of having opposed every measure to improve standards of the past 16 years.

Mr. Alison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that overcrowded school premises can inhibit a school's excellence as much as overcrowded classes? Will she look with special sympathy at proposals, soon to reach her, to rebuild or expand Monk Fryston Church of England primary school in my constituency? Built for 44 children, it is now crammed with 126 of them, in more temporary classrooms than original classrooms. Will she do her best to help that marvellous school move into a more expansive phase?

Mrs. Shephard: My right hon. Friend has been consistently assiduous in pressing the case for a capital allocation to Monk Fryston school, and I am grateful to him. I understand that the North Yorkshire local education authority has included an element for the school in this year's capital bid. Clearly I can give my right hon. Friend no more reassurance than to say that I will judge any such bid against our criteria to ensure that resources are fairly distributed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it is acceptable for primary schools to have classes of more than 30, why is it not acceptable for preparatory schools—the junior equivalents of public schools—to which the rich can send their children? Why should those schools be able to have 15 in a class while numbers in the state sector are double that? Does it not show that the Government are interested only in privilege in education?

Mrs. Shephard: On the contrary, we believe in choice, and in choice for everyone. The Opposition believe in choice for their Front Benchers and a firm march back to the 1960s for everyone else.

Literacy and Numeracy

2. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what progress has been made in improving literacy and numeracy in schools. [45991]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment (Mrs. Cheryl Gillan): Raising standards of literacy and numeracy is at the heart of our school reforms. The chief inspector of schools has confirmed that our reforms are improving the quality of education.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that literacy and numeracy are still the keys to success in later life for young people? In that context, what steps does her Department propose to take further to improve standards of reading, writing and speaking English, and of adding and subtracting numbers?

Mrs. Gillan: My hon. Friend is right. Only last week, we set out new measures for raising standards of written and spoken English in schools and the workplace across the country. Communication skills are vital for career prospects and the Government's initiatives on spoken English qualifications emanate from discussions and consultations with a wide range of people, including business, the media, unions, voluntary bodies and educators. We are delighted that Trevor McDonald has agreed to chair the steering group and we look forward to developments in this sector.

Mr. Marek: The Minister will know that class sizes in public and preparatory schools are on average half as

small as those in state schools. Will she make a connection between class sizes and achieving higher standards in numeracy and literacy?

Mrs. Gillan: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is inviting me down a route that I should not care to follow, but the House should know that Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools has confirmed that, notably, the national curriculum and testing are already helping to raise overall education standards, and we can expect a steady rise in standards as more pupils benefit from our reforms.

Nursery Education

3. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a further statement about her plans for the expansion of nursery education. [35992]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): I am delighted to announce that Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Westminster have confirmed their decision to take part in the first phase of the voucher scheme, beginning in April 1996. Others are considering the issue and I hope to be able to add to that list in the near future.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my hon. Friend confirm that when he has completed his consultation exercise on quality assurance he will promote a policy of good education, good quality and good value for money?

Mr. Squire: I most certainly confirm what my hon. Friend seeks. The aim of the scheme, which will apply to every local education authority from April 1997, is to ensure the quality of education delivered to pre-fives and to extend the opportunity of nursery education to all four-year-olds who do not have it.

Mr. Don Foster: Given the recent debate about levels of crime, does the Minister agree that a proven connection exists between high-quality, early-years education and lowering juvenile crime? If he does, would it not have been better to introduce a system of proper, high-quality, early-years education for all three and four-year-olds instead of the cumbersome and bureaucratic voucher system?

Mr. Squire: I think that I can say no to most of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I am prepared to concede that one of the many elements claimed for early school education is that it may reduce subsequent delinquency.

I disagree fundamentally with the hon. Gentleman about vouchers. Only vouchers will give parents choice in their child's pre-school education, including parents who may have only one opportunity. Secondly—I do not wish to outstay my welcome, Madam Speaker—any money channelled through block grants to local authorities is by no means guaranteed to be spent on the sector that he has identified.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: Does my hon. Friend share my regret that Essex county council appears, as a matter of policy, to have refused even to take part in the trials that we have initiated?

Mr. Squire: I have been disappointed by the response of a number of local education authorities, all of which have been invited to take part and all of which, by definition, will have four-year-olds whose parents will be unable to secure pre-school education for their child. They would have had a better chance of doing so if they had been in phase one, so I share my hon. Friend's dismay.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Given the Secretary of State's failure to involve a nationally representative cross-section of authorities in the pilot scheme and her further failure to set clear targets for access to nursery education for three and four-year-olds, will the Minister tell us which agency is being charged with looking after the voucher scheme?

Mr. Squire: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, he will have to wait but a short while longer for the announcement to be made.

On the central issues, the hon. Gentleman will have to recognise that some authorities are not taking part because they have been misled by him and others and have been persuaded to give first priority not to parents but to political dogma.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the chief attractions to parents of four-year-olds of the new plan to expand nursery education is that no less than £185 million of entirely new money is being added to the education budget for that? Will he confirm that there is great enthusiasm for the provision of nursery education and for the expansion of choice and diversity? Will he join me in paying tribute to the expansion of the education provision in playgroups run by the Pre-School Playgroups Association?

Mr. Squire: I willingly confirm the figure quoted by my hon. Friend and, like him, I welcome developments within the Pre-School Alliance. The large number of letters to the Department from parents who want to know why their authority is not taking part from 1996 shows that both Opposition parties are risking considerable unpopularity.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proportion of men aged (a) 55 to 59 and (b) 60 to 65 years are in employment. [35993]

Mrs. Gillan: At spring 1995, the proportion of men aged 55 to 59 in employment was 66.3 per cent. and 40.8 per cent. for those aged 60 to 65 years.

Mr. Wicks: Does the Minister agree that the fact that one in three men in their late fifties is out of work represents a huge waste of human potential and is bad news for the economy? Is it right that so many men who are still relatively young are thrown on to a human scrapheap? Do the Government have any proposals to get Britain back to work?

Mrs. Gillan: The hon. Gentleman should know that all age groups have benefited from the expansion of employment opportunities under this Government and that the fastest growth has been among those over 50. Among men aged 50 to 59, 66.3 per cent. are in employment, compared with the EC average of 63 per cent. Among men aged 60 to 64, the 45 per cent. figure compares with an EC average of 31 per cent. I am continuing my campaign to assist older workers to realise their potential and to play a full part in the labour market in a way that

meets their needs and those of employers. The Government are taking action today. We are not just talking about promises of legislation way into the future which will not deal with the current problem.

Sir Sydney Chapman: As someone who this very day has crossed the threshold between the two age groups mentioned in the question, my hon. Friend will understand that I am taking an increasing interest in tackling the problems of agism. I congratulate my hon. Friend on her recent initiative. May I suggest that it is far better to tackle the problem through her friendly persuasion rather than attempting to do so by legislation?

Mrs. Gillan: I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to take this opportunity to wish my hon. Friend a very happy birthday. He is only halfway there since we know that Madame Calment in France has achieved the great age of 120 years and 238 days. My hon. Friend has a long way to go.

During the recess I was able to make three new announcements on our campaign for older workers. First, I announced a new booklet targeted at recruitment agencies, which will be published before Christmas. Secondly—

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow such long answers to questions, particularly since the hon. Lady seems to be making a statement. Questions and answers are becoming longer and we are not making the progress on which I insist. Will the hon. Lady complete her answer?

Mrs. Gillan: First, there is to be a new booklet aimed at recruitment agencies; secondly, advice will be given to recruitment advertising agencies; and thirdly, the undertaking of a comprehensive survey—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms Harman: Does the Minister agree that unfairness and discrimination should have no place in today's world of work? Does she further agree that it is wrong to sack someone or to reject a job application solely on the ground of age? If so, why will not she take the simple step of making age discrimination in employment unlawful?

Mrs. Gillan: I shall not take lectures from the hon. Lady on this subject. Her policies are full of rhetoric. I have referred to three measures that I announced earlier this year, which propose positive steps to counteract the problems now, rather than talking about vague promises of what may be done in future.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the kernel of her answer is the figures for other European countries? Would not the adoption of the social chapter and a national minimum wage increase the number of old people out of work in the same way as it would increase youth unemployment?

Mrs. Gillan: Yes.

Nursery Education

5. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many three and four-year-olds started in nursery schools this September. [35994]

Mr. Robin Squire: Information about the number of three and four-year-olds in school is collected centrally in January. Provisional figures show that in January 1995, 52,600 three and four-year-olds were in maintained nursery schools.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that many parents of three and four-year-olds would like their children to be in nursery school, but are denied places? Did not even Lady Thatcher, back in 1972, commit the Conservative party to providing nursery education for all three and four-year-olds? Is not it a tragedy that, 23 years later, that has not been achieved? The Government are producing a smokescreen of vouchers to cover up the fact that they are not prepared to carry out even Lady Thatcher's commitment.

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman echoes others on the Opposition Benches in not being keen on parental choice, but that is no surprise to us. The answer to the substance of his question is: let us get universal provision for four-year-olds up and running properly, after which we can consider other aspects. The hon. Gentleman and his party are very free with spending commitments from time to time. The Government have made a firm commitment on four-year-olds and we will stick by it.

Sir Jim Spicer: Is my hon. Friend aware that within one day of the announcement of the voucher scheme, Liberal-controlled Dorset county council arbitrarily said that it wanted nothing to do with it? Since then it has been havering in its decision. Will he undertake to give the council as long as possible to decide one way or the other? If it does not decide to join the pilot scheme, when my hon. Friend comes to Dorset on 27 October will he lay the blame fairly and squarely on the council for not consulting governors and head teachers?

Mr. Squire: As my hon. Friend and the House know, because of the current legislative position the Government were required to ask for volunteers. Provided that my hon. Friend races from the Chamber at the appropriate time, contacts his local authority and makes it clear that it must act quickly, it could still be brought into phase one. It will, like all other authorities, be brought into phase two, but that will be too late for the parents of four-year-olds in the coming year.

Teachers' Pensions Agency

6. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the Teachers' Pensions Agency. [35995]

Mr. Robin Squire: We invited expressions of interest in June for a contract to administer the teachers' superannuation scheme. We are now considering whether to invite certain companies to tender for a contract. We expect to inform the House of our conclusions shortly.

Mr. Milburn: Does the Minister accept that if privatisation of the agency's functions goes ahead, it will not only threaten one of Darlington's key employers but will undermine the impartial pensions service currently received by more than 1 million teachers in this country? Will he explain to the House why, despite meeting all the targets set for them by Ministers, hard-working staff at the agency were denied the right to bid against private competitors to run the service? What assurances can he

now give both the staff at the agency and those directly employed by his Department in Darlington about their future job prospects?

Mr. Squire: As the hon. Gentleman knows, considerable discussions have been held, including those that I had with staff, and I fully understand that uncertainty is alarming some members of staff. In fairness, as I hope the hon. Gentleman recognises, whether or not we finally decide that the scheme could be contractorised, there will still be—even in the public sector if it remains in the public sector—a need to find further efficiency savings.

I see no reason why the management of the scheme—of course, there is no fund as such—should in any way jeopardise pensions or in any way lead to a lower standard of service. Indeed, one of the requirements that we would make if we proceeded would be that service should be at least as good as, if not better than, at present.

Mr. Devlin: I applaud the Minister for seeking savings on behalf of the taxpayer, but I remind him that the superannuation scheme is highly complex. It would be prudent if we were at least to allow the work force an opportunity to meet targets and to provide the service in competition with the private sector.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend's concerns—no doubt some of his constituents work at the agency—are well noted. As I made clear in my main answer, although at this stage I cannot announce whether we shall move out to the private sector, it should be stressed for the benefit of the House and for those who are expressing concern that the Darlington office has considerable attractions. We are advised that existing staff would transfer to any future contractor under legislation, and there would self-evidently be an advantage of continuity if another private sector body were brought in to administer the scheme from the same site.

Industrial Links

7. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what the Government are doing to encourage links between schools and industry. [35996]

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government continue to promote a wide range of activities, both departmentally and with other organisations, aimed at developing closer links between schools and industry.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the support that British Aerospace gives schools in my part of Lancashire sets an example that should be followed by other firms? Will she do all that she can to encourage other firms to do precisely that?

Mrs. Shephard: I am aware that British Aerospace, in backing the setting up of technology colleges, is giving a great deal of support to this area of educational work. Although I am absolutely delighted by British Aerospace's commitment, 200 industrial sponsors are backing 101 technology colleges and six language colleges which have been approved. Their support amounts to £11 million of sponsorship.

Mrs. Clwyd: Has the Minister looked at the recent health and safety statistics on accidents at work, which show an increase in accidents in manufacturing industry among school-age children? When will the Government act to enforce the law to end the scandal of 1.5 million school-age children working illegally in Britain?

Mrs. Shephard: The Government cannot condone any kind of illegal practices in employment. If the hon. Lady would like to send me details, they will be looked at.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that teachers benefit just as much as pupils from links with industry?

Mrs. Shephard: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. More than 160,000 teachers have taken industry placements since 1989.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Given that both schools and colleges are involved in providing academic and vocational training, does the Minister agree that we need a new partnership—not competition—between schools, colleges of further education, training and enterprise councils and industry so that they can provide the best quality of training for 16 to 18-year-olds in a highly competitive job environment? If extra resources are necessary to deliver that partnership, will she make them available?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall not make any promises today on extra public expenditure, but the hon. Gentleman is right. There should be a productive partnership between training and enterprise councils, colleges and schools in given areas. Occasionally that spills over into extremely fierce competition, which usually results in benefits for the young people involved, but a careful eye must be kept on it.

Class Sizes

8. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what research her Department has undertaken on the effect of class size on education standards. [35998]

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We continue to monitor research on Ofsted evidence in this area.

Mr. Khabra: The Minister has given a very unsatisfactory reply. May I draw her attention to the comments of Duncan Graham, the former chairman and chief executive of the National Curriculum Council, who is reported in the press as saying that

"the national curriculum could not be delivered properly in classes of more than 35 and children in groups of 40 and over were 'getting a raw deal'"?

We are already nearly 10,000 teachers short of the number required to maintain class sizes. Will the Minister deal with these fundamental questions? I should like a positive response.

Mrs. Shephard: Classes are not too large to deliver the national curriculum effectively. That is not only my view but that of the chief inspector. Clearly, the national curriculum is now slimmer than it was when Mr. Graham was chairman of the National Curriculum Council. I repeat that the quality of teaching depends on the quality of teachers, not class size.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Government's education reforms have done much to

improve the quality and standard of state education? Does she agree, however, that an increase in class sizes may jeopardise those reforms? May I therefore ask her to redouble her efforts to persuade her Cabinet colleagues to fund in full the next teachers' pay award?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is an inspiration and support, as always. He will know that at this time of year it is normal for members of the Cabinet to be engaged in vigorous debate.

Mr. Blunkett: It sounds as though we have another convert on our hands.

Does the Secretary of State agree that when the Deputy Prime Minister said last week that it was necessary to allow 60,000 children to "escape", as he put it, from the inadequacy of inner-city education, he was making the biggest indictment possible of 16 years of Conservative government? If £220 million is available, should not it go to lowering class sizes for 1.5 million children in infant schools or 7 million children in our state system, not merely to allowing 60,000 children to escape Tory incompetence?

Mrs. Shephard: It really is time that Labour Members stopped perpetuating the fiction that they are remotely interested in raising standards in our schools. They have consistently opposed every standard-raising measure that has gone through the House. The opposition of Labour Members to choice, diversity of provision and excellence is well known and well documented; so is their principal motivation of class envy. All those factors are well illustrated in their desire to end the assisted places scheme, which provides real opportunities for children from poorer families. Sadly, the Labour party is the enemy of aspiration.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite all the huffing and puffing by the Labour party, pupil-teacher ratios have fallen substantially—from 19:1 to 18:1—since it was in office, that over the same period the number of support staff in our schools has vastly increased, and that how classes are organised within that ratio is entirely a matter for the head teacher?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right, as always. Class size statistics tell us nothing about how teachers now work and how pupils learn.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Secretary of State agree that, irrespective of class sizes, the class teacher's ability to identify through early assessment the special needs of individual children, and the provision of individual help, will play a major part in raising standards?

Mrs. Shephard: Indeed, assessment and testing at all stages throughout a pupil's career are extremely important, and our nursery initiative will enable us to examine carefully what children can achieve when they reach primary school.

Dr. Spink: Is my right hon. Friend aware that when the Education Select Committee visited Japan it found that in some subjects standards were higher than in this country, yet that class sizes were invariably much higher than in this country? Does she not conclude from that evidence that it is the quality of teaching and the involvement of parents that dictates achievement and outcome, and that those are the areas that we should address most aggressively?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, I am happy that the Select Committee's visit to Japan confirmed my conviction that it is the quality of teaching that matters.

School Budgets

9. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what representations she has received about the level of school budgets in 1996-97. [35999]

The Minister of State, Department for Education and Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): Funding for schools in 1996-97 is currently under consideration in the public expenditure survey. As part of that process, my right hon. Friend has received the views of the local authority associations and other interested parties.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Minister listen carefully, especially to the views of parents? Does he understand their concerns and will he respond positively to them? Does he realise that parents in, say, Nottinghamshire are alarmed that there are 350 fewer teachers in schools this term than last term, and that there are real worries that there will be 2,300 fewer teachers in the east midlands next year? Should we not invest in education and the future rather than cutting expenditure?

Mr. Forth: I am not surprised that parents in the hon. Gentleman's constituency have expressed alarm at their county council's conduct of local education matters. I should have thought that they would want to examine carefully his county's disposition of surplus school places, for example, as well as the priority that it has or has not given to education, and the extent of its non-education expenditure. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is urging parents to ask their county councillors searching questions about how far the council reflects those parents' needs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that size is not everything, and that what is done with an education budget can be just as important? Is he aware that in Japan less than 4 per cent. of public expenditure goes to education, compared with more than 5 per cent. in this country, so there is no necessary link between how much is spent on education and what is achieved with the money?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is right; none of us is sizeist. The point is how effectively the money is used. There is no proven demonstrable correlation between the amount spent per pupil anywhere in the country and the educational outcomes achieved. My hon. Friend has done well to undermine and expose the glib assertion that there is necessarily a causal connection between the amount spent and educational outcomes.

Mr. MacShane: In that case, will the Minister promise the parents of Rotherham, who have seen 104 teachers sacked because of last year's education round, that spending money on education does not matter? He would not dare to come to my constituency and tell teachers and

parents that class sizes, educational attainment and sacking teachers does not count. The only teacher whom they want sacked is the ex-teacher sitting beside him.

Mr. Forth: I have been to many constituencies up and down the country and said exactly that to many people, and I will continue to do so whenever I have the opportunity. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I want to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Forth: I repeat to the hon. Gentleman what I said to his colleague, the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). Parents in the hon. Gentleman's constituency should be asking those questions of those responsible for spending the money in the area. If it has been necessary—if regrettable—to sack teachers, the hon. Gentleman's questions should be put to the local education authority that has made the decisions. The authority must be accountable to parents for the expenditure in its area.

Mr. Dover: Is the Minister aware that the Government's announcement last year of a 1 per cent. increase in education spend was converted by the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council into a reduction of 5.5 per cent? Is it not the worst-possible trouble-stirring for Labour to say to schools that there will be a further cut of 8 per cent. in 1996-97 before the Budget at the end of November and before the rate support grant settlement?

Mr. Forth: Yes. My hon. Friend makes the point extremely well. LEAs must be accountable for their decisions in their localities. If the authorities are prepared to play politics in the classroom and to make cheap political points by sacking teachers or by misleading parents and electors, I am sure that my hon. Friend and all my colleagues will continue to expose such practices.

Educational Attainment

10. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what assessment she has made of the effect of educational attainment on levels of pay received later in life. [36000]

Mr. Forth: High levels of educational achievement are vital to promote economic growth and personal development. The evidence is that earnings are higher for the better qualified both on qualification and throughout life.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that most of those who get the chance of going to university, and therefore have the chance to earn more in later life, will pay back for their education by higher taxation? Will the Government therefore scrap the discredited and despised student loans?

Mr. Forth: I am delighted that someone has emerged from the undergrowth on the Opposition Benches to make a plea for higher taxation. If there were more honesty from the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, we would get further in the political debate. The student loans scheme is working extraordinarily well. It has been well taken up and has been welcomed by students, more and more of whom are entering and leaving higher education every year.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is it not the case that students currently going into higher education—the ratio is one in three today, compared with one in eight under Labour—are benefiting from the education funds that have been recycled through the repayment of the grants of the generation who went before? Are not those very students, who under Labour would not have entered higher education, now benefiting?

Mr. Forth: Yes. My hon. Friend is right. The evidence shows that a large number of young people are now enjoying the benefits of higher education, while many more are enjoying excellent education post-16 in our further education colleges and sixth forms. Even more young people are taking part in modern apprenticeships and the many other training and educational opportunities that the Government are giving them. We will take no lectures from Opposition Members on the quality and breadth of what is being provided to young people and to those in learning throughout their lives in our various institutions of learning.

Ms Short: Does the Minister appreciate that the Government's policy of encouraging low pay in Britain is leading to a growth in the number of jobs requiring few skills or educational qualifications? Does he agree that Britain is worryingly backward when compared with our competitor countries in the skills level of the work force and in the percentage of young people in higher education? Is not the Government's policy of encouraging low pay and low skills blighting the life opportunities of British workers and damaging the economic position and the future of the British economy?

Mr. Forth: I recognise nothing in what the hon. Lady has said. We do not support the Opposition's policy of no pay. The figures prove that countries which have a statutory minimum wage—particularly some of our partners on the European mainland—have much higher overall unemployment, and unemployment of young people in particular, than this country. The lesson is quite clear; if one imposes a minimum pay rate on the labour market, a lot of people will be thrown out of work and will end up with no pay, not low pay.

Training

11. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when she next plans to meet representatives of the TUC to discuss training. [36001]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment (Mr. James Paice): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met John Monks on 30 August, and I will be meeting him on 8 November 1995.

Mr. Rooney: Is the Minister aware that today one in five vacancies cannot be filled because of skills shortages? Will he therefore accept the advice of both the Confederation of British Industry and the Engineering Employers Federation that the voluntary levy system has failed and that he needs to get together with all partners in industry to improve training levels?

Mr. Paice: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets his ideas from. Both the CBI and the engineering employers are whole-heartedly against the reintroduction of a levy. Only the Labour party persists in believing that it knows better than business how to invest in training. The voluntary approach that the Government have

followed has delivered greater volumes of expenditure on training, much better focused training and a much better qualified work force than there ever was under the previous Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36019]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Coombs: Even in the light of the recent record fall in reported crime, is my right hon. Friend aware of the great welcome that there will be throughout the country for the additional 5,000 police officers approved last week? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, irrespective of what the Lord Chief Justice might say, long prison sentences which become short as a result of automatic remission undermine people's sense of justice and do not act as a sufficient deterrent to the criminal?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I entirely support my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's strategy to fight crime. The threat of a long prison sentence deters criminals from committing crime. That is not just my view and that of the Home Secretary. That is the view of the police as well. I welcome the fall in crime over the past two and a half years, but we wish to see it fall a good deal further. That is what lay behind our announcements last week.

Mr. Blair: The Prime Minister will know that the Home Secretary has denied any involvement in the operational matters of the Prison Service, including the Parkhurst breakout. Can he therefore confirm the following facts: that, so far from this being true, the Home Secretary personally told Mr. Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst prison should be suspended immediately; that when Mr. Lewis objected as it was an operational matter, the Home Secretary threatened to instruct him to do it; that when Mr. Lewis further objected, the Home Secretary told the operational director of the Prison Service by fax that he would announce it in the House of Commons that day and duly did announce it in his statement to the House? Is that true or is it false?

The Prime Minister: The Home Secretary is responsible to Parliament for the actions of the Home Office and for the actions of the governor. He appointed Mr. Lewis to run the Prison Service. The criticisms over the past few days by the Learmont report have been directed at the director of prisons and not at my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I believe that the Home Secretary has acted entirely properly throughout this affair.

Mr. Blair: I am afraid that the Prime Minister has not answered the factual question. The Home Secretary is sitting a couple of places along. The Prime Minister can ask him whether it is true now. I put certain specific facts in relation to the pressure on Mr. Lewis in respect of the removal of the governor of Parkhurst. Are those facts true or are they false?

The Prime Minister: I have made it entirely clear to the right hon. Gentleman that I have no doubt that whatever action my right hon. and learned Friend took was entirely proper and within his remit as Home Secretary answerable to this House.

Mr. Blair: If the facts are true, it was not within his remit as it was an operational matter. That is precisely the issue. Is the Prime Minister aware of the fact that Mr. Lewis has also said this morning that the Home Secretary personally interfered in prison visits, in searches and in disciplinary awards and that there has been greater political interference than at any point in time in the service history? Is it not the case that we do not have a Government governing the country? We have a group of Ministers who will play games with these issues, who take credit when things are going right and refuse to take credit when things are going wrong. That is not a responsible Government for Britain.

The Prime Minister: We noticed the careful lead-up to the pre-prepared soundbite, as we do each Tuesday and Thursday. My right hon. and learned Friend discharges properly his responsibilities to this House and this country. Were he not to do so, the Leader of the Opposition would say, "Why does the Home Secretary not take an interest in matters that are relevant to the good conduct of the prison service?" But he is not responsible for the day-to-day management of the Prison Service. He is responsible to this House and answerable to this House, and he must take actions in the interests of the Prison Service. That is what my right hon. and learned Friend has done, and he has my full support in having done it.

Mr. Alexander: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the proposal that British Telecom should be able to wire up schools to the super-highway in return for carrying television signals? Is he aware that that would run contrary to the well-settled framework for those matters, and would be to the considerable advantage of British Telecom and the considerable disadvantage of the cable companies which have invested a great deal in the procedure so far?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am aware of that. Many schools are already being cabled up for precisely those advantages. If the Opposition, who occasionally like to claim credit for the information super-highway, were to examine what was happening—if they took their heads out of the sand and put them in the holes in the road—they would see that it was already being built.

Q2. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36020]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell: Which has done more damage to the Government: the irresponsibility of the Defence Secretary last week or the Home Secretary's unwillingness to accept responsibility this week?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary was expressing the fears of many people, not

just in the United Kingdom but throughout Europe, about the more ambitious federalist plans for the future of the European Union. If the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying that his party's policy is that the British armed forces should be commanded by qualified majority vote elsewhere, let him say so.

Mr. Dunn: Conservatives welcome the decision to expand the assisted places scheme. Will my right hon. Friend compare our policies of maximising parental choice with those of the Opposition, which would destroy the city technology colleges, grammar schools, the assisted places scheme and grant-maintained schools in the interests of equality, justice and social engineering?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. We seek excellence in education and choice for all parents in the interests of their children. I very much regret that the Opposition—except perhaps the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth)—oppose the assisted places scheme.

Q3. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36021]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Prime Minister share the fear that has been expressed that the privatisation of Her Majesty's Stationery Office later this afternoon will lead to commercial motives overriding the public interest in making official information more freely available to the general public, as it is in other countries? Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that it is clearly in a privatised HMSO's interest to resist free electronic access to Government publications protected by Government copyright? How does that square with the Government's commitment to a freedom of information policy and to extending the information technology revolution to the rest of the country?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will know, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is answering a question later on this afternoon. I do not wish comment in detail on the substance of his question but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend will ensure that the needs of Parliament and other customers are satisfied for openness, for improved access to information technology, for value for money, for flexibility and for security of supply. The record of privatisation over recent years is that it has improved, not damaged, service.

Mr. Garnier: My right hon. Friend will have heard this morning of another terrorist bombing in Paris. Will he use this opportunity today to reaffirm his Government's policy on border controls and to make sure that they are never loosened so that terrorists may not get easy access to this country?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to confirm the Government's policy on border controls. We need those border controls. We intend to keep them, and they are not negotiable.

Q4. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36022]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michael: Can we now hear it straight from the Prime Minister: just how bad do things have to get at the Home Office to require a ministerial resignation?

The Prime Minister: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads the Learmont report, and after he has done so he will be better informed and he will know that the criticisms were directed not at my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary but at the Prison Service. My right hon. and learned Friend acted properly in those circumstances.

Mr. Marlow: Given that a report has been issued today by the Labour party—the blueprint for the dismemberment of the United Kingdom—could my right hon. Friend tell the House how it could be possible if there were a Parliament in Scotland, that a party with a majority in the United Kingdom but not in the majority in England could govern England?

The Prime Minister: I have not yet had the opportunity to consider the document that has been published today but I am certainly aware that one was scheduled to be published today and I am aware of the policies of the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party on the subject of devolution in Scotland. There is no doubt whatsoever that those policies, if carried out as at present intended, would have a very damaging effect on the United Kingdom. *[Interruption.]* Although the leader of the Labour party shouts something at me across the Dispatch Box, it was he who referred to the tartan tax—an extra £6 a week, which he seems to think is an accountancy detail.

Q5. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36023]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Quin: Given the widespread public concern expressed over the summer, will the Prime Minister take the opportunity, particularly before the Commonwealth conference next month, of condemning the French nuclear tests in the south Pacific?

The Prime Minister: No, I will not.

Mr. Michael Brown: The Prime Minister spoke with the Home Secretary last week in the Winter Gardens at Blackpool where the subject of closed circuit televisions to deal with law and order was raised. Is he aware that in Cleethorpes we have a Winter Gardens, but we do not yet have closed circuit television. The Minister of State was unable to accede to my request earlier this year. Can my right hon. Friend assure me and the people of Cleethorpes that this time round Cleethorpes will be considered for closed circuit television in the high street and on the sea front where we have a problem with the youths and yobs who cause such distress to our retired people in Cleethorpes?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that there will be provision for a further 10,000 such closed circuit television cameras over the next three years and I

have no doubt, as we consider where those should be, that my hon. Friend may from time to time mention the particular concerns of Cleethorpes.

Q6. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 October. [36024]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Prime Minister aware that there have been angry reactions throughout the country to reports that overseas aid is to be cut by 12 per cent. over two years? Does he not care that such cuts would have a catastrophic effect on some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world? Is he aware that 79 per cent. of the British people find such cuts repugnant when they will be used for tax cuts in the run-up to the general election?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, at something more than £2.2 billion, we have the fifth largest overseas aid programme in the world. It is not only one of the largest aid programmes in the world but, as the hon. Lady herself has acknowledged in the past, one of the best. I assure the hon. Lady that, after my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget, we shall continue to have a highly effective aid programme.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the concept of fundholding is right at the core of the success of our reforms in the health service? Has he noticed that doctors who are fundholders have, in the past two days, roundly attacked Labour's proposals for the sham that they are and have said that they will destroy the very success that we have created? Will my right hon. Friend now take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to fundholding status and to point out the disastrous concept of Labour policy?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The report by the GPs sets out what we have said consistently about fundholding—that our reforms are benefiting patients and delivering to them the service that they deserve. If the Labour party seriously intended to turn the clock back and to abolish fundholding, it would create chaos and confusion, and would damage the service for patients. The fact of the matter is that Labour is more concerned about political gestures than about care for the patient, and that has always been the case.

Rural White Paper

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Gummer): I am pleased to present to the House today the Government's White Paper "Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside". This has been produced jointly by my own Department and that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but with the close co-operation and participation of all Government Departments and countryside agencies. Scotland and Wales will produce their own papers.

When we started on this venture, we undertook to consider together the economic, social and environmental aspects of country life, building on the principles set out in the sustainable development strategy. This was an ambitious task, but the goal of sustainable development requires that we look at such subjects in the round. This White Paper does just that.

The White Paper sets out the role of Government alongside that of the many others who share influence over the future of rural life. It strikes a proper balance between the many competing pressures on our rural life and landscape. It embodies our determination not to allow the countryside to be turned into a museum piece. It sets out how the countryside can continue its economic success and remain a living, working place. It marks a new phase in environmental protection. It shows our determination to protect and enhance the countryside for its own sake. It emphasises the diversity within our rural areas, and demonstrates our commitment to real subsidiarity.

Sustainable development is about the right way in which to achieve economic development, not about stopping it. All our aspirations for rural areas depend on a secure and diverse economic base. The Government's root economic policies—more competition, less regulation and sensible planning—have brought huge benefits to the rural economy, as elsewhere. Rural enterprise is flourishing. The rate of growth of small business has far exceeded the national average. Unemployment is lower. New jobs are rapidly replacing the old, as advances in communications and in transport transform our notion of what is remote.

However, success must not lead to complacency. We need further diversification, and we need to see the benefits of this reach to all parts of the countryside—as the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) will no doubt know from his rural experience.

The White Paper therefore contains a number of measures to strengthen the competitiveness of rural businesses and to promote economic diversification in ways which respect the environment. Perhaps most notably, we shall revise planning policy guidance note 7—the main rural planning guidance note—to encourage greater re-use of rural buildings for business rather than residential purposes; we shall consult on the introduction of a new rural business use class within the planning system, in order further to encourage appropriate rural enterprise; and we will continue our drive against unnecessary regulation and over-zealous enforcement of those regulations which are necessary.

At the same time, we should defend the green belt, restrain out-of-town shopping developments and, by the regeneration of our inner cities, ensure that as much new building as possible takes place in our towns.

We shall also continue to safeguard a viable and competitive agriculture. Although no longer the predominant rural employer, farming remains a dynamic and essential industry. It supports a range of ancillary supply industries and provides raw materials for food processing. Agriculture remains the most important influence on the appearance of most of our countryside. Its continued viability will remain crucial for the achievement of many conservation objectives.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear the Government's view that producers and consumers alike would benefit from further, fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy in the direction of freer markets. The White Paper reaffirms that belief, and with it the Government's commitment to ensure that care for the environment is central to the future development of the CAP.

The White Paper also places great emphasis on diversity. Conservative Members will welcome the fact that we set out to respect and enhance that diversity, not to stamp upon it. Rural England is not one homogeneous entity, but a glorious mixture. A wide range of local circumstances create a wide range of local needs. These needs are best known, and therefore best dealt with, by the people most directly concerned.

Accordingly, the Government propose to test new ways of increasing local influence over local issues and enhancing the role of parish councils, particularly in crime prevention, community transport and the management of local footpaths.

The White Paper contains a number of additional measures and commitments to help meet the need for high-quality rural services, and to improve their accessibility to those who most need them. Quality and accessibility do not always rest easily together, yet the Government are determined to improve both. To this end, we shall launch a rural charter initiative to help ensure that service providers meet the needs of their rural as well as their urban customers.

Without doubt, there is great potential in the application of information technology. This has implications right across the board—for education, for medicine, for the viability of local post offices, for work patterns and for transport needs. Use of such technology is already spreading fast, a process which has been greatly assisted by our resolute determination to introduce greater competition into the communication markets.

I should like to comment particularly on two crucial aspects of community life—the village store and local housing. There is no true substitute for local shops, which so often form the hub of a small community. While ultimately it is only customers who can guarantee their future, the general store and post office do have a particular importance in village life, and I am sure that the House will agree that it is right both to recognise that status and to seek to bolster it wherever practicable.

I am therefore announcing today that we intend further to safeguard the position of the traditional village store, and that we shall shortly consult on a new business rate relief scheme specifically targeted to benefit these stores. This last measure may require legislation, but in the

meantime we shall encourage local authorities to use the discretion they already have in the area to help the retention of village stores.

Similarly, the need for affordable housing is particularly keenly felt in rural areas, and we therefore wish to see more land brought forward for rented housing for local people. Our consultations identified four main constraints on this, and the White Paper addresses every one of these constraints.

First, the Government will reinforce their exceptions policy, so that affordable housing can be built outside the normal village envelope. Secondly, the Rural Development Commission will extend its support for so-called rural housing enablers, helping to guide interested landowners through the necessary agreements with housing associations and others.

Thirdly, we shall give the Housing Corporation greater flexibility to enhance its grant rates where that is necessary for rural schemes. I can give an assurance today that, in rural areas, developments built for local low-cost rented accommodation now will remain available for local low-cost rented accommodation in the future.

The White Paper emphasises the inter-relationship between economic development and environmental protection. It has much to say about safeguarding the countryside's natural resources—its water, its soil, its minerals, its habitats and wildlife, its woodland. In the case of forestry, it sets out a new target for doubling woodland cover over the next half century.

The White Paper marks a transition between two great phases of conservation policy making. The Government intend in future to complement the present system of area designations with new ways of enriching the quality of the wider countryside. We are not content merely to protect the wildlife that we already have; we aim to reverse that decline through the biodiversity action plan that is being advanced in parallel with this rural White Paper.

We shall give high priority to providing extra funding for the countryside stewardship scheme. Countryside stewardship will become the main axis of our practical conservation policy, and will be expanded to target new habitats and landscape features.

It is not for us to impose a national blueprint upon rural life, or to attempt a proliferation of local blueprints. Rather, it is our task to set a broad policy framework that maximises the opportunity for local initiative and responsibility, while ensuring that legitimate national objectives can be met and that the genuine public interest is properly protected.

In addition, the Government take seriously the task of ensuring that the rural voice is not drowned out by the metropolitan megaphone, and that rural tradition and local opinion are not stifled by sophisticated national pressure groups. To that end, we shall expand the remit of the Cabinet Committee on the Environment so that its task will be continually to consider the rural dimension of policy-making right across Whitehall. We intend to follow up the White Paper's proposals swiftly, and will report on progress next year.

The rural White Paper is a landmark statement on rural policy. I commend it to the House.

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does the Secretary of State remember telling his party conference last week that this rural White Paper would start with humility? So it should, for the Government have failed our rural communities.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, under the Conservatives, unemployment and crime have increased faster in our rural areas than elsewhere? Rural homelessness has more than doubled, and low pay is more prevalent than in our towns. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that village schools have closed, and that other essential local services have been lost—that our market towns and local shops have borne the brunt of the Government's past planning mistakes over out-of-town shopping centres?

As for the White Paper itself, let me deal first with housing. I welcome the Secretary of State's concession on exemptions to the right to buy for housing associations, and note what he just said about Housing Corporation grants; but how does he hope to ensure the building of an adequate number of much-needed homes for rent—particularly if he still refuses to allow local authorities to spend the millions of pounds raised from council house sales?

Then there is agriculture. I welcome the restatement of the plan to expand the countryside stewardship scheme; but only this year the Government scrapped the farm conservation grant schemes that helped farmers to combat pollution and to implement environmental improvement plans. How, then, can the Secretary of State assure us that today's recycled announcement is not just another thin coat of green paint that will be quickly scratched off in the spending round?

It was only two and a half years ago that the right hon. Gentleman, as Minister of Agriculture, was telling us that the reformed common agricultural policy was all his own work. Can he confirm that today's remarks on the CAP mean that the Government are now moving towards the policy that the Labour party has been advocating for some years—that price support payments should go, and that fair support for agriculture should be placed alongside new investment in the rural economy and environment?

Is the Secretary of State seriously seeking to encourage the selling off of more county council smallholdings? Is he not aware that the policy of both the agricultural workers union and the National Farmers Union is that those smallholdings should be retained?

Finally, on transport, is the Secretary of State aware that there has been a disastrous collapse in bus services in many rural areas? Local bus passenger journeys outside London have declined by more than a quarter since deregulation. How does the right hon. Gentleman expect to make a significant impact on the desperate shortage of transport services in rural areas if he continues to back deregulation? Will he also accept that the Government's deeply unpopular rail privatisation plans would pose a threat to rural stations and rural services in particular?

Has not the Government's recent agenda shown just how out of touch they have become with rural communities, as witness their proposals to privatise the Post Office and the Forestry Commission, and to abolish the agricultural wages boards? Labour fought successfully with rural communities against all those proposals. Does the Secretary of State accept that, while the Government have failed our rural communities, it is the Labour party that is addressing the real needs of people in the

[Dr. Gavin Strang]

countryside? That is why so many Conservative MEPs and councillors have lost their seats to Labour in the past 18 months.

Of course we shall consider this White Paper carefully and with interest. Above all, however, is it not a recognition of 16 years of Government failure?

Mr. Gummer: I shall resist the temptation to indulge in party politicking, although it seems a bit thick for the Labour party to say that it is a rural party when it cannot even allow its shadow Environment Secretary to reply to a statement by the Secretary of State for the Environment. That is because the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman knows so little about rural life that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) has to answer instead. I am surprised that he knows so little about England that he does not even realise that village schools in Warwickshire, and in Stratford-on-Avon in particular, are being closed at the instigation of Labour-controlled Warwickshire county council.

I am also surprised that the hon. Gentleman should dare to talk about agriculture as he does. I note that he has to fill in for the entire Labour agriculture Front-Bench group—but, as they represent Deptford, Camden and agricultural Greenwich, one can understand why that is necessary.

When talking about agriculture, the subject that he is supposed to know about, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East seems to have missed the fact that the reform of the CAP put support for environmentally friendly farming at its centre, whereas it had been a peripheral, add-on extra. That is the reform that we carried through, with precious little support from the Labour party, whose members, in so far as they were able to understand the rural dimension, did nothing to support rural people, farmers and farm workers.

As for county council smallholdings, the hon. Gentleman should have checked the facts. The number of county council smallholdings which act as a ladder into agriculture, as they were intended to do, is infinitesimal, which is why we believe that using the resources for other rural purposes is a higher priority for improving the rural economy. That comes from a party that knows about rural areas, not a party that merely visits them occasionally at weekends.

The one thing that will give us the rail services we need in rural areas, as in the East Suffolk line in my constituency, is the privatisation of rail services, which will enable us to direct the subsidy for the very services we want, rather than the subsidy being lost in the general cost of what was British Rail, when one could not see where that money was used, and certainly did not find it used in rural areas.

What an amazing statement about the privatisation of the Post Office. Most, if not all, rural post offices are privatised. The hon. Gentleman has never been in a rural post office if he thinks that they are nationalised. Rural post offices are run by rural postmasters and postmistresses. They were overwhelmingly in favour of Post Office privatisation because it—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am afraid they were. Opposition Members do not listen to rural people, so they do not know. Greenwich appears to be so far from the country that they have not even heard what rural postmasters and postmistresses have said. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East knows nothing about rural areas, cares less about them and should not have replied to the statement.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): My right hon. Friend will know that there has been much concern in rural areas about the prospect of the sale of council houses to their tenants on land that has been given to the village at less than the market price. May I take it from my right hon. Friend's statement that that position is now safeguarded, and that it will be possible for gifts of land or sales of land at less than the market price to be made to the local community in which council house tenants may be kept with no right to buy?

Mr. Gummer: That is true, and the effect of the exceptions policy, which allows land to come forward which would not otherwise be allowed for development, will, of course, be the interreaction with that, making the situation in settlements of less than 3,000 people unique. It is not something that happens elsewhere, but it does happen there and we want to safeguard it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Secretary of State will note that, although there are many warm words in the White Paper, the real test will be in the Budget which is yet to come. For example, will there be money to restore the cuts in rural housing association funding for new build in relation to the homes that he talked about in rural communities?

Will the current review of sparsity factors which the Department is undertaking lead to big cuts in rural council funding, as those councils expect? Will there be funding to councils to give rate relief to local post offices and to small businesses in village centres that he talks about, and will he respond to the call by his own Conservative party activists at his conference, who do know rural areas and who asked for the cap to be lifted on local rural councils?

Mr. Gummer: I think that the hon. Gentleman should know that the review of the sparsity factor was asked for by Labour councils in association with Liberal councils—in most counties, the difference is difficult to see. They are working closely hand in hand in ruining our rural areas and supporting urban areas instead.

That is what is happening in my county, where Ipswich is the only part that counts and rural areas have been betrayed by Labour and Liberal councillors together. I find it difficult to take the hon. Member's views on rural areas seriously when we note what is actually happening in rural county councils controlled by his party alone or in coalition with the Labour party, where they have given way to the megaphone of the towns instead of supporting the needs of the countryside. He will find out what is in the Budget when the Budget comes.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I warmly welcome the White Paper. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a profitable agriculture is a prerequisite of enhancing and beautifying the countryside and looking after the habitat? With my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will he do all he can to achieve just that within the CAP?

Mr. Gummer: Of course. The battle to ensure that we did not have the MacSharry plan, which would have made our agriculture unprofitable and which in many regions was supported by Opposition parties, involved an

important change of attitude, but we still have not moved far enough into a situation in which farmers are supported for looking after the land in an environmentally friendly way. We still have too much weight on production support; I look forward to a CAP that moves closer to selling goods at a proper price level and to providing help for farmers to farm in a way that enhances the countryside.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Secretary of State tell us how much it will cost, where the money will come from and who will pay?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read every word of the White Paper, where he will see very clearly that, instead of the usual Labour party view that one can solve all problems by throwing money at them, we have shown that, by changing the nature of the way in which we look at the countryside, and by building on what we are already spending and what we have already done, we can make a huge difference to the countryside. The hon. Gentleman has not yet had an opportunity to read what is a long, complicated and extremely interesting report. I hope that he will do so, and that when he does he will not make such off-the-cuff remarks.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his support and encouragement of village stores and his resistance to what I call supermarket mania will be widely welcomed in Cambridgeshire? Will my right hon. Friend address an entirely different matter which is of great concern in what is the fastest growing county in the country and the one with the worst road accident record? Will my right hon. Friend look at the problem of development where, in the case of the crazy proposals in the so-called Cambourn development, thousands more vehicles will be thrown on to a road that is already extremely dangerous? Will my right hon. Friend please discuss that serious problem with those in the Department of Transport?

Mr. Gummer: We will have to see some development in the countryside. I hope that we can change the social conditions whereby, because of the break-up of marriages, more and more units of accommodation are demanded for the same population. That is one of the serious matters that must concern us. We are talking about perhaps a further 2 million homes. I want to see the majority of those—as many as possible—in the centres of our cities. I want to see the re-use of brown land where there is the necessary infrastructure.

I must tell my hon. Friend that there is to be consultation about how we will meet those requirements. One of the issues that will be raised is that of new settlements and the roads that service them. I hope that my hon. Friend will play a part in that consultation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Secretary of State is always pressing the Labour party on how much our programmes will cost. Can we have a clear answer to a simple question? How much will it cost to meet all those promises made to the British people? How much taxpayers' money will be spent in supporting this statement? Let us have a clear answer to the question.

Mr. Gummer: A clear answer to the question is that a large amount of that money is already being spent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How much?

Mr. Gummer: There will be more money spent in these areas, but most of what is in the White Paper, as the hon. Gentleman will see when he reads it, is about an entire change in the way in which we look at our rural areas and making sure that the attitudes of rural people are reflected in Government policy, so that money which in the past has not come to rural areas will come to them, and so that the services of service providers, not necessarily the Government, are offered in rural areas as well as urban areas.

The White Paper has a wider range of proposals, not just for Government and local government, but for institutions outside, than any comparable White Paper. The fact that the hon. Gentleman made that comment shows that he has not yet had a chance to read the report. I hope that, when he has, he will not bother to ask that question.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his White Paper, and warmly welcome many of its provisions. I particularly welcome the business rate relief scheme announced today for rural post offices and general stores, which will be very welcome in the rural areas of my constituency. In addition, I welcome the fact that affordable housing in villages will remain in the rented sector. However, like the issues that arise in smallholding, how will my right hon. Friend address the fact that, sadly, it may mean that housing is allocated once and once only? Will there be some sort of mechanism to ensure that those who become more prosperous use such housing as a first step rather than as an end-of-the-road home, if I may put it that way?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to point to that, and it is why we have a series of policies which enable those who wish to buy their own home to do so on the open market with some help, in place of what would otherwise be a discount on the house on which they have paid rent over the years. As I have already announced, those schemes will be expanded and they will be available to many of those about whom we have been talking. We want those who live and who are brought up in the countryside to be able to continue to live there. The problem in many small villages is that there is no alternative space because of the strict planning provisions. Therefore, it is better to make provision for people to buy on the open market in those circumstances.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Many of the proposals in the White Paper should be welcomed by the House. On the question of restraining out-of-town shopping developments, does the Secretary of State accept that one of the problems for retail developers is the difficulty in acquiring central sites in our towns and cities that require regeneration? Has he any further proposals to facilitate and ease the acquisition of such sites in the inner parts of our towns and cities?

The business rate relief for village stores is very welcome indeed, and I hope that it will be pursued. Will the right hon. Gentleman consult the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland to ensure that village stores throughout the whole of the United Kingdom can benefit from that measure?

Mr. Gummer: I shall certainly do the latter, if the right hon. Gentleman would like me to do so. On his comment

[Mr. Gummer]

about the provision of central sites, we hope to persuade local authorities to take a much more active part in that, not only in helping with the assembly of land, but in being much more sensible about the provision of car parking. I am afraid that some local authorities have sought to second-guess those who wish to develop in the centre of towns by saying how much car parking they, the local authorities, think is suitable—when, after all, often the developer has built many large supermarkets throughout the country, and knows perfectly well how many car parking places are necessary.

I also hope that local authorities will recognise that the provision of car parking is much better done by those who have an interest in it, such as the retailing sector, than by the local authority, where money for the car park is often spread over many years, refurbishment does not take place and, consequently, the car parking is not acceptable, and people go to out-of-town stores instead.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his determination to protect the green belt, to discourage the development of out-of-town shopping centres, and to encourage the development of brown land in our towns and cities. While most people would warmly welcome measures that develop business in rural areas, will he ensure that any relaxation of planning restrictions in countryside areas outside the green belt does not assist the sort of massive over-development of the countryside that is currently being planned by local authorities such as Lancashire county council in its draft structure plan, which will eat up 6,000 acres of Lancashire countryside?

Mr. Gummer: Some of what I have seen of Lancashire county council belies the Labour party's comments about concern for the countryside. Lancashire county council has not shown any such concern under its current Labour control.

I am not suggesting any relaxation of planning arrangements, except in the following senses. First, when a local authority refuses planning permission for the re-use of an existing building, it should say what it believes the building could be used for. It cannot simply take a negative attitude; there must be a positive attempt to find a proper use for the building. Secondly, I believe that, in every case possible, such a building is better used for the provision of jobs than turned into another rural home. That was its original use in most cases, and it is one of the ways by which we can bring greater work into the countryside.

I hope that a more sensible attitude will be taken towards allowing people to begin businesses, whether in back kitchens, outhouses or the like. Often, some over-zealous local authorities prevent that, and demand that people should go to the local industrial estate—

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Come on.

Mr. Gummer: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that, but many of us who know about rural areas have had that sort of experience. I have no intention of permitting a general relaxation of planning arrangements.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. If I am to call all hon. Members who are interested in the statement, questions must be brisker and answers must be equally brisk; otherwise, many hon. Members will be disappointed today.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): The Minister was speaking about buildings. I would like to ask him about police stations. Across a whole swathe of rural Lancashire, in towns such as Barnoldswick and Clitheroe which serve the rural areas, police stations are being closed. The police are telling the public that they have to choose between having a police station closed or having policemen or women on the beat.

Is it the case, and is the Minister advising, that police stations should double up with fire stations, parish councils, Co-ops and perhaps post offices, to ensure that the police station is a presence in the countryside?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that I suggested any of those possibilities. It seems that the promise of 5,000 further policemen and the fact that we are suggesting in the rural White Paper a considerable increase in the number of special constables in rural areas, especially those who have a connection with a particular village, shows that we put the emphasis where it ought to be: bobbies on the beat, bobbies in the village, and a feeling that there is someone there doing the job, which is what most rural people want.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the biggest threat to the countryside is the tremendous outspill from the big cities? The building of at least 10,000 new houses in Maidstone over the next 20 years is threatened. Does he agree that we should look at the possibility of creating new whole villages rather than simply chicken-pox development around the local area?

Mr. Gummer: In the consultation paper with which we will be proceeding early in the new year, that is obviously one of the issues that we will have to discuss. I happen to think that we also have to deal with the root cause: we need more and more units of accommodation for every thousand of the population, not only because people live longer or go away from home earlier, but simply because marriages break up so much more often. We must consider that issue in a serious way as a nation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): May I ask, as one who represents a constituency of more than 500 square miles, whether the Minister is aware that most people in those villages and small towns would take the view that he could hardly wipe away in a single statement one afternoon 16 years of unregulated market forces, which have caused damage and blight in many of those villages? I refer in particular, but not only in that respect, to those massive supermarket and hypermarket developments.

I also draw the Minister's attention to the fact that, for most people in about 100 constituencies in Britain where rural life is important, he ought to put a stop to all those new green field opencast applications. I do not suppose for a minute that there is anything in the White Paper to put a stop to that.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would want me to join him in saying that I am entirely supportive of the 16 years, which saw the major changes in our rural society brought about by the environmentally sensitive areas—a system copied throughout Europe and

the world. It has meant that large sums of money have gone into the rural environment, and that the Environment Agency has been set up after the very successful setting up of the National Rivers Authority.

In the past 16 years, more attention has been given to our rural areas than perhaps in any time since the war. So I have nothing to be ashamed of from the past, but I want to do better in the future and to build on the excellence of the past. We are recognised throughout Europe for the excellence of our rural policy, and we wish to continue that. We do not have desertification in our rural areas: we have people moving in, so good is the policy.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I welcome the Secretary of State's emphasis on local decision taking, and his wish to see the countryside protected. Does he agree that he should look again at the way in which the five-year supply of land is calculated, and base it more on market experience—the number of houses people want to build and can sell—and rather less on the apocalyptic dreams of his officials about the likely collapse of the family? Surely, as members of the party of the family, we should support the family, not forecast its demise.

Mr. Gummer: I have scaled down as far as is humanly possible the concerns of a county such as Berkshire, for example. But the figure which Berkshire has agreed to accept of 40,000 homes is significantly less than the number which has been proposed by most of the authorities in the areas concerned, based upon the most, if I may say so, conservative figuring. We have to consider such matters seriously. My right hon. Friend's own record shows that he at least thinks that concern for the family is a matter for all of us.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about opencast mining? Does he accept that opencast developments provide very few jobs and seriously disrupt the landscape and rural communities of the areas involved? He must surely accept that the time has come to review the planning regulations and planning assumptions about opencast developments by the private sector.

Mr. Gummer: I have already done that; it was one of the first things I did. I reviewed the planning arrangements for opencast developments, and transformed the nature of the proof required. The proof is now very much more difficult to get, and it is also more difficult to get opencast mining permission. We made that change not because of the Labour party but because our party is concerned about our rural areas. The effect has been dramatic; the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is just wrong.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is it not the case that the White Paper was produced after the most extensive consultation ever undertaken the length and breadth of England, during which the Government listened above all to those who live and work in rural areas? Is it not right that this White Paper should be produced by the real party of the countryside, in contrast to what was produced on the back of an envelope by the townies opposite who represent seats in Camden and Edinburgh? Will not the White Paper create the right tone for the important debate that must follow on the future of our rural areas?

Mr. Gummer: There was more consultation on this White Paper than on almost anything that I can remember in government. My right hon. Friend is right to point out that practically nothing in the consultation stemmed from any suggestions made by the Opposition. The Labour party is unable to offer anything to country people, for it is an urban party, with no interest in the countryside except when votes are at stake.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of the deep concern felt by the farming population about the failure of young people to enter agriculture, and the consequent continuing increase in the average age of farmers. Does he recognise that it is important to have a sufficient number of people working in agriculture, not only to guarantee food production in the future but to ensure environmental protection?

Furthermore, the United Kingdom is the only country in the European Union that has no package of support to enable young people to enter the industry. Will he undertake to press the matter with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and is there something about it in the White Paper?

Mr. Gummer: I have several times—as Minister of Agriculture, and since—considered whether such a package would be effective, and I must say that I do not think it would. Much more effective has been the reform of agricultural land tenure, which means that many more farms will be available for letting than would otherwise have been the case—clearly, what the Government and the Country Landowners Association suggested turns out to be true. One sadness is that that legislation was opposed by the Opposition, who do not understand rural life, and prove as much whenever there is the possibility of a vote.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the Minister accept that many people, in my constituency and in the country as a whole, will warmly welcome the White Paper, especially its emphasis on parish councils and the new opportunities that are to be given to them to play a more active part in the daily life of their communities, and its emphasis on a sensible examination of the common agricultural policy and its impact on, for example, forestry?

Should not everyone who has a real interest in the rural community read the White Paper and take an active part in the further consultation process, so that we can build on the White Paper and expose members of the Labour party as the urban townies they are, as pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins)?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I believe that, within the European Union, we can develop a common agricultural policy that is more effective in supporting the environment. We need to work with our partners because alone we would find ourselves in a conflict of subsidy. I believe that my hon. Friend will find some of our suggestions in the White Paper extremely supportive.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister agree that most farmers in difficult hill country are living on a knife edge, and want the Government to show that they are committed to helping hill farmers remain in production? Will he say that he recognises the concerns

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

of farmers who are unable to maintain drystone walls, and that Government policy is in fact making that more difficult for them?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we have done a great deal to help farmers maintain such traditional elements, and that, in the Environment Act 1995, we took particular care to further that end. We have a long record of support for hill farmers, because there is no doubt that the countryside in the hills will remain as it is only if it is properly farmed, and animals and human beings can continue to live there. The hon. Gentleman speaks for us all when he says that hill farmers deserve the support that we give them.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the urban townies on the Conservative side welcome his statement, especially the flexibility being introduced concerning the reuse of rural buildings, and the much-needed economic health that that will bring to the countryside? Does he accept that we are also watching with interest the progress of rate relief for rural shops? Many shops in our high streets suffer equally, and rate relief for them would be extremely popular.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware that many hon. Members—they are not confined to the Government side of the House—will find an excuse to raise a favourite topic even in unfavourable circumstances; but, I must tell my hon. Friend that, in a small remote village with one shop, the closure of that shop would make a huge difference that would not be paralleled in the cities.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): How does the right hon. Gentleman square his new-found opposition to out-of-city shopping with the efforts that he has made to ensure that the Dumplington scheme in Greater Manchester has gone ahead?

Mr. Gummer: During my time as Secretary of State, I have sometimes felt it necessary to say that a development phase comes to an end, and that is what has happened—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) may make such comments, but it is rather typical of him that he has asked a question and then does not listen to the answer.

The Dumplington scheme was decided on some time ago, the circumstances were well tested in the courts, and there was no doubt that the scheme should go ahead. I have made decisions about individual schemes throughout the country, and I have believed that some should go ahead, but many I have refused. That is what the Secretary of State for the Environment has to do to fulfil his judicial function—and the hon. Member for Worsley would do better to listen to what I am saying rather than talking to his neighbour.

Sir Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I greatly welcome the main principle behind the White Paper—to keep the countryside as a living, working place. I also welcome the thrust to increase environmental diversity. In that connection, doubling the size of our woodland in 50 years is a colossal ambition, and it was a dynamic and brave statement to make. It will make a great difference to habitats, but how will my right hon. Friend achieve that ambitious target?

Mr. Gummer: We have a whole range of programmes, not least the community forest scheme, which I support. My hon. Friend is one of the most credible environmentalists, if not the most credible, in the House, and he will agree that we must approach the matter in many different ways.

I want to encourage farmers to do more planting, and local authorities, too, to support more planting on a wider scale. I also want to see planting in many places from which it is now excluded; that is why I hope that the green roots schemes starting in London will spread elsewhere. Over the next 50 years, we shall look to a whole range of innovative ways of doubling this nation's woodland cover—in appropriate places, not in places where it would harm wildlife.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What, as distinct from mineral planning guidance notes, is there in the White Paper about opencast mining? How can I be assured that the wide area of green belts in my constituency will not become black belts, with all the inconvenience that that causes to our citizens?

Mr. Gummer: I have addressed that question in four different places, the first of which was the change in the planning guidance that has made opencast mining much more difficult. Secondly, by reducing the land banks that local authorities have to hold, I have stopped the blight over large areas that would otherwise be used for the extraction of gravel.

Thirdly, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and I have announced the landfill tax, which will make it more economic to use second-hand aggregates, and will therefore reduce the demand for virgin aggregates. Fourthly, we will ensure that national recycling schemes will increase the amount and availability of second-hand material, and will thus reduce the need for extra mining. The rural White Paper builds on our present success, and we will continue what we are doing.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend's announcement about the business rate relief will be warmly welcomed not only by sub-post offices, but by village shops. But should not the announcement go further, as such shops need support as well as advice? Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that advice will come from the Rural Development Commission and that he will encourage the RDC to give such advice?

Organisations such as VIRSA—which is based in Halstock and run by Derek Smith—have done so much to assist in the introduction of co-operatives. Will such organisations be given help to enable them to do their jobs better? Will we finally have a campaign directed at those people who live in villages to say that—despite all the support that is to be given—if they do not use their local shops, they will lose them? Are not those people the key figures in this matter?

Mr. Gummer: We hope to bring together all the people concerned with the matter, and that is one reason why I am determined that the White Paper should be read in the round. It must not become the sort of wish list that the Opposition constantly want. We are seeking to tap into the dynamism of our rural areas and use voluntary and other organisations more widely.

My hon. Friend is right to say that the phrase "use it or lose it" ought to be emblazoned upon every heart in rural areas. Too many people who live in country villages and

drive long distances to buy all their goods then expect the local shop to be open in the middle of a snowy winter weekend to provide them with the things that they normally buy somewhere else.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): The White Paper contains measures to improve access to the countryside. Does the Secretary of State accept that a great deal needs to be done to change the rhetoric into reality? I have in mind the White Paper commitment to allow public access to land sold off by the Forestry Commission, the need to ensure that the countryside stewardship scheme really guarantees new public access, and a recognition in the White Paper that the commitment to have the rights of way network in good order by 2000 may not be met. May I invite the Secretary of State to walk down that path with renewed vigour and enthusiasm?

Mr. Gummer: I want the 120,000 miles of footpaths to be open properly and conveniently for the public, and I would like to see more access in some areas. I would certainly like to see the introduction of many of the things to which the hon. Gentleman referred—if not all of them—but I want that to be done in a way that will enhance opportunities for walkers while being balanced with other countryside matters.

I am not a believer in the right to roam, because I think that it gives rights without obligations. It gives walkers the right to roam in other areas, including wild conservation areas which must be protected to allow the next generation of birds and butterflies to be produced. We must keep a balance, but I agree that access is a most important aspect.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I welcome the White Paper as a whole, but I wish particularly to emphasise my welcome to its emphasis on affordable housing. That is very important in areas such as mine, where we support a green belt which needs some exceptions. When my right hon. Friend is developing his policy in that area, will he pay attention to a matter of particular concern to me? The effect of pushing rents up to a market level has been that many people living in some form of public housing are on benefit of one kind or another. That is not very healthy from the point of view of families, and I would be interested in my right hon. Friend's views.

Mr. Gummer: Obviously, we must reach a balance. If rents are at a particular level, we can bring more money into the provision of supported housing. My hon. Friend is probably right to say that rents are at an appropriate level, and I have made some announcements in the past about the terms in which we will look at rents in the future. I do not think that my hon. Friend's opinions and mine will be very far apart when we get to that point.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will understand that, although there are important social and human considerations to be borne in mind, from a landscape point of view it is pretty immaterial whether or not a house in the countryside is affordable. While I welcome the White Paper and look forward to reading it, can my right hon. Friend tell the House what it does further to protect the green belt, and particularly sites of special scientific interest?

Mr. Gummer: I have made it clear that I intend to continue the tough policy on the green belt, which I increased in toughness in my announcement on the green belt. I have every sympathy with my hon. Friend's view. One of the reasons why I intend to treat village housing differently from other housing is that, very often, it needs to be rather more expensive in its building in order to fit in with the character of the village.

We do not want the same house type built in one village in the south of England as is built in a northern village or an eastern village. There is a great deal of difference. For example, the desire to build social housing as infilling in Suffolk villages when those villages never were infilled—they always had little gaps—is a sad result of the fact that many planners are urban people who come in from outside. I hope that we will be able to meet my hon. Friend's worries.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I welcome the broad thrust of my right hon. Friend's statement, in particular that aspect of it which enables local authorities to retain 90 per cent. of the receipts from the sale of county farms. Can he tell me who is to decide whether the measures are likely to improve the quality of life in rural areas? Will that be something for the county council, the district council or his Department? When will the scheme come into effect? Can the money be spent only on local government schemes, or may it also be spent in partnership with private landowners?

Mr. Gummer: I am going out to consultation with all those bodies. It would be wrong of me to make decisions in advance. There is a well understood consultation procedure. I hope to see all the spending of the money done in partnerships. It is only through partnership that we get the best value for money.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): May I welcome the White Paper, and urge my right hon. Friend to look carefully at the proposals for tree planting? He and I know how much Suffolk will benefit from a few more trees. Will he examine carefully not just how many trees are planted but how many survive and thrive? Unless we make sure that enough money is spent, and care is taken to look after the trees, we will not have the numbers we want. Each year we lose them, we have to start all over again.

Mr. Gummer: That is a fitting question for the president of the Arboricultural Association. I thank my hon. Friend for it. He is right to say that, in Suffolk, where we have adjoining constituencies, we have seen far too much planting of trees which have not survived, particularly in heavy droughts such as the one we have just had. I agree that we must make sure that we get value for the planting, as well as the best value for the money.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I welcome my right hon. Friend's recognition that agriculture is at the core of rural life, especially in areas such as the High Peak, in spite of adverse farming conditions. I also welcome his rejection of the right to roam proposed by the Labour party, which would be devastating to many farming interests in my constituency and many others.

May I urge him to co-operate with our right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Agriculture in keeping the hill livestock compensatory allowances, which target grants so effectively into rural communities, while vigorously opposing a minimum wage, which would devastate farms and many other small rural industries?

Mr. Gummer: The right to roam is a matter of concern not only to farmers. Those who are concerned with the

[Mr. Gummer]

conservation of wildlife and want to look after landscapes of various kinds understand that, if the right to roam becomes the right to trample, which it is almost automatically, it damages the countryside. We need to balance the interests of the walker against other interests, in order that we can have a proper countryside.

As for the minimum wage, no part of the economy will be more damaged by it than the rural economy. It shows that the Labour party thinks that the only people who work in the countryside are farm workers. Many other people work in the countryside, and a minimum wage would destroy their opportunity to have a job at all. The Labour party is destructive of countryside employment.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. Does he share my view that the sustainability and viability of our rural communities and villages depend on a good democratic mix? Does he agree that county councils should be encouraged to provide affordable transportation for young rural people in pursuit of their education?

Mr. Gummer: I certainly recognise the curious system of priorities that led Suffolk county council to spend £2 million on new road signs and cut off the opportunity of 16-year-olds and others to go by bus to higher education institutions. But then, a county council run by the Liberal and Labour parties is likely to do that. I think that it is wrong.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Secretary of State come back to the questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) at the beginning? Will he now come clean, and admit that many of the problems faced by rural communities, which the White Paper attempts to address, are the direct result of the deregulation policies pursued by the Government over the past 16 years?

Those include the deregulation of buses, which has deprived thousands of local communities of their only form of public transport; the promotion of out-of-town shopping centres at the expense of village shops; the promotion of opencast mining; policies that have dried up the supply of affordable homes for rent and closed village schools and small local hospitals; and a record on crime in which villages, which in the past scarcely encountered theft, drugs or violence, have been left living in fear.

On top of that, the common agricultural policy, which leads to high food prices and harms the environment, costs every family in Britain £20 a week. Unless the White Paper puts all those matters right, it is a waste of paper.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is not a credible defender of the countryside. In many senses, that was the worst contribution that he has made on this subject for a very long time. He does not understand that, all over the country, Labour councils are closing village schools without so much as a discussion with parents. He does not understand that, in many areas, deregulation has increased the number of buses available.

As for crime, he does not understand that the Labour party is soft on criminals. It has not supported a single improvement in the fight against crime which we have brought before the House. The hon. Gentleman has never made a speech asking for tougher sentences or more policemen supporting rural areas. Indeed, he has never made a speech about rural areas, so far as I understand.

Mr. Dobson: That is rubbish.

Mr. Gummer: I said, "so far as I understand", and if I did not understand the hon. Gentleman's speech, it is because he uses words with a curious turn. His usual concern for rural areas is a photo opportunity rather than real concern.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member made the affirmation required by law: Chris Davies Esq., for Littleborough and Saddleworth.

Home Secretary (Prison Service)

4.34 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The House will wish to have notice at the earliest possible opportunity that, in view of recent developments and of the Prime Minister's failure to answer questions today, the Opposition have decided to change the subject for the half-day Opposition debate on Thursday this week, and that we will now initiate a debate on the responsibilities of the Home Secretary for the prison service.

Madam Speaker: That will be in order.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Hill Livestock

That the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1481) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Question agreed to.

Elimination of Poverty

4.34 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities to monitor the condition of their population; to require central government to publish information on the poverty of the people; to exempt pensioner households from standing charges; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; to equalise retirement ages at 60; to make provision for the calculation of social security benefits by reference to average earnings; and for connected purposes.

This is the 12th occasion on which I have sought leave to introduce such a measure, to recognise the problems that many poor people face and the poverty in which many pensioners are forced to live.

A media silence has been cast over the poverty that exists throughout Britain and over the campaigning work done by many pensioners' organisations to expose the disgracefully low state old age pension and demand fairer treatment. This summer, the Pensioners' Parliament was held in Blackpool, amidst a virtual media blackout of its work, despite its decisions and widespread support for its call for the state pension to be at least one third of average earnings and uprated annually in line with average earnings.

I will cover some of the points in the Bill in a moment, but the House ought to be aware that the most telling statistic about Britain—one of the richest countries in the world—over the past decade has been that it has had the largest growth in the disparity between rich and poor, and that that is getting worse. People did not always sleep on the streets in this country; they did not always beg. Young people did not always have to sleep in barns and disused garages. We did not always have the sight of people being discharged from mental institutions to beg and roam without any visible means of support. It is a crying shame that such poverty exists in our society. My Bill seeks to draw attention to those problems and proposes some measures to alleviate it.

First, we must establish a national poverty line, which the Government have signally failed to do. The Bill requires the Government to publish information on poverty every year and set a benchmark figure for poverty. Every time such a figure is produced, the Government say that it does not tally with their figures. They have to be brought to account.

The most recent figures for the poverty line were provided by the Social Security Select Committee in January 1993. It reported that, between 1979 and 1989, the number of people at or below benefit level rose from 7.7 million to 11.4 million. Lone parents, the unemployed and pensioners are among the poorest people in the country.

Between 1979 and 1993, the number of individuals in households with incomes of less than half the average went up from 5 million to 14.1 million. That figure included 4 million children. In other words, 4 million children are being brought up in households in a desperate state of poverty. It is small wonder that there is a high level of under-achievement in school, and that so many other social problems are associated with it.

The figures for income change between 1979 and 1989 show that someone who, in 1979, was earning £321 per week was earning £520 per week by 1993; someone earning £171 per week was earning £236. However, some of the poorest people in our society, who in 1979 were on £75 per week, were getting £62 by 1993. In other words, while the income for the richest has gone up by nearly two thirds, the income for the poorest has gone down by 17 per cent. That is a disgrace and a scandal. Those issues must be addressed.

If hon. Members care to read the reports of their local health and medical officers, they will find that, among the poorest people, life expectancy is lowest, the incidence of cancer highest and infant mortality highest. All the indices that led the great social reformers of the 19th century to introduce social reforms demonstrate yet again that the greatest enemy of good health is poverty.

Other statistics are, in many ways, more frightening. The suicide rate, for example, among young men aged 15 to 24 has increased by 75 per cent. The increase in the number of pensioners living in poverty who do not have access to an occupational scheme, a private scheme or any other scheme is increasing rapidly.

The Government like to claim that pensioners' incomes have gone up by 34 per cent. since 1979. That is not what people tell me on the streets and in the clubs of my constituency. That is not what one finds at any pensioners' meeting anywhere in the country. One finds the opposite to be the case. There is degrading poverty, especially among older women pensioners. There is the degradation of pensioners queuing up for stale bread outside supermarkets at 5 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, because that is the only way in which they can make ends meet.

The Bill is intended to address some of those problems. It is not possible to describe it all in 10 minutes. I make the point, however, about the huge increase in tax allowances for the richest in our society. If those tax allowances had been evenly distributed rather than handed to the richest, they would have made the poorest household at least £4 a week better off in real terms.

The Bill would require local authorities and health authorities to publish statistics every year on the poverty of the population whom they represent and especially on the services and provisions made available for the elderly within their communities. The Bill would also make the Government publish every year their statistics on the causes of and elimination of poverty within our society.

Many of us are fed up with the consensus that the welfare state is no longer affordable—that the state pension is too high and no longer sustainable, and that we therefore have to go down the road of the private, portable pension scheme. Most people are worse off and more insecure, and they live more precarious lives than was the case 15 years ago. The Bill would address some of those points.

Included in the Bill is a provision exempting pensioner households from standing charges as a way in which to increase the money available to them. In view of the profitability of the gas, electricity and telephone companies, such things are easily affordable. Likewise, all the travel schemes that were brought in by progressive Labour authorities in the 1970s and 1980s are under threat through the privatisation of our transport system. There is a need for a universal, nationwide scheme.

Above all, we must look at the way in which social security entitlements are calculated. In 1980, Geoffrey Howe, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, claimed that

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his greatest achievement was to break the link between pensions and earnings and to substitute the retail prices index. He has cost every pensioner more than £20 a week by that single decision. The pension is falling from 24 per cent. of average earnings to a mere 10 per cent. of average earnings. On top of that, there is the insult of saying to women in work that they must work until the age of 65 to qualify for a state pension. We should be reducing the age at which people have the right to retire to 60 for both women and men.

This issue will dominate this country for a long time to come. If the policy of continuing to cut the welfare state and to encourage people to take out private health, medical and pension insurance continues, there will be disasters and crises in future. We must change the terms of the debate.

A civilised, decent society would not allow people to sleep on the streets. It would house everybody, and would not allow its senior citizens to live in the abject poverty and misery in which they have to live at present. The Bill would at least guarantee that their increases would be in line with earnings, and there would be a national focus on the problems of poverty for all our people.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Llew Smith, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Ms Jean Corston, Mr. Bill Michie and Mr. Tony Banks.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities to monitor the condition of their population; to require central government to publish information on the poverty of the people; to exempt pensioner households from standing charges; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; to equalise retirement ages at 60; to make provision for the calculation of social security benefits by reference to average earnings; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 October, and to be printed. [Bill 169.]

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) read out the title of his Bill, the Elimination of Poverty Bill, he caused great amusement on the part of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Would it be in order for the hon. Gentleman to explain to us why he was so highly amused when somebody was talking about grants—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That is a good try, but it is not a point of order for the Chair. It is a matter for the Minister.

Orders of the Day

Defence

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [16 October]:

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995 contained in Cm. 2800.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Which amendment was: to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'declines to support the policy of the Government as set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995; condemns the continued instability in the armed forces caused by the Government's failure to establish a long-term strategic overview; notes that this undermines the morale and operational effectiveness of the United Kingdom's armed forces and fails to prepare the United Kingdom for the challenges of the post cold war world; calls upon the Government to establish a strategic defence review; deplores the way that United Kingdom defence capabilities and installations are being run down in an unstructured way instead of the Government seeking to manage the worst effects of change on communities and individuals through a defence diversification agency; urges a positive approach in the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and the immediate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention; condemns the Government's financial mismanagement and waste in defence; congratulates the excellent work carried out by British forces throughout the world and expresses pride in their continuing presence in United Nations peacekeeping operations'.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

[Relevant documents: The Ninth Report from the Defence Committee on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995, Session 1994-95, HC 572; the First Report from the Defence Committee on the Defence Estate, HC 67; the Fourth Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 318; the Fifth Report on Defence Costs Study Follow-up: Defence Medical Services, HC 102; the Sixth Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 641; the Sixth Report on Defence Use of Civilian Transport Assets and Personnel, HC86; and the Seventh Report on Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance and Target Acquisition, HC 319.]

4.44 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to speak to the Government motion. Before I start, I must say something about the speeches yesterday by the two Opposition spokesmen on defence, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew). Before I do, I should like to apologise to the hon. Member for South Shields for wrongly mentioning that he had not moved the motion. He had moved it so I was wrong to say that. All of us, however, who heard those speeches found them to be truly disturbing and, perhaps, an exceptional revelation because they demonstrated an inherent triviality, a total lack of understanding and an apparent lack of any concern for the big and complicated issues that dominate defence today.

Of course, we understand that the Labour party is on difficult ground. It is wedged between very real internal splits on defence, astonishing superficiality and ignorance and, in the case of the hon. Member for Carlisle, an almost hopeless naivety combined with an unhealthy obsession with something called sexism.

It is plain that Labour simply does not understand the armed forces. It has no vision and no strategy for defence; its views are null, void and invalid. Labour is, in short,

wholly unconvincing and, as every sensible person in the land knows, it could not and cannot be trusted with the defence of the realm.

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): While the Minister is in an unusually apologetic mood, may I ask him whether he is correctly quoted at column 115 as saying that this party, of which I am a member, has for the past four elections been "entirely unilateralist and pacifist"? Is he correctly quoted? Would he like to amend that remark or, if not, would he repeat it outside the House?

Mr. Soames: I was referring to the manifestos and not to the honourable exceptions, such as the right hon. Gentleman, who have always championed the cause of multilateral defence.

One of the recurring themes of yesterday's debate was the many expressions of pleasure at the success of the VE and VJ day celebrations. This is an appropriate occasion for us to reflect on what has been a most significant and poignant year. The whole nation came together to remember how much we all owe to the wartime generation and the armed forces were able to pay their own tribute to the past in a series of dignified and extremely moving ceremonies.

The House was able to pay its own unique and touching tribute through Madam Speaker. Some 57 world leaders gathered in London to mark the end of the war in Europe. It seemed that the entire nation paused in solemn and grateful reflection for the two-minute silence on the evening of 8 May.

I think, however, that the images that will rest longest in many of our minds were those of VJ day—of the millions of poppies drifting down from a Lancaster bomber and of the rank on rank of veterans, no longer the forgotten army, marching past Her Majesty in a seemingly endless stream. It is unlikely that there will ever again be a parade of such pride and distinction as when the nation united around the person of the sovereign to give due honour to worthy pride and still, in many cases, to remember unforgettable and inconsolable sadness.

I had the honour when in Ottawa a few weeks ago, on my way to visit our troops training at Suffield in Canada, to unveil a stone plaque at the foot of the Canadians' beautiful and impressive national war memorial. It was a tribute from all the people of Britain to the 111,548 heroic and selfless Canadians who gave their lives in the cause of peace and freedom in two world wars. It was a small but truly heartfelt token of the solemn gratitude, respect and admiration of the British people to the Canadians for their supreme gallantry and almost incredible endurance in circumstances which today are almost beyond the call of modern imagination.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that the declining band of people who served in the far east were particularly touched and impressed by the remarkable dignity of the VJ celebrations? Will he assure the House that the Government will not forget them in the future, particularly those who were prisoners of war of the Japanese?

Mr. Soames: I am sure that my hon. Friend will remember that one of the central points of the celebrations was the tribute and promise parade when just such a promise was made and just such a tribute was paid.

All the countries that fought alongside us are bound together with us still to this day by sometimes hidden but nevertheless profound ties of blood and sentiment which have stood the test of time. The message of the commemorations is that we must ensure that the awful sacrifices of our forebears and their courage, comradeship and sense of purpose are put to good use in this disorderly and dangerous world. The VE-VJ celebrations showed that their actions still command to this day the wonder, the reverence and the gratitude of the British people.

The House will, I know, wish to congratulate the world war 2 commemoration team at the Ministry of Defence on its wholly remarkable work in staging many of these unforgettable events.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): May I tell my hon. Friend how much his presence in Portsmouth was appreciated during the course of the commemorations and how much I endorse what he has just said? In Portsmouth, they do not feel forgotten any longer.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. One of the highlights of the commemorations were the celebrations for the forgotten fleet. I pay tribute to the town of Portsmouth and all those who organised what was a deeply memorable and moving parade and one which I shall never forget.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): When the Minister pays tribute, as he rightly does, to all those who fought, suffered and died in the last war, is not it necessary for us to remember that we were collaborating with other countries to defeat fascism and, though many of us may have many reservations about possible developments in the European Union, many of us were sickened by the sort of xenophobia demonstrated by the Secretary of State for Defence in Blackpool last week? Surely the last thing that we want to do is to create such anti-foreign and anti-European feeling which causes such deep offence abroad, and rightly so.

Mr. Soames: That was a uniquely foolish and stupid point to make, my having paid a lasting tribute to all those who fought beside us, and particularly in front of my right hon. Friend who had himself done exactly the same thing yesterday. But I suppose it comes of giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

I come now to the quite exceptional range of activities in which the armed forces have been involved during the last year. Given both the events of the last few months and the quite extraordinary achievements and efforts of the British forces in the theatre, I will start with the former Yugoslavia. All told, there are currently some 8,000 personnel from the United Kingdom on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. About 3,000 more act in support of United Nations and NATO operations.

Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State paid a handsome and warm tribute to the part played by the British forces in the United Nations and NATO operations to make Sarajevo safe for the civilian population following the brutal marketplace attack on 28 August. Twenty eight British aircraft—Tornado F3s, Harrier GR7s, laser-designating Jaguars, and Sea Harriers from HMS Invincible—all played their part in this the largest air operation in the alliance's history.

On the ground, 19 regiment Royal Artillery, the Highland Gunners, from the rapid reaction force, provided vital support from their positions on Mount Igman. They

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have now been dug in on Mount Igman for more than 80 days—a truly impressive example of toughness, endurance and resolve.

In central Bosnia, British forces remain at the forefront of the United Nations efforts to sustain the peace between the Croats and Muslims. That work is not as exciting to the media as air strikes and, as such, is more often than not overlooked by them, but we should be in no doubt as to its importance. It too is a difficult and sometimes extremely dangerous task. We saw the steadiness and courage displayed by the Royal Welch Fusiliers, the 24th of foot, during the hostage-taking incident in May this year.

For almost two years now, peace, albeit a fragile one, has existed between the Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia. British forces have been absolutely key in sustaining and nurturing this. They have helped to reconnect water and electricity supplies, to mend roads and to rebuild schools. They are working with local people and they are slowly helping them to take back control of their own lives and, with skill and patience, they are quietly laying the foundations for a lasting peace.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): As the Minister is describing our involvement in the former Yugoslavia, would he care to comment on the fact that we supplied many of the arms which almost certainly have been used in the present conflict?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman entered into a rather futile discussion on those lines last night which I do not propose to continue.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my hon. Friend agree that to carry out those and other important tasks the strength of regimental tradition is most important? Does he further agree that it does not help troops if they are second guessed by an army of accountants and experts in Whitehall when they need reasonable discretion on the ground under their own officers, commands and orders? Will my hon. Friend look favourably on many of the points made yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) about the excellence of our troops and the importance of supporting that excellence?

Mr. Soames: There was a great deal of what my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said in the debate last night with which I profoundly disagreed and there were a number of things with which I wholly agreed, as my hon. Friend knows, one of them being that the regimental system is the backbone of the British Army. I have to tell my right hon. Friend, even though I know that it will come as a terrible shock to him, that there is no question of anyone second guessing commanders' choices and decisions on the ground. Commanders make their own choices and decisions within the orders that they are given. My right hon. Friend, with his background, before he felt that he had to leave these places of high authority, will know that the Royal Welch Fusiliers sustain themselves in their hour of trial with years and generations of experience and loyalty, and that no other regiment in the British Army would have been more fit to be under seige than the 24th of foot.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Soames: No, I must continue.

In the Adriatic, the Royal Navy continues to play an important role. Her Majesty's ships Brazen and Glasgow are enforcing the arms embargo and trade sanctions—

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Having served in a famous regiment himself, I am sure that my hon. Friend needs no lectures from me on the regimental tradition. But is he aware that the Bett report, which he defended last night, says at paragraph 7.13 that the proposals would not be compatible with the existing regimental system?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend seems to have difficulty understanding that the Bett report is not a settled piece of Government policy. The Bett report is a consultation document which, as we have tried to explain to the hon. Gentleman, is being considered at some length by many working groups within the Ministry of Defence. Some of the recommendations in the Bett report will not see the light of common day and some will. It is an excellent piece of work which is considered by all three services to be worthy of the most serious consideration.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I acknowledge everything that the Minister has said about the excellent work that has been done by the British forces in UNPROFOR over the years. I have seen some of it for myself and I know that the British troops are as keen as any to play their part in peacekeeping and in protecting humanitarian aid. Can he therefore explain to me why his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told me that the British forces deployed on Mount Igman were not prepared to do what their French counterparts were doing to protect British humanitarian aid convoys?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman took up more than his fair share of the debate last night. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman made a perfect nuisance of himself at a time when we were extremely busily engaged. *[Interruption.]* I acknowledged last night the admirable work that the hon. Gentleman has done with Edinburgh Direct Aid. I applaud what he did, but I do not share his interpretation of the events that he describes.

In addition, the Royal Navy Carrier Group, which currently includes Invincible and Boxer, remains on station to provide support for the British contingent if necessary. Earlier in the year, I was delighted to return to Bosnia; as always, I was extremely impressed by the work being carried out by our forces in their peacekeeping role.

I visited Gioia del Colle in Italy, where the Jaguars and Tornados are based. From Italy, I flew on to Illustrious before visiting the Royal Highland Fusiliers in Vitez, the household cavalry regiment in Maglaj, the Royal Welch Fusiliers at Bugogno and men of the Royal Engineers at a number of locations. I was also delighted to visit the detachment of 845 Naval Air Squadron with its Sea King helicopters based at Split. That squadron has played an unbelievably distinguished role, taking part in many life-saving operations, often in the most hostile and difficult conditions, and they deserve great credit.

Further east, it is easy to forget that a significant British presence has remained in the Gulf region since the expulsion of Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Would my hon. Friend be good enough to clear up a point that he made in his winding-up speech yesterday? He said:

"Not only have we not gone too far but there . . . will be further cuts and attempts to keep down the cost of the way in which we do our business."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 115.]

Will my hon. Friend confirm that he agrees with the Prime Minister, who said that there would be no further cuts in the overall defence budget in the future, and that his remarks were aimed solely at cutting, within the overall budget, areas that he thought could be cut without jeopardising the front line?

Mr. Soames: I made plain what I meant in my speech last night. I am sure that my hon. Friend knows that I am well aware of what I said. What I said, and what I meant, was that the Ministry of Defence is a very large organisation that can never be complacent about bearing down on its costs. Its administrative costs, like those of any major organisation, will need to be ruthlessly trimmed at all times, in order particularly to preserve—as the Prime Minister said—the integrity and stability of the front line. I meant nothing more and nothing less than that.

I have just returned from visiting the Royal Air Force squadrons deployed as part of the coalition operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch. Those operations enforce the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 688.

There is no doubt about the need for continued vigilance in regard to Saddam Hussein. As the House will be aware, Ambassador Ekeus issued a report to the UN Security Council last week. He confirmed that Iraq is still far from complying with UN resolutions. For the first time, we have a detailed catalogue of Saddam Husseins's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. The report includes shocking details of Iraq's biological weapons programme. It is vital that the international community continue its stand that Iraq must comply with the Security Council resolutions. Until then, it is clear that Iraq will remain a threat to the region and to our strategic interests.

Alongside our coalition partners—the United States, France, Turkey and our Gulf allies—we have worked to enforce the no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq. To date, the Royal Air Force has flown over 12,000 sorties aimed at deterring repression of the Iraqi people, observing military activity and policing the no-fly zones.

The no-fly zones present dangerous conditions and a testing environment. The men and women whom I met at Incirlick, Dhahran and Riyadh are playing a vital role in keeping the pressure on Saddam Hussein. They have won the admiration and respect of their coalition partners for their bravery in daily flying into a potentially hazardous and very dangerous scenario. It is a measure of their guts and pure determination that the RAF's operational mission success rate stands at over 96 per cent.

Six Tornado GR1s and one VC10 tanker are deployed to each operation. They fly an average of 17 operational flying hours a day; in all, there are some 200 sorties a month. These operations underline the importance that we continue to attach to monitoring activities in Iraq. They send a clear message to the Iraqi dictator that we will not tolerate any repetition of the adventurism and disregard for international law that he has previously displayed.

The House will recall—with pleasure, I am sure—the rapid and emphatic international response to Saddam's provocative action last October. The spearhead battalion and additional Tornado aircraft were deployed to Kuwait within 48 hours.

Those two operations, Provide Comfort and Southern Watch, are truly formidable, and the people of this country can be very proud of the RAF's contribution.

As the House knows, the United Kingdom has continued to be a leading contributor to peacekeeping operations. At the time of last year's debate, a British contingent 600 strong was about two thirds of the way through a three-month deployment to Rwanda. Logistics specialists had made substanial improvements in the force's supply organisation, and 23 Para Field Ambulance gave crucial and brilliant medical care to returning refugees, many of whom owe their lives to those young men and women. A field squadron from the Royal Engineers and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers helped to reconstruct Rwanda's shattered infrastructure. It was a model deployment of its type, and we were pleased to be able to help that suffering and sad country in some way.

Elsewhere in Africa, between 8 February and 3 March this year the destroyer HMS Exeter joined an international task group to protect the UN forces withdrawing from Somalia. More recently, a British logistics battalion of some 650 personnel returned from a three-month deployment to Angola, where it set up the logistics infrastructure for the United Nations Angola verification mission. All three services were represented in that thoroughly joint operation in the British contingent, which was supported by the royal fleet auxiliary Sir Galahad.

By the time that it left in early August, the battalion had established and handed over to the United Nations a fully comprehensive system for receiving, storing and distributing supplies to peacekeepers in the field. Their contribution to the crucial early stages of the operation has been warmly praised by the United Nations commander, and they deserve the greatest possible credit.

The services also provided extensive assistance in the Caribbean during a recent spate of natural disasters. On 20 July, the West Indies guard ship Southampton and the royal fleet auxiliary Oakleaf were diverted to Montserrat when volcanic activity started on the island. Experts and advisers were also sent from the British military advisory and training team in Barbados to help prepare for a possible evacuation. A small team from the Irish Guards arrived shortly afterwards, with men from the Royal Marines fleet standby rifle company who were later deployed to provide internal security assistance for the Royal Montserrat police force, while men of the commando logistics regiment were deployed to Antigua to help prepare for any evacuees. The units involved were also able to help clear up in the aftermath of the hurricanes Luis and Marilyn.

It is easy to describe the operations that capture media attention—however fleetingly—but it is not only service men and women deployed on those operations who support our defence interests overseas. I want to mention two groups of people who hold very responsible and important assignments, yet rarely receive any credit. I speak first of the 119 attachés and defence advisers, and their wives, who support our defence interests in 71 countries around the world. That is vital work for our wider national interest.

Secondly, more than 400 personnel from the three services are employed in an advisory or training capacity in 24 countries and territories. They are a critical factor in cementing good defence relations, and in helping our friends to provide for their own security and that of the regions in which they live.

But, of course, it is close to home where, over recent years, the most sacrifices have been made. In the past 18 months, there have been some wonderful changes for the

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better in Northern Ireland. When I first visited the Province, the ceasefires were a new and uncertain development; in succeeding months, hopes and expectations of a lasting peace have grown steadily as people have become used to living without the terror of the bomb and the bullet. They will not lightly forgive anyone who returns to violence.

All three services have made an outstanding and incalculable contribution over the past 26 years to the Government's endeavours to maintain law and order in Northern Ireland and to restore normality. In particular I should like to single out for mention the contribution of the Home Service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment and their forerunners in the Ulster Defence Regiment. Their sacrifices over the years and their continued bravery deserve our unqualified admiration and respect.

As Armed Forces Minister, it is one of my greatest pleasures and one of my primary duties to visit as many units of the armed forces, and the civilians who support them, as possible. I have in the past year managed to visit over 50 different service units both here and overseas. They have included visits to command headquarters of all three services; operational RAF stations; ships of the Royal Navy; and regiments both on their home bases and deployed on operations and overseas.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I know that the Minister has visited both RAF bases in my constituency. Will he take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men who so tragically lost their lives in the Nimrod accident in Canada? In paying tribute to all who work in related defence areas, will he perhaps tell us when he expects the inquiry to be completed, since speculation brings no consolation to the relatives?

Mr. Soames: First, I wholly endorse the sentiment behind the hon. Lady's question. Secondly, I thank the Canadians for the unbelievable help they gave our military staff in Ottawa, who were under great pressure and handled the matter with distinction and sensitivity. Thirdly, I praise the hon. Lady for her unstinting support for the RAF, whose members regularly tell me how grateful they are for her support.

As to the board of inquiry, these matters take a very long time. There is no intention to delay on our part: only a resolve to get to the bottom of events and to find out what happened.

I had the great pleasure a few weeks ago of going to Canada to visit the training areas of Suffield and Wainwright, where we train nearly 20,000 British soldiers a year in the most high intensity end of the land battle. These are exceptional training areas; they provide the most exacting conditions, not only for live firing but for use of the tactical engagement simulation, which has revolutionised Army training and which will continue to do so.

The House should be extremely proud of the way all three services have managed, even in a period of prolonged and easy peace, to maintain the highest possible standard of training at the high intensity end of conflict. Were it not for this, the forces would not be nearly as good as they are at peacekeeping operations. It is because of the strength, discipline and skill that they derive from training hard that they can undertake peacekeeping operations so successfully. We are resolved at all costs to maintain these skills.

I have also tried wherever possible to spend time at some of those units that are perhaps less in the limelight than some of our front-line troops but who nevertheless make an invaluable contribution. Places such as the Army school of catering—

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I bet he enjoyed that.

Mr. Soames: I did indeed. It is safe to say that they laid on a very good show. Such places as the Defence Clothing and Textiles Agency would perhaps not spring immediately to mind for someone planning a programme of service visits, but to visit them gives one not only a feel of the enormous depth and breadth of skills but an indication of the exceptional size of the areas of business in which the services are involved.

In debating the activities in which the armed forces are currently engaged, the focus will tend naturally to be on our regular forces. So I welcome this opportunity to reiterate the Government's wholehearted recognition of the vital contribution that the reserves make to our defence capabilities. We are very lucky in this country to have so many splendid people who are prepared to give up their time in these vital tasks.

Earlier in the year, a composite company from the Territorial Army was deployed to the Falkland Islands. The deployment was a great success and it is likely to be followed by others. In addition, members of the Territorial Army continue to undertake short periods of service to fill vacant posts in units deploying on operational tours and exercises.

The numbers vary from day to day. But let me give the House a snapshot. On 30 September this year there were two reservists serving in support of the enforcement of the no-fly zone in northern Iraq, and 82 supporting operations in the former Yugoslavia. Wherever they are and whatever they do, they make an invaluable contribution.

What of the future? Over the years, the reserves have adapted to meet changing circumstances and commitments and have become experts in a wide range of skills. I want to leave the House in no doubt of our absolute intention to maintain sizeable reserve forces, and of our commitment to enhancing their role within the one-army concept. On 30 March this year, I announced the publication of "Strength in Reserve". We were delighted with the response: 504 written responses were received. Most supported our proposals. I know that many reservists have responded enthusiastically to the policy of using reserves more flexibly, and that they welcome the opportunities that the new legislation will offer them.

Having covered both the regular and reserve forces, I must take an opportunity to thank the Department's civilian work force for its vital and irreplaceable contribution. Much has been asked of it, as it has of the services, in driving forward much needed and important changes in the structure and organisation of the MOD, in improving the quality of service, and in achieving greater efficiency.

Civilian staff fill crucial roles. The caricature of the civilian at the MOD is one that I, having served there for a year and a half, deeply despise. They provide invaluable

support in every theatre and operation in which they serve. The rationalisation of the way in which the MOD carries out its activities, as set out in "Front Line First", is steadily being achieved and they are playing a full part during this great period of unsettling change.

Civilians do all this notwithstanding the massive upheaval for many hundreds of individuals and their families who are necessarily being redeployed to different areas of the country, or transferring with their work to agencies and to organisations within the private sector, or regrettably facing unavoidable redundancy.

We are very fortunate with our civilian staff, and I want to pay a warm and sincere tribute to their work at all levels of the Ministry of Defence.

I should now like to bring the House up to date with a number of important matters on which we have recently made decisions. The first of these concerns the Royal Marines units currently based in Plymouth. Following detailed consultation, I have today, with my right hon. Friend, decided that the Commando Logistics Regiment, whose living and working bases are currently split between Seaton and Coypool in Plymouth, and 59 Independent Commando Squadron of the Royal Engineers, currently based at Seaton, should move to Chivenor.

This arrangement will produce savings of about £2 million a year in running costs for the Royal Marines. More importantly, however, there will be significant operational and administrative advantages. At present the scope for training of both units is limited. At Chivenor it will be possible to fit both units, which are in many respects interdependent, to live, work and train together on the same site with modern, well appointed facilities.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): As a graduate of the parliamentary armed forces scheme with the Royal Marines, may I wholeheartedly welcome the Minister's announcement? Chivenor is the station that never closes. In that regard, will my hon. Friend ensure that the aviation facilities remain available, since it will be useful to be able to deploy C130s and helicopters into the station?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who honourably wears two hats in this context. He is a former RAF officer who was attached to Chivenor and thus understandably resentful about being made to give it up; but he is also a graduate of the Marines armed forces scheme. I endorse what he says. There is no plan to degrade the runway; and we shall be in consultation with the Department of Transport as to the best way forward.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): The community of North Devon will warmly welcome the Minister's announcement. The RAF has always enjoyed a close relationship with everyone in North Devon, and I have every confidence that the same warmth of welcome will be given to the Marines when they arrive.

I also echo remarks made about the future of the runway, about which we are all very anxious. If any shared use of the runway can be found that would make it viable, that would be to the benefit of all.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I was in his constituency not long ago speaking for the young man who will be replacing him in the House after the next election and I was left in no doubt as to the level of support that exists. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who I know has always been supportive of the services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) will know that Chivenor is an outstanding base. It has wonderful facilities—I pay tribute to the Royal Air Force for the excellent facilities that it left behind there. As I have said, I understand its resentment at having to give Chivenor up, but Chivenor has gone to a good home and I know that the Royal Marines will love and cherish it.

The second decision concerns the base porting arrangements for royal naval vessels. All royal naval vessels are now base ported at one of the three naval bases, Portsmouth, Devonport and Faslane.

Against the background of the successful outcome of the "Front Line First" studies, we have been considering what arrangements should apply to the landing platform helicopter HMS Ocean, which, for the benefit of Opposition Members, is a ship, when she enters service in 1997 and to the planned replacement for the current landing platform docks, HMS Intrepid and HMS Fearless—they are also ships. We have also considered whether any consequential adjustments might be necessary to the existing plan for other vessels.

After detailed consideration, I have decided that HMS Ocean should be based at Devonport and that she should be joined in due course by the planned replacement LPDs. We conclude that there are clear operational advantages in concentrating the amphibious vessels in Plymouth in close proximity to Royal Marine commando units based there. I can also confirm that the planned move to Portsmouth of five type 23 frigates and of some minor war vessels is proceeding.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Although I am grateful to my hon. Friend for keeping me informed of developments on the helicopter carrier and the LPD replacements, will he confirm that he has taken full account of the focus of Royal Marine activity in Whale Island in Portsmouth and also of the availability of the amphibious training ground in Browndown in my constituency? Will he confirm that putting replacement ships in Plymouth, Devonport as opposed to Portsmouth, will not in any weaken the Royal Navy's commitment to Portsmouth?

Mr. Soames: I am completely happy to give my hon. Friend, who has done so much to support the Royal Navy in Portsmouth over the years and to whom I know it is grateful, my absolute assurance that Portsmouth will remain central to the Royal Navy's operating requirements. This is a sensible and natural move. I am wholly behind it and it is completely the right thing to do. I acknowledge the wonderful facilities at Portsmouth and I have no doubt that fine use will continue to be made of them.

I deeply share the concern and distress of people in Plymouth who have been through a difficult time. Eighteen hundred marines will remain in Plymouth, even though the Commando Logistics Regiment is moving out, and I hope that the people of Plymouth will be pleased by the announcement that it will become the centre of amphibious excellence in the Royal Marines. I share the words of my hon. Friend about the importance of Portsmouth.

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Last month, I also confirmed that the Royal Naval air station at Portland would close by 1 April 1999 and that the restructured naval support command headquarters would be relocated in the Bath-Bristol region.

During the Army debate in February, I confirmed that, as a result of savings from the defence costs study, we would be able to increase the number of front line army units by re-rolling the Royal Armoured Corps Training Regiment. I have decided that that regiment—the 9/12 Lancers—should be located at Swanton Morley in Norfolk.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has announced in a written reply earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), we have selected Rosyth 2000 Ltd. as our preferred bidder for the purchase of Rosyth naval base. My hon. Friend the Minister will make a full statement towards the end of today's debate.

I have spoken at some length of the activities undertaken by our armed forces, both overseas and in the UK and I am extremely sorry to have spoken for so long and grateful to the House for its indulgence. I have a few more things I want to say.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The Minister mentioned Rosyth and the future of the naval base but he will be aware that, in the past months, there has been considerable speculation about the refitting of submarines and surface ships, and a decision that had previously been taken as between Devonport and Rosyth has appeared to be under review. Will he be a little more unequivocal about that than Ministry of Defence spokesmen have been able to be in the press in the past two or three months?

Mr. Soames: I hope that hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me if I do not stretch into that issue, which is not within my responsibility. My hon. Friend the Minister will, however, be dealing with that tonight and, I know, will be glad to mention that.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my hon. Friend going to say anything at all about the cadet forces?

Mr. Soames: It is about the only thing that I am afraid I am not going to have time to discuss. I wish to talk about a number of other things and my hon. Friend and I know what they are, but we simply have not time for everything and they got a good canter last year.

We have formidable armed forces and we must ensure that we can continue to recruit and retain people of the same high quality for the armed forces of tomorrow. It is against that background that Sir Michael Bett's independent review of service career and manpower structures was commissioned. We are now studying its wide-ranging recommendations and I note the concern expressed in the House yesterday by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends. That work is being taken forward in a number of major and detailed studies and our aim is to have completed the work in time to make a definitive statement on the way ahead in the spring of next year.

There is one important point of doctrine that I should stress publicly in the House. This is a good moment for me to stress this and I hope that I will have the support of the Opposition. My ministerial colleagues and I are determined to pursue joint operations and joint working wherever we can and wherever it is sensible to do so. That represents a sea change in the way in which the Department and the armed forces conduct their business.

This year's White Paper includes special features on the most visible expressions of that change: the permanent joint headquarters, the joint rapid deployment force, on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a further announcement yesterday, and the joint service command and staff college. Those projects are all being implemented and we look forward to the activation of the PJHQ and the joint rapid deployment force next year. Over time, they will bring about a marked change in the way in which we conduct our business, in the way in which our young officers are trained, in the way in which our units operate together, and in the way in which our forces are commanded. All those will be changes for the better.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Has the Minister read the report in yesterday's *Independent* which casts doubts on the estimates of the cost of the establishment of the joint service college at Camberley? Are the estimates contained in the paper presented with the defence estimates that there will be substantial savings still correct, and can the target date of 1997 be achieved, given that the *Independent* indicates that that is unlikely?

Mr. Soames: I do not wish to elude the question, but I have not read the report. A good deal of work is going on on that project and I will gladly examine the points that the hon. Gentleman makes and let him know. I am afraid that I returned from abroad only yesterday.

Those projects are not an end in themselves. The move towards joint working does not end with them—quite the opposite. This is not just some passing politically correct fad that will go away. In future, joint working must underlie everything that we do. The concept of joint operations will dominate.

In the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, we can see that the missions on which our armed forces will be engaged will require them to operate jointly. "Front Line First" showed us how joint working can both improve their effectiveness and cost us less. In future, therefore, our goal is to inject joint working from the cradle to the grave in military doctrine, in training and exercises, in operations, in the way in which we approach decisions on the projects on which we spend money, and in administration. In short, we think that we have to think and act jointly.

I want to conclude by saying a few general words about the services and again I apologise for speaking at some length—*[Interruption.]* I am getting on with it. I hope that our country still understands how proud it should be of our armed forces and of the way in which they carry out their duties, often in difficult circumstances and sometimes in dangerous conditions in this country and abroad. It is sometimes said that the services are reluctant to change—that is a favourite hobby-horse of the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew). That is not the impression that anyone receives who knows the services or works with them. I know of no other institution in Britain that has so readily and willingly adapted throughout its time to change. A journalist recently remarked that as so many other British institutions seem to be undergoing an almost total systems failure only the armed forces have maintained a high degree of credibility and a unity of purpose and performance. He went on to

say that he believed that their "can do" attitude seduced and impressed a country that, somehow too often feels that it cannot.

We live in a period of revolution—social, technological and political. That is extremely uncomfortable and it destabilises people. The organisations that survive revolution need to be imaginative, courageous, adaptable and flexible and need to bring in new ideas. Those are, above all, the qualities of the modern service man and woman. I hope that the House will listen to what I am saying because it is important.

In their standard of personal conduct and respect for the law, in their team work, cohesion and trust and in their highly developed sense of duty and obligation they are an institution which is wholly unique in this land and are a priceless and golden asset, for not only the defence of the realm but the vigorous promotion of Britain's national interest all over the world. I believe that their qualities are almost unique and it is important that our fellow citizens understand what makes up the traditions and institutions of the British armed forces rather than the complete caricature suggested by the hon. Member for Carlisle last night. They are so admired because of their comradeship, team spirit, loyalty and true but never jingoistic patriotism. The emotional, intellectual and moral qualities—

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soames: No I will not.

The emotional, intellectual and moral qualities which lead people to put their lives on the line are there for all to see on almost every occasion one cares to choose.

What I think sets the services apart from all the other institutions in the land is the general exceptional qualities of its leadership. I know that the hon. Member for Carlisle finds those qualities offensive. We are lucky with the young men and women whom we are able to recruit, but they would be largely ineffective were it not for the exceptional standards of leadership that the forces have retained.

Potential officers in all three services are trained to be fit, resilient and inspirational young leaders who will accept discipline and danger, discomfort and separation and who can lead in peace and, more importantly, in adversity with true professionalism and a real understanding of and care for those whom they command.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soames: No I will not.

I am confident that at all levels and all ranks the services will continue to produce such men and women and I am sure that they will learn, as did their parents and grandparents, that at some time in their career they may have to depend on their colleagues and comrades for their very survival. Above all, they will develop a willingness to do things that are wholly contrary to every natural instinct because of a binding and, in modern terms, an almost magical unselfish commitment to others as well as to their families, their regiments, their queen and their country.

The Conservative Government have kept British forces strong. Their reputation is unmatched by any other armed forces in the world. They are truly formidable and it is our solemn commitment to the nation that we must and will stay strong because Conservatives know that there is no other way to defend and preserve British ideals and the British way of life.

In our armed forces we are blessed with men and women of a quality not found in any other institution in the land today. What is more, we know that the nation values them for what they are and not for what the Labour party would want them to be. The Government will maintain armed forces which will continue to be highly trained, highly motivated and at the forefront of technology. This year's statement on the defence estimates explains how we will achieve that.

We will all listen with care and interest to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) as he sets out how the Labour party would set about the defence of the realm. The nation knows that the defence of the realm can never be safe in the Labour party's hands, old or new, and I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Government's motion and to reject out of hand the Labour amendment.

5.34 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): Before I call the Opposition Front Bench spokesman I must apologise because at the beginning of the debate I failed to inform the House of the fact that Madam Speaker has placed a 10-minute limit on the speeches of Back Bench Members between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I recognise the importance of this debate to many hon. Friends and Conservative Members. I know that many of them want to participate and I will do my best to ensure that Front Bench spokesmen do not take up much more time.

I found the final part of the Minister's speech offensive. He tried to slur the reputation of the Labour party by suggesting that it is unpatriotic. That is unworthy of someone holding his office. In a quieter moment I think that the Minister will reflect on those comments and realise that they should not have been said during the debate.

Throughout its history the Labour party has supported the British armed forces—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The Minister talked about round objects.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister finds it easy to speak from his position on the Front Bench. He should recognise that what he said is offensive to some and what he just said is offensive to many of those who have given their lives or who have made a contribution. Literally thousands or millions of those people will have friends who are Labour supporters and they will not believe that the Labour party is in any way unpatriotic. It was unworthy of the Minister and the House for him to make that comment.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Would my hon. Friend care to reflect on the fact that at various times during his speech today the Minister appealed to the Opposition to join him in certain aspects while, at the same time, engaging in that rather cheap, silly and certainly over-simplified party political hacking which is best reserved for the annual Conservative conference? It is not only insulting but it is illogical when he chooses to seek enjoinment.

Mr. Fatchett: I agree totally with my hon. Friend, but I will move on.

Mr. Bill Walker: It would be nonsense for anyone anywhere to suggest that someone is unpatriotic simply because they support or vote for the Labour party. What must be addressed is which Government and which party look like doing the best by the armed forces. The record demonstrates clearly that the Conservatives are better.

Mr. Fatchett: It is rare for me to compliment the hon. Gentleman on a statesmanlike intervention. He set out the terms of genuine party political debate. We will argue that the record of the Labour party and of Labour in office refutes the allegations made. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) set out the debate in the right terms.

I should like to pay tribute to the forces and the role that they play. I join the Minister in thanking those involved in the commemorations for VE day and VJ day and I should like to remember all those who made sacrifices during the second world war. I agree that we must not just see those sacrifices in a vacuum. We must recognise that they were made for a political purpose, which was to preserve freedom and democracy. While we enjoy freedom of speech in the House we must recognise that others made sacrifices so that we could have this debate today. The lesson for all of us is that we must be vigilant in our attempts to preserve and strengthen democracy. That is the lesson from this century.

Like the Minister I wish to thank the forces who are playing their part in 24 countries around the world. I shall not go on the Minister's Cook's tour and I have not had an opportunity to visit all those troops. However, we recognise the contribution that they are making. I share with the Minister his views on the prospects for peace in Northern Ireland and on the changing character and atmosphere of the Province. We hope that the peace process will continue.

There were constant references to Bosnia during yesterday's debate. I thank our troops for the contribution that they have made in that country. We all know that the issue of Bosnia has divided each side of the House and that great passions have been roused. Three key points came out of the references to Bosnia in the speeches of all my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members yesterday.

The first point is that without the military intervention of the United Nations and NATO, humanitarian relief for thousands of people in Bosnia would not have been secured. We are grateful for and proud of our country's contribution to that. Secondly, it is fair to argue that because of our intervention we have been able to prevent the fighting and war in parts of the former Yugoslavia from spreading to other parts. That is a success for which we must be grateful.

I am sure that all hon. Members will agree with the assertion that I am about to make on the third point, which opens up substantial political debate. As politicians, we have a responsibility to define the role that UN and NATO troops must play in every theatre. The difficulty with the operation in Bosnia is that we have not always been clear about whether we have been talking about a peacekeeping or a peacemaking role. When we look back at the history of Bosnia in a few years' time, I suspect that the lesson we will learn is that we should have been clear in our own minds about exactly what we wanted the troops to do and then back that politically. On many occasions we have given way to pressure, which has meant that the political message and the political direction have not always been consistent.

I give the Minister of State an opportunity to do something that he should have done earlier—to withdraw his churlish remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). My hon. Friend has a proud record of helping to bring relief to many people in Bosnia, and doing it in a way that no other hon. Member has done. It was very wrong of the Minister to refer to my hon. Friend as someone who made a nuisance of himself yesterday on the question of Bosnia. The Minister should look at my hon. Friend's speech yesterday and withdraw his remarks. I give him the opportunity to apologise to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Soames: I have absolutely no intention of apologising to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I have to tell the hon. Member for Leeds, Central that he has confused peacemaking with peace enforcing—a mere detail, but one that he might wish to consider.

I must point out that I have already paid a handsome tribute to the hon. Member for East Lothian. He surely cannot want me to do so every five minutes. I said that he had done well in Bosnia. I am not prepared to enter into an argument across the House about who said what about whom because I am aware that he was stuck in a difficult position in Bosnia. However, that does not alter the fact that he did very well. If I was him, I would stop banging on about it.

Mr. Fatchett: I gave the Minister an opportunity to make a gracious apology. He failed to do so and the House will have noted that.

The key point about the Bosnian experience and, indeed, many of the other experiences to which the Minister referred, is that they have occurred under the auspices of either NATO or the UN. There has been co-operation, there has been dual command and there have been joint operations. In his speech yesterday, the Secretary of State referred 11 times to the need for international co-operation; 11 times he spoke about the benefit of international institutions and countries working together to meet the need of common security.

Anyone who had the opportunity to listen to the right hon. Gentleman's speech at the Conservative party conference in Blackpool last week must have wondered what happened during the week since then. Yesterday, it was a speech was written by civil servants but delivered by the right hon. Gentleman. Last week, it was a speech written by an immature young person and then delivered to a Conservative party conference. The right hon. Gentleman made crude appeals to nationalism and jingoism to improve his personal political standing in the Conservative party.

We are aware of the argument that is taking place. Indeed, we saw it earlier. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), the man who really did challenge for the leadership, the man who dared—not the man who quoted the SAS, but the man who dared to challenge the leadership—came here this afternoon to represent one wing of the Conservative party and to try to claim the ground from the Secretary of State on the question of who is the real champion of the right in the Tory party. Is not it the truth that Opposition Members

have a greater regard for our armed forces and our national security? We will not allow internal party arguments or internal party ambitions to deflect us from important national issues.

The debate and division in the Tory party was out in the open last night. The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) made an important speech which is worth quoting. In referring to the Secretary of State's Blackpool speech, he said:

"I . . . feel that that was not the time for him . . . to make some of the comments that he made . . . The fact remains that the people whom he criticised are our allies within NATO and the Western European Union."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 109.]

It is not just the hon. Member for Wyre who has criticised the Defence Secretary. Criticism has also come from Lord Gilmour, someone who should not be dismissed lightly by Conservative Members. In the past, he has spoken on defence issues from the Dispatch Box on behalf of the Conservative party. What did he say about the Defence Secretary's Blackpool speech in last Friday's *Evening Standard*? He said:

"No prominent member of a mainstream political party in any other western European country could have made Portillo's speech. Even the Italian neo-Fascists might have shrunk from it."

The point is that the Secretary of State debased his office in his speech last week.

Mr. [illegible] Walker: Has the hon. Gentleman ever heard German Ministers speaking? If he has, he may wish to withdraw what he has said. He should listen to what I have to say, which will be very anti-German with regard to the Eurofighter 2000. I do not think that that is anti-European; I think that it is defending British interests.

Mr. Fatchett: The point that I made is valid. The Secretary of State's speech, with its cheap jingoism, was very damaging to this country.

Mr. Soames: When are we going to hear about defence?

Mr. Fatchett: The opportunity to hear about defence was at the Tory party conference last week, but the Secretary of State did not utter one word about defence—it was a bid for the leadership of a faction within the Conservative party.

Why is the Secretary of State's Blackpool speech relevant? When the Minister talks about our armed forces, he should realise why it is relevant. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Wyre said that he had received many letters and he quoted one from an ex-service man. I shall quote it again. He wrote:

"As a former regular officer with a son about to depart for Bosnia early next year either wearing a UN beret or as part of a NATO formation, I found his"—

the Secretary of State's—

"remarks about 'soldiers willing to die for Britain but not for Brussels' particularly offensive."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 109.]

Those are telling and important words. It was not just that parent, an ex-soldier, who found the Secretary of State's remarks offensive; many people throughout the country and many serving troops found them offensive.

Of course, the Minister of State tried to defend his boss. Some of us had the advantage of watching the news last week and seeing a clip of the hon. Gentleman's face when his boss was speaking. It was that picture from the defence debate that I will take away from the Conservative party conference. I will be fair to the Minister: the look on his face was one of utter disgust. His reaction to his boss's speech was similar—

Mr. Soames *rose*—

Mr. Fatchett: Let me finish this point. His reaction to his boss's speech was similar to the reaction that he would have if a bad meal were placed in front of him. He did not like it. He did not like the smell of it. He did not like the feel of it. He did not like the texture of it. Of course, he is ambitious enough to clap at the right points. What he did not do, but what the Prime Minister did, was to lead the clapping for what was one of the most disgraceful jingoistic speeches that we have had at a party political conference.

Mr. Soames: I would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would tell the House when he intends to give up this childish and idiotic rant. He has been speaking for 15 minutes. He has not said one word about anything to do with defence, or the future of defence, or any of the big issues facing this country, and has done nothing other than indulge in a really pathetic and hopeless attack on my right hon. Friend. Will he please let us—and as he thinks the wider country—know what the Labour party is going to do? Will he share with us his vision about the defence of the realm and how he proposes to bring forward the many reforms which we understand that the Labour party has in mind? Or does he not have any visions? Is that the humbug that he is hiding behind?

Mr. Fatchett: We seem to have hit a raw nerve. It is quite clearly the case that the hon. Gentleman would like to join me in condemning his boss's speech, but finds it difficult to do so—and I can understand the reasons for that.

Let me cite one final quotation about the Secretary of State's speech. It was probably the most important of all. I have been unfair to the Secretary of State for Defence. There were people at the conference who applauded the speech and one former Cabinet Minister praised it. Sadly, he has left the Chamber, but he made an intervention earlier. The right hon. Member for Wokingham praised the speech and I shall use his words. He referred to the Secretary of State's speech in the following terms:

"They were lighthearted remarks, rabble-rousing remarks, which worked on the day."

That is praise indeed from the real leader of the right of the Tory party. It is interesting that the only praise that could be given to a Defence Secretary's contribution to an annual party conference is that it worked on the day and it was rabble-rousing.

What is important, what yesterday's debate showed and what the Secretary of State's speech showed is a great difference between the reality of the defence agenda and that speech in Blackpool. In speech after speech yesterday one crucial point was made: for the past 50 years or more, Britain's defence has been best served in partnership with others on the basis of common security.

It is against that background that Britain and other countries will take decisions about the future of NATO, its role and its membership, about our relations with Russia, and about the future of the Western European Union. Taking decisions in that way is not about

[Mr. Fatchett]

abandoning Britain's interests. Nobody wants to do that. On the contrary, it is about furthering British interests and security in partnership with others.

If I could offer some advice to the Secretary of State for Defence, it would be this: his contributions to the debates about the future of Europe and our defence and common security will be much better received if he relates to the important agenda implicit in yesterday's debate—the debates about the common security of Europe, the future of NATO, and the WEU—rather than, as he did at Blackpool, spend time trying to knock down futile, false propositions. That is simply a waste of time.

There is an important debate; there is an important agenda. What was clear yesterday from everyone who spoke in the debate was that we need to define Britain's defence interests very obviously in co-operation and collaboration with others. The fact that we are having a false debate about any other proposition amazes me and it is a total waste of time. We should not be going in that direction.

When the Minister pretends, as the Secretary of State tried to do again yesterday, that Labour would somehow give up our sovereignty on defence, it is no more than a cheap party-political pretence which bears no reality to what the party has said and bears no reality to the way in which political decisions are made.

Mr. Soames: As the hon. Gentleman is talking about co-operation—he is finally beginning to get into a little of the substance—would he tell the House which of the candidate countries for NATO he favours in the next stage of NATO enlargement?

Mr. Fatchett: We have always made it clear—

Mr. Soames: Which countries?

Mr. Fatchett: Oh come on. If the Minister would listen to the answer he might be able to make a more sensible contribution. *[Interruption.]* The crucial decision should not be made with an atlas and a catalogue at this stage, but by looking at the criteria and the way in which that decision will be taken. The criteria concern common security, our ability to contribute to that common security, our ability to preserve and safeguard democracy in the countries which may become NATO members, the ability of those countries to contribute in military terms and their ability to make that contribution economically. Those are all clear criteria which the Labour party has set out. It would be against—

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall in a minute. Again, it will be on the criteria that we shall make a judgment about future NATO membership. I realise that the Minister knows too much and that he does not have to listen—we recognise that from his speech—but if he did listen, he would find out that we have clearly set out our criteria and we are very keen to ensure that the debate is about democracy, economic expansion and human rights in eastern European countries. That debate must be sensitive to the requirements of Russia and the needs of the people of the eastern European countries. We have made that argument many times. If the Minister wants to reduce that to a list, it shows that he has very little grasp of his office.

Mr. Hardy: Since the Minister is interested in the list of countries, would my hon. Friend care to put to him the following question? Does the Minister fully endorse the view of Her Majesty's Government in welcoming into associate membership and involvement in the WEU a whole list of east European countries which sought that relationship to achieve security guarantees that neither this country nor any other European country can properly fulfil at the present time?

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend raises a point with which I am sure the Minister will deal in his reply. My hon. Friend is also right about the article V guarantees. Indeed, we have made that point clearly in the criteria that we have set out.

In the discussion about co-operation and national interest, there is one area in which the Secretary of State could speak on behalf of the British people and British interests more clearly and define his contribution in that direction. I speak of the importance of the defence industries and those who work in them. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) spent a good deal of time on this issue yesterday and I shall certainly not delay the House by repeating those points. The key elements, however, which we all recognise and understand, are that the industries are important in their technology, skills and in the contribution that they make to Britain's industrial base.

We want to know from the Minister whether it is true that the Secretary of State prefers an option to buy off the shelf. If that is true, it means that, almost invariably, we will buy American to the cost of British industry. Is there no strategic view coming from the Ministry of the British defence industrial base interest? Will the Minister give us some indication tonight of whether there will be at some point a clear statement that the off-the-shelf approach is not the Government's approach and that they recognise their responsibility towards the defence industries?

We also know that there will be more European collaboration in procurement. How will we secure the UK interest in that? How will we manage those projects? Again, there have been no comments from Ministers and no clear policy statements, yet key British interests are involved.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement—he is new to his job and I congratulate him on his appointment—cannot have been helped by the Secretary of State's speech last week. In considering European collaboration projects, how will British industrial interest be secured against a background of other European countries feeling that they have been subjected to personal criticism by the Secretary of State for Defence? How are we to defend British jobs, companies, technology and skills? Those are the key issues to which the Minister must relate, yet there is no strategy on it at all. Yesterday, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces scoffed at Labour's idea for seeking ways in which we could diversify from military into civilian production. Is not it a shame that on yet another issue of such importance—Britain's industrial base—the Government have no ideas?

The notion that everything can be left to the marketplace is comfortable to state but it is irrelevant to the needs of the British people. We need a strategy. No

one in the Labour party is saying that the conversion process will be easy, but, if we do not try to make that move and to preserve the skills, the technology and the scientific base, we shall lose important national assets that should not be wasted.

Our stance on diversification is ringing a chord not only with the companies involved but with the people who work in the industry. Again, we have the right agenda. The Minister said yesterday that there was a need to be forward looking, but he has not dealt with the important issue of Britain's industrial base.

The Minister of State spoke yesterday of the need to manage the Ministry of Defence's resources better. In his speech last week, the Secretary of State said that it was his task to convert waste into weapons. There is certainly a great deal of waste in the MOD which could be converted. A great deal of taxpayers' money could be saved by better management. Let us consider the waste permitted by the Government over the past few months.

The privatisation of the MOD housing scheme, which I believe was the brainchild of the Minister of State, cost the taxpayer £5 million in consultancy fees alone. That was money wasted. Some £6.7 million was spent on consultants at Devonport and Rosyth, but, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, there is still uncertainty at the bases and no decision has yet been taken about them. I hope that such matters will be cleared up in tonight's winding-up speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields yesterday quoted the National Audit Office report which shows that all major projects are delayed and overspent. The Government need to take seriously the notion of turning waste into weapons. They need to save on the waste which is costing taxpayers so much and which is a further indictment of the Government's record.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields also mentioned yesterday that there was much criticism of our European partners in virtually all the speeches at last week's Conservative party conference. However, when there is an opportunity legitimately to criticise our European partners the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are quiet. The nation recognises their silence on and tacit support for the French nuclear tests. I put it on record again that we condemn those tests. Our position is absolutely clear, and we speak for the people of this country and for the people of Europe and elsewhere.

In his winding-up speech yesterday, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces let slip a comment that worried one or two of his colleagues. He said:

"Not only have we not gone too far but there have been and will be further cuts and attempts to keep down the cost of the way in which we do our business."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 115.]

It seemed to my colleagues and me, and to some Tory Members, that the Minister was flagging up more defence cuts. It is no wonder that concern had been expressed in some earlier interventions. The Minister must tell us tonight whether what we suspect is true.

The reason why I raise the issue now is that whenever we argue for a defence review—one that will take account of the substantially changing world to which the Minister referred and of Britain's commitments in Europe and to the United Nations, and one which will examine overstretch in our forces—the Government criticise us and say that such a review would merely cause uncertainty. Once again, that shows the Government's arrogance. They believe, although the British public certainly do not, that they have got it right every time. The reality is that they are not prepared to face the consequences of a new world and new decisions, which are what make the prospect of a defence review so exciting.

The Government are introducing cuts by stealth. My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) spoke yesterday about the number of armed forces personnel. The defence estimates show that in the past decade alone, at 1993-94 prices, there was a 30 per cent. cut in defence spending. That may have been necessary—we are not arguing about that—but the cuts were made by a Government who have not had the courage to face their own Back Benchers or the armed forces and talk logically about Britain's defence needs and foreign policy requirements. In this, as in so many other spheres, Labour would promise an opportunity to consider the changing world to which the Minister referred, an opportunity to match Britain's role in the world with Britain's defence requirements, an opportunity for us to have a defence base driven by foreign policy requirements and a real assessment of Britain's needs in the world. That is what is exciting about a defence review.

Despite the cheap patriotism that Ministers like to use, the fact is that, because the Labour party is thinking about these issues and knows the way forward for Britain's defence and foreign policy, the people of this country trust us. That is why we shall form the next Government and take the crucial decisions about Britain's future defence needs.

6.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I begin by paying tribute to the previous Secretary of State for Defence, who has now moved to the Foreign Office, on his three difficult years in that post. He handled the difficulties extremely well and fought the armed forces' corner. In his absence, I welcome the new Secretary of State to his first defence estimates debate.

In my three and a half years as a Member of Parliament, I think that I have attended all our defence debates. As I said, it has been an enormously difficult period. I hope that there will be no further turbulence but instead more certainty and, dare I say, more stability. We need a period of positive progress and I therefore welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement of the joint rapid deployment force and the Tomahawk and other equipment procurement.

In looking forward to stability, we should be honest about the unhappiness of the past three to four years, which was characterised by the plethora of volunteers for redundancy, as mentioned yesterday by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). We should now encourage a reinstatement of the previous high morale in our forces and fulfil our commitments to them. The Prime Minister promised last year that there would be no further cuts in the armed forces or in defence spending, and that promise was also made by the previous Secretary of State. I would welcome further reassurance tonight that there will be no further cuts in funding other than those already proposed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Real-terms reductions have been planned and I accept them but now is the time to reiterate that there will be no further cuts.

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

I believe that the cuts went too far. For example, I do not think that there are enough infantry battalions in the Army. Indeed, the previous Secretary of State agreed and reprieved two battalions a year ago. I still believe that there are not enough but I trust that I shall be proved wrong. Similarly, I am not happy about decisions such as that to scrap the royal yacht but I do not think that it materially affects the ability of the armed forces to fight a war.

The results of the uncertainty and unhappiness of the past three to four years remain, which is why I stress that we must restore the high standards of which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has spoken. For instance, yesterday the Secretary of State mentioned recruiting. Quotas for recruiting are now adequate, but unfortunately it is difficult to get recruits to come forward. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces acknowledged yesterday that the number of recruits for the infantry, the artillery and the Royal Armoured Corps is inadequate, and it is time that we stressed that fact and encouraged further recruitment by all means including, if necessary, pay rises above the rate of inflation.

Last week, there were various articles in the press that I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to dismiss later, suggesting that Gurkhas are to take over the role of British troops. I mean no criticism of Gurkhas, who are excellent soldiers in their own way, and have a history of loyalty and service to the British Crown, when I say that it is not a happy state of affairs to have non-British soldiers, indeed mercenaries—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I do not denigrate the Gurkhas in any way when I say that they are troops paid to fight for us. As I have already said, they are excellent troops. I pay tribute to them, but they are not as flexible as British troops—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mr. Robathan: The idea that Gurkhas can do everything that British troops can do has been acknowledged for many years as unlikely. For instance, Gurkhas are not fighting—or rather, not on the streets—in Northern Ireland, because it is not deemed sensible to place them there. They are not as flexible and they cannot replace British troops. I am sure that the Minister will address that problem, and I hope that he will be able to reassure me.

One cause of uncertainty hanging over the United Kingdom's armed forces is the Bett report, which was mentioned yesterday.

Mr. Bill Walker: Before my hon. Friend deals with the Bett report will he tell me whether he, unlike the Opposition Members who were laughing at him, has direct experience of military activity and of leading troops of different kinds? We know that they have none.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The generalisation made in that intervention is insulting to the House—

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): And quite untrue.

Mr. Cook: And, as my colleague says, it is totally untrue. I ask the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to withdraw the implication of his statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. There was nothing out of order in what the hon. Member for Tayside, North said.

Mr. Robathan: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have served in the armed forces as, I know, have many other hon. Gentlemen. Indeed, I have served with the Gurkhas within the past five years, and they are excellent troops—

Mr. Mackinlay: In their own way.

Mr. Robathan: They are super troops and I love them dearly. However, they are not British-speaking troops, as is painfully obvious. I do not know why the Opposition should find it difficult to accept that. They should look up the word "mercenary" in the English dictionary and discover what it means. The Gurkhas are paid to serve the British Crown, just as the excellent Swiss troops still guard the Pope.

One cause of uncertainty that hangs over the United Kingdom armed forces is the Bett report. It has been mentioned before, and I do not intend to speak in great depth about it. However, I emphasise the fact that the armed forces are different. They are not Tesco, British Telecom or any other business; there can be no profit.

We can encourage efficiency—which I am sure hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House would wish to see—but the ultimate test is in war. So far as I know, there are few complaints about the armed forces not being efficient. Certainly they could be more efficient, but they are well respected. I quoted the Minister of State's grandfather to him last February, so I shall not do so again, but those words should be marked well.

Sir Michael Bett's report, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said so much, considered the armed forces, especially the Army, in peacetime. That is not appropriate, because the armed forces exist for war. The hierarchical rank structure might seem odd in British Telecom, but it does not seem odd in a battle. I fear that the Bett report may strike at the very heart of the ethos, the fraternity, the spirit and the comradeship in the armed forces. It is not necessarily appropriate for a civilian business man to try to organise an army. Certainly BT is not more respected than the British armed forces. So I trust that Ministers will consider the consequences of the Bett report carefully before introducing its recommendations.

Many people wish to force the armed forces to be like the rest of society, and to allow homosexuals to be service personnel. That is a rather contentious subject, upon which the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has commented in the past. My own view is that such a change would turn common sense on its head in a desire to be politically correct. Are we to sacrifice the efficient defence of the United Kingdom for the sake of political correctness? Political correctness may not be peddled on the Government side of the House, but it is peddled by the Opposition.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend may care to consider something before he makes his point. I shall seek to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I shall be brief. My hon. Friend should

consider how much it costs the Ministry of Defence to hound out perfectly good decent soldiers, not for reasons of misconduct during their military service but for being rather than for doing. My hon. Friend should be careful.

Mr. Robathan: My hon. Friend has his own particular point to make, and I look forward to hearing it later. I served in the Army for 15 years and met some people whom I suspected were latently homosexual. There were also one or two sad cases, which I greatly regretted, involving courts martial—for actions, not for "being", as my hon. Friend describes it.

It may surprise some people to know that most soldiers were extremely tolerant. They were not—to use a rather contrived modern term—homophobic. Indeed, they were quite happy serving with whoever, and they certainly regretted the courts martial, as I did. But they did not want to share a shower or a lavatory, a trench or a bed, with somebody who might be interested in them. Women have separate facilities, and it is not so unreasonable to say that men, too, should have their privacy respected in different facilities.

There are quite enough difficulties with women when sex rears its ugly head, as has been well reported in the press, and I do not think that one needs to exacerbate the situation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Go and have a cold shower."] I notice one or two Members laughing. Will they tell us whether it is official Labour party policy to allow homosexuality? I believe that the hon. Member for South Shields said that it was not. Or did he say that it was? I cannot quite remember.

It would not improve the armed forces to allow homosexuality. I advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the other Ministers to defy the judges and political correctness, even if the sensibilities of a few people are offended.

The major operation of the moment is taking place in Bosnia. God willing, we may now have a lasting peace there, in which case I congratulate all involved, including President Clinton and the British Government. However, fighting continues in north-west Bosnia, and it is a peculiar state of affairs, about which many hon. Members are slightly unhappy, when United Kingdom soldiers and aircraft support, or by their actions seem to support, the territorial ambitions of Croatia. Not many hon. Members would say that President Tudjman leads a democratic government.

My view is that all three sides in Bosnia are culpable, and all three have committed atrocities, but for now I shall concentrate on Croatia and say that 18 months ago its forces were bombarding Mostar and killing Bosnian Muslim Government troops, and civilians. Now the regular Croatian army is fighting in Bosnia—a campaign aided, albeit perhaps unwittingly, by NATO and RAF soldiers and aircraft. That is not a conflict that we understand, and it is not a conflict of which we should be part.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman certainly does not understand it.

Mr. Robathan: I suspect that I understand it rather better than the hon. Gentleman who made that rather foolish intervention.

About two weeks ago, while I was abroad, I heard on the BBC World Service that the United Nations had referred to a Bosnian Government action as "treacherous". I think that I am right in saying that. Should we really risk the lives of our service men in such an action? I think not, and I acknowledge that I was wrong to applaud the decision to send troops.

Our other major operation is in Northern Ireland. Last week, an old flax mill in west Belfast that was my home for five months was knocked down. I am delighted that the battalion based there has been withdrawn and I hope that troop numbers continue to be reduced, as my right hon. Friend mentioned. Having soldiers who are not gainfully employed hanging around in cramped barracks is likely to cause difficulties rather than assist in the peaceful maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland. We must keep our internal security training, but the sooner the Northern Ireland garrison is returned to pre-1969 levels, the better. Battalions can always return quickly if they are properly trained.

I congratulate the Government on their Northern Ireland policy and on reducing force levels, especially since there seems to be a great deal of opposition from some people in Northern Ireland who, I suggest, are wrong in the matter. My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench have jobs which anybody would be proud of, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that it was an honour to open yesterday's debate. I look forward to his being Secretary of State for Defence for the foreseeable future, and I know that while he is there, he will defend the best interests of our armed forces to ensure that they remain the envy of the world.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): With others, I am intending to vote against the White Paper tonight and I want to give the electors of Chesterfield, the House and my colleagues the reasons for that. I am in fundamental disagreement with the defence and foreign policies of the Government, and I would like to devote my comments to that.

I was in the House during the big arms programme of 1951, and I heard Aneurin Bevan—who resigned from the Government on that occasion and was no supporter of the Soviet system—say that he did not believe that the Soviet Union ever intended to invade western Europe. I agree with that. I do not believe that the Soviet Union had either the will or the capacity to invade western Germany, move into France, take over Italy and then come to London. But enormous sums of money were spent on building up resistance to the Soviet Union. The real reason for that was very simple; if we pretended that we were about to be invaded by the Soviet Union, anyone who criticised the Government could be described as an agent of the KGB or of the Kremlin. It was a political campaign.

At any rate, NATO was built up to deal with that matter, and that included the build-up of nuclear weapons to which I shall refer in a minute. Looking at the difficulties the Russian army had in Chechnya, I wonder whether the expenditure undertaken by NATO was at all appropriate. I hear that Willy Claes, the Secretary-General of NATO—he may be, for all I know, about to be replaced for other reasons—has announced that now that communism is over, Islam is the great enemy of the west.

There is a picture of the crusades in St. Stephen's Hall, and we must be careful that we do not fall into the habit of believing that we now need all these weapons to protect ourselves from Islam. A holy war or, "jihad", would be

[Mr. Tony Benn]

very dangerous, although I understand that many Governments find it necessary to have a foreign enemy. Nor do I believe that the Bosnian Serbs justify our defence budget.

My second point in that context is that we cannot afford the present level of weapons. I have had the national defence budget divided by the population to help me to understand the matter, and it appears that every family of four is spending £40 a week on weapons. The Government should knock on any door and ask whether the occupants feel more threatened by an attack from the Bosnian Serbs or by the possibility that they might fall ill without medical treatment being available. The veterans who fought on D-day and who go to hospital now are told, "We are afraid that it is not worth treating you, Sergeant Bloggs. You are 75 and it is not worth giving you a new hip." That is where the threat to security comes from.

We should look at Japan and Germany, countries which we have not allowed to re-arm. Why have they done so well? Why are they selling us cameras and cars when we are supplying military equipment through the arms trade to other countries? While I cannot anticipate what the next Government will do, I do not believe that any incoming Government, faced with pressure to improve services, will be able to say that the defence budget is sacrosanct. It cannot be sacrosanct. We are about to send 15,000 people to Yugoslavia as part of a peacekeeping force. If we can house 15,000 British soldiers in Yugoslavia, why can we not house the people who live in cardboard boxes in London? Our priorities will have to be considered in that context.

My third point is—from the point of view of public deception—the most important of all. We have not had for many years—since atomic bombs could be dropped by Vulcan bombers—an independent British nuclear deterrent. I speak with some authority, as I was the Minister in charge of Aldermaston and I know what I am talking about. When the Americans supplied us with nuclear weapons, we allowed them to control our security services and they allowed us to pretend that we had an independent deterrent.

We do not have such a deterrent, and that is what Zircon was all about. We could not fire our so-called "independent deterrent" without the Americans switching on their satellite system. It has been a miracle of misrepresentation, that 10 general elections have been fought on the question of whether we should retain that which we have never had. I am disappointed that the Labour party has suddenly come around to accepting the need for a weapon with nine times the killing power of Polaris while denouncing the French for testing their weapons. I strongly doubt whether the computer testing of our weapons will give the reliability that is alleged. On those grounds, I shall go into the Lobby against the Government tonight. I think that an awful lot of people will share my view, although I do not know how many will join me.

I come now to the Government's foreign policy, which is more important, because all defence policy has to be related to the Government's foreign policy objectives. What has happened—I thought that someone must mention this—is that NATO is replacing the UN. We had a great celebration of the UN in the summer, and I remember the excitement I felt as a young pilot coming back from the war when I read, in the charter of the UN:

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind".

I believed in that, but I now find that NATO has taken over. The basic principle of the UN was the power of unanimity, but the Russians have now been pushed to one side as the Americans, following the end of the cold war, have taken control of the Security Council.

In the case of Iraq, a so-called "alliance" or coalition of partners was supposed to have been involved in the operation, but of course it was American dominated. The subject of sanctions has been raised, and 500,000 children under five have died in Iraq because of sanctions in the past five years, according to figures produced by international aid agencies. Twice as many children under five have died in Iraq as died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I cannot support such a policy, and I do not support it.

Reference has been made to Bosnia, and I tried—together with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—to get the House recalled to discuss the matter. We could not get the House recalled, although the decision to participate in the bombing of the Bosnian Serbs was taken in direct contravention of what the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary said during the summer, which was, "We do not intend to get involved in the war."

I wish to spend a moment on the matter, because there is a lot of background detail. Yugoslavia was occupied by the Turks for many centuries, and was then a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. During the war, the Croats had the fascist Ustashi regime, which is now being recognised again by the Croatian Government. The German Government broke up Yugoslavia, and Herr Genscher—the former German foreign minister—said that the greatest achievement in that period of the German foreign office was to break up Yugoslavia. Why? Because the new Germany wants to extend its power in the Balkans.

As Croatia and Bosnia were allowed to leave Yugoslavia, an argument could be made—although I am not in favour of any such disintegration—for the Bosnian Serbs to be allowed to leave. Why should Bosnia be allowed to leave, but not the Bosnian Serbs? We have gone in to provide humanitarian aid, and I support that. I have said time and again in the House, and I shall say it again, that all that we can do in a civil war is provide an embargo of weapons, humanitarian aid and a peace table. It is a civil war in Bosnia, and we must not pretend that the war is an act of international aggression. Instead of providing an embargo, aid and a peace table, we have taken part in the most murderous assault by NATO, with which the Minister is proud to associate himself. That assault brought the Bosnian Serbs to the peace table. But if the Bosnian Government are not satisfied, they may say that unless NATO continues the bombing, they will not come to the table. NATO has become an instrument of the Bosnian Government.

I believe that the story will be different in the end. I think that Croatia will take over Bosnia, and that the Bosnian Serbs will probably move in with Serbia. We are seeing a partition of Yugoslavia between Croatia and Serbia, and the pretence that we are there to defend Bosnia's Muslim multi-cultural Government is quite untrue.

I shall give one or two other reasons why I shall vote against the Government, although I do not want to take up too much time. The arms trade is the most criminal trade in the world. It is worse than terrorism because it is sponsored by Governments. It is worse than AIDS because it is sponsored by Governments. As the House knows, Britain has supplied weapons, as has America to a greater extent, to both sides in most conflicts, just as at the time of the crusades the European arms manufacturers supplied weapons to Saladin and Richard I. That came out at a recent seminar in Cairo.

The arms trade uses conflict to test weapons. Then when the weapons are used, they send in peacekeepers and say, "Have a ceasefire." The ceasefire allows arms manufacturers to find out which weapons worked best. That is what happened in the Falklands war. The Exocet proved to be so successful that it is now widely sold.

If we look at the world seriously—I try to do so—we find that the way in which international finance causes countries to cut their public services to satisfy the demands of international financiers creates poverty. Poverty is one of the greatest causes of war, as is unemployment. There were 6 million unemployed in Germany before the last world war. That brought Hitler to power. People who are unemployed are frightened and look for a strong leader. A strong leader, or would-be strong leader, always finds foreign enemies. Hitler found the Jews. The Secretary of State found all foreigners. Anyone who has read "Mein Kampf"—as I did in my teens—and the life of Mussolini could not mistake the roots of the ideas that came out of the Conservative conference. If we do not deal with the problem of world poverty, we should not be surprised if it leads to conflict. If it leads to conflict, that means more weapons. If it means more weapons, it means less money for development. So the policy is wholly misplaced.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will be called to speak. He will talk about the cancellation of third world debt, which I support. Do not tell me that it is not possible to diversify from weapons production. At the end of the war, within 18 months we moved 4 million or 6 million people from producing weapons into producing houses. I remember when the Beaufighters stopped coming out of the factory in Bristol. About eight weeks later prefabricated houses started coming out of the factory. Do not tell me that we cannot diversify. Of course we can, if we plan so to do.

We should also seek to reduce our defence expenditure. I cannot see any reason why there are British troops in Germany. I hope that the peace process will result in the withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland. The purpose of the peace process must surely be that.

I have put my arguments without making any reference to the Ministers who have spoken because I do not believe that our debates are improved by turning to the level of abuse that we have seen. I said that yesterday in my tribute to Lord Home and I say it again. The issues that face Britain are formidable. It is not possible to have law and order without social justice. It is not possible to have world peace without international justice. It is not possible to have either while we devote so much money to the weapons of war and neglect the real threat to people's security, which is that they do not have a home, a job, education or health or they do not have dignity when they are old.

Throughout the world, the gap between rich and poor is widening. There are 1,300,000,000 people in the world without a clean water supply. Half a million women die every year in childbirth for lack of proper resources and 35,000 babies die every day from poverty-related diseases. When will the country and the Parliament face those questions? If we go on thinking that a few more weapons or a few more soldiers will solve the problems, we will make worse the very problems that we should be solving.

6.33 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. The House knows of my interests, and particularly my Royal Air Force interests. That is one reason why I am wearing my tie today. I notice that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is wearing his tie. I welcome that because, as another member of the Volunteer Reserve, I too wear my tie with pride.

I assure the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that he is not the only Member in the House who remembers 1951. Some of us remember it vividly. There was another war going on at the time, called the Korean war. The right hon. Gentleman may have overlooked it when he talked about the need in 1951 to improve the capability of our armed forces. He was right to say that, when the war ended, we thought that war was over. We all rejoiced, and the Americans went home. The United States military left the United Kingdom and left the bases. It was not until 1948 and the problems in Berlin referred to as the Berlin airlift that the United States returned to the United Kingdom.

In 1951, we had to spend more money because the Royal Air Force, among other services, had to train new people to take on the tasks. I remember vividly how the training regime in the RAF had to be stepped up again to train new pilots and air crew, because we thought that the Chinese intervention in Korea would lead to a much greater war. That was the reason for the planning at that time.

The House will note that I do not make the criticism that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield makes of the Labour Government. The truth was that we faced an extremely tortuous and difficult situation. No one really knew what was going to happen in Korea with any certainty. The fact that the Chinese could have become much more involved was one reason why we had to have adequate air crew available to meet the envisaged possible needs. The same was true for the rest of the services.

Of course, we all know that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield is the real voice of Labour. It is not the new Labour that we keep hearing about. His views on nuclear weapons are of long standing. He has never changed them. That is to his great credit. When one cares deeply about something, one should stand by it. I know that the right hon. Gentleman does. I do not doubt the integrity of his position—I just disagree with it. That is an entirely different matter.

When the right hon. Member for Chesterfield touched on the break-up of Yugoslavia, I found myself agreeing with him. It was Germany's precipitous recognition of Croatia that brought about the break-up of Yugoslavia. Germany took that decision without consulting its European allies.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

Is it anti-European to make that comment? Am I being nasty? Am I being hideous? Of course not. If one is talking among friends, one must tell the truth as one understands it. I said in an intervention earlier that I would be making some comments about Germany. I did not intend making a comment about Germany in relation to Croatia, but the right hon. Member for Chesterfield gave me that opportunity. He and I are in agreement.

I am also in agreement with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—this may get those on my Front Bench worried—that regimes and politicians under stress at home will try to find foreign enemies. I am concerned about the unstable situation in the former Soviet Union and parts of the Islamic world, where there is undoubtedly a proliferation of weapons. In the former Soviet Union in particular, there is a proliferation of nuclear weapons, and some nuclear capability will exist in Islamic countries in the foreseeable future. So it is wise—I put it no higher than that—to retain a capable deterrent.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield, like myself, spent quite some time flying aircraft for the Royal Air Force. He will recollect that, if we had had sufficient Spitfires and Hurricanes available, we might have been capable of deterring Hitler in 1938. They were the deterrent capability at that time. The Germans believed that their Luftwaffe was invincible. They believed that it could take them anywhere they wanted to go. If we had had television and all the pundits that we have today, we would never have fought the battle of Britain, because they would have told us that we could not possibly have won.

Mr. Benn: Galtieri attacked a nuclear power: Britain. Saddam Hussein attacked three nuclear powers: America, Britain and France. Where was the deterrent then?

Mr. Walker: They never attempted to use a nuclear capability against nuclear powers. I drew attention to Spitfires and Hurricanes because, had we had a deterrent capability in the south Atlantic—had we had the aircraft carrier squadron that Dennis Healey withdrew—we would probably have had a deterrent capability. *[Interruption.]* I say that as a passing reference. Dennis Healey withdrew the aircraft carrier squadron from the south Atlantic. It was part of the east of Suez policy at that time. Some of us remember what actually happened because we were there. Those who were involved cannot be told the fairy tales that we sometimes hear today.

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I give way to the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a high regard.

Mr. Hardy: Does not the hon. Gentleman recall the fact that the iron lady removed HMS Endurance just before the Argentine invasion of the Falkland islands, and was warned by hon. Members on both sides of the House of the consequence of that withdrawal? Is that not more apposite than a reference to my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Healey?

Mr. Walker: It was an unhelpful act, which contributed to that. But if we could have deployed an aircraft carrier squadron, carrying aircraft that a proper aircraft carrier would carry with an over-the-horizon radar capability, Galtieri would undoubtedly not have taken the chance. I simply draw attention to that point.

May I return to the matter of foreign enemies? Given the unstable regimes and conditions in countries such as the former Soviet Union and Islam, it is wise for us to retain a nuclear capability and a conventional deterrent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) made some scathing comments about the Bett report. I agree with Ministers to a degree. While aspects of the Bett report may be helpful, many other aspects want throwing out, as they have nothing to do with a military capability, leadership, or what is required under active service conditions.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the reserve forces, and I endorse what he said. We must now look seriously at beefing up our reserves. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is sitting behind me, because I am about to say something which he and I have been trying to get the Government to agree to for years: the Royal Air Force Reserve should have a flying capability. An opportunity could arise if we are to deploy the rapid reaction force. A reserve squadron could and should have done that job.

I welcome the ceasefire agreement, such as it is, reached in Bosnia. Like everyone in the House, I pay credit to the professionalism, quality and courage of our Army, Navy and Air Force. The House will not be surprised that I wish to draw attention in particular to the Royal Air Force and its pivotal role in Bosnia, particularly in reaching the current agreement. Its contribution, which was made in harmony with the United States and our other NATO partners, was pivotal in producing those results. The operational task of the Jaguars and Harriers in delivering laser-guided bombs is an example of professional flying and great capability. The tankers and early warning aircraft, which also played a role, are often undervalued, but very necessary in combat conditions.

I also draw attention to the critical and vital part in the military jigsaw played by the transport fleet, which rarely gets credit for what it does. I am always amused when people talk to me about buying foreign aircraft. What short memories they have. How could we ever have won the war without the Dakota—the DC3, for those who do not know what it is? We should not forget the remarkable and often dangerous sorties carried out by the Chinook helicopter crews, particularly those attached to 24 Air Mobile Force.

Last but not least—sadly, it is often overlooked—we must recognise the vital top-cover role of the Tornado F3s. Other NATO air forces were unable to take on that task, as they could not provide top cover at night. The role that the RAF's F3 crews and aircraft carried out with such distinction should be acknowledged.

We should also remember the contribution of the ground crews and staff of Logistics Command. Like many of my hon. Friends, I have often wondered what "Front Line First" is. It is uncomfortable to be in the front line if one does not have the ammunition required to carry out one's task, so the work of Logistics Command was very important. Its staff often worked long hours, with frequent absences from their home base. I have received letters, as have other hon. Members, about the concerns of their wives. I simply say that they are right to be concerned and to contact their Members of Parliament.

On the replacement aircraft and replacement programme, I want first to look at maritime patrol aircraft. The Nimrod has been, and still is, a super aircraft in that role. It has done a remarkable job, and is one of the most popular aircraft in the Royal Air Force. Air crew love the Nimrod. I make a plea this afternoon for a thoughtful and considered debate to evaluate and properly assess the respective types under consideration to replace the Nimrod. I do not want next year's decision to be pre-empted.

I make that plea because I have no wish to see a repeat of the public and high-profile campaigns that took place during the Hercules replacement programme. Those did nothing for the candidates and little to make the work force affected any happier, particularly as many of the scare stories circulating at that time have been found to be overstated. They caused concern and made many people in the industry feel insecure. It does not help to tell people that their jobs are at risk because of something that may happen in five or 10 years' time. I hope that we shall have an in-depth debate, but not lots of scare stories.

The Eurofighter 2000 is critical to the future requirements of the Royal Air Force. I deplore German attempts to delay the programme and obtain what I regard as an unfair share of the construction work. The Germans have deliberately tried to delay the programme because their entry-into-service date differs from that of the Royal Air Force. Moreover, they have reduced the number of aircraft which they originally committed themselves to purchasing. The only country that has kept to its original commitment is the United Kingdom. As we are buying the lion's share of the aircraft, it is only right and proper that British factories should have the lion's share of the work.

I find some of the comments made by German politicians particularly nauseating. Am I allowed to say that, Madam Deputy Speaker? Am I being anti-European or anti our allies? It is the job of German politicians to suit their own needs and ends, but, as a British politician, it is right that I should criticise them, especially as Britain is honouring its commitments on the Eurofighter 2000. If the United Kingdom is to have a design and construction capability in the future, the Eurofighter 2000 programme is vital. Therefore, we are honouring our commitment; the Germans are not—to name a name, Volker Rühe.

In an earlier intervention, I asked Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen if they recalled any European politicians making comments that I might judge to be anti-European. I repeat the name: Volker Rühe. He was saying what he judged would appeal to the German electorate and, more importantly, to his party's supporters. It was all right for him to do that; perfectly in order. After all, he is a good European. I am not a good European.

Let me remind the House that some of us remember what being good Europeans meant. As many of us remember it on the Government side as on the Opposition side. Loyalty, chivalry and the other qualities that go with being in the military do not belong to any particular individual or party. Britain has those qualities in abundance across all sections of society. We were good Europeans twice this century.

I recently went to a conference with politicians from Europe and other parts of the world. The Speaker of the Belgian Parliament was making comments about the British not being very good Europeans. I said, "Excuse me, you are from Belgium, that wee country between Germany and France. Have you ever visited the war graves? If you do, you will find Macdonalds, McGregors, Campbells and Frasers and, if you look carefully, you will find a few Walkers as well. You say we are not good Europeans. We gave you your freedom with our blood. That is the kind of good Europeans we are."

The Eurofighter 2000 is important to the United Kingdom. I do not have to remind the House that the Belgians would not give us the ammunition we required during the Gulf war. People talk about what is required to be a good European. I believe that the blood of my relatives is sufficient evidence of what being a good European is.

I come now to a subject about which I care deeply—this will be no surprise to my hon. Friend the Minister—the cadet forces. Again I have to declare an interest, because I am the honorary president of the Air Cadet Gliding Organisation, which is a voluntary organisation.

During defence costs studies, the volunteer officers, staff and parents of the air cadets were exposed to many months of uncertainties. A 50 per cent. cut in the budget was originally proposed. I thank my right hon. and hon Friends on the Front Bench, and their predecessors, for their support for the cadet forces and for recognising their responsibilities in that respect. Without their support, the uncertainty would not have been removed.

We were relieved when we heard what we thought were the decisions of the defence costs study, only to find that there is something called "Defence in the Public Eye" rumbling around the corridors of Whitehall. I understand that proposals—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will note this—that involve air and other cadets being required to raise more funding for themselves are being considered. In real terms, that means that air cadets would have to raise more than the £3 million that they already raise each year by their own efforts.

The adults who give up their time to run the cadets do so largely because they have specific knowledge and skills to impart. In my experience, they do not have specific knowledge or skills in fund-raising. That is not what they are there for. They would find themselves in competition with other good causes, many of which are experiencing difficulty in raising funds.

The proposal is wrong-headed and unwise: our cadet forces exist because the volunteer adults, officers and instructors are prepared to give of their time to do the tasks they have accepted. If we ask them to become fund raisers as well, I judge that we will lose many of our adults, which we can ill afford. I hope that Ministers will engage their minds as they did during the latter part of "Front Line First", when they came up with some helpful answers, for which I thank them.

I have again to declare an interest in considering the rationalisation of the defence estate. The Air Cadet Gliding Organisation has 28 units scattered throughout the country with both powered and conventional gliders. They require airfields from which to operate. With the reduction of Royal Air Force airfields, and with some airfields being transferred to the Army and other services, it is important that we have some meaningful arrangement about how volunteer units are going to be deployed.

I am concerned about northern England, where—it may interest some hon. Members from northern England that I commanded a volunteer unit at Dishforth many years ago—the volunteer unit at Catterick may have difficulties.

[Mr. Walker]

Can the Minister give me an assurance that consideration will be given to the needs of air cadets, and especially the volunteer gliding schools, so that the voice of the air cadets will be heard during the rationalisation? Once the airfields have gone, it will be too late to try to find somewhere else; that is what happened to the unit at Dishforth, which closed 21 years ago and has not reopened. That is a plea from the heart.

The volunteer gliding schools are close to my heart. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) told the House that he had given 18 years of service; I have given close on 40 years of volunteer service. In my time as a pilot and instructor, one of the things that gave me the greatest joy was seeing 16 or 17-year-olds going off on their first solo flights. It gave them an uplift that one has to see to understand. It is part of character development. It is a real challenge; if they make a mistake they could easily kill themselves. Such youngsters are never likely to steal a car for kicks, because they have had the thrills, excitement and challenges. That is what sending them solo achieves. That is why airfields are critical at a time when we hear so often of the troubles of young people.

The House knows also of my interest in the scouts. I believe that the scouts and cadet forces contribute massively to the well-being of our young people, and we must recognise that.

I hope that Opposition Members will not feel that I am making my plea this evening because the cadet forces are military organisations; it is the good that the youngsters do for the community afterwards that pays back the nation. More important, it is easier to keep good kids good than to make bad kids good, and much less expensive. That is why I believe that the air, Army and sea cadets, supported as they are by the Ministry of Defence, are a massive contribution to the well-being of our people.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I must remind the House that Madam Speaker has decided on a limit of 10 minutes for speeches between the hours of 7 and 9.

6.59 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I am grateful to be chosen to speak while there are still shop stewards from the naval building yards of Yarrow, Barrow and Vosper here to listen to the debate. I want specifically to raise with the Minister of State for Defence Procurement the procurement of the type 23 frigates, the batch 2 Trafalgar submarines and the landing platform docks. I want to raise with him not simply the question whether those orders should be placed, but the timing of the orders.

I accept, as all of us do, that, in the past, much defence procurement was far too cosy. I believe, however, that it has now become, in many ways, far too rigorous, and that the Ministry of Defence is not taking into account the full enormity of its influence on the suppliers as, effectively, a monopoly purchaser when there are far fewer orders, both in this country and for export purposes.

The Ministry needs to recognise more than it does at the moment that the shipyards need a flow of work to ensure that they retain the vital skills that will enable them not only to meet Ministry requirements at present and in the immediate future, but to tender for export contracts now and in the future. It is not reasonable for the Ministry of Defence to postpone the placing of orders and to expect privately owned yards to retain full work forces on the understanding that an order might arrive at some time in the future.

There has, of course, to be competition for tenders, but if the tenders are not being awarded timeously, it is not reasonable to expect the employers to retain substantial work forces when there is no work for those people to undertake.

The Ministry must enter a much better partnership with the private sector shipyards to ensure that capacity is retained. If capacity is lost, there is no guarantee that we shall be able to turn to the French, to the Germans, to the Italians or to the Spanish in future and ask them to build ships to our requirements or to our time scale. If the capacity is lost, it will never return. The orders must be placed to ensure that there is a work flow, rather than placed simply to suit the cash flow of the Ministry.

The Ministry of Defence and the Government have been correct to focus on the idea of national champions when going for export orders, and I very much welcome that. I hope, however, that, given that there is a recognition that so much is based on personal contact, especially in the third world and in the middle east, the Government will take into account the possibility—they may wish to concede no more than this—that there may be a change of Government.

I hope that the Government will ensure that there are Opposition Members who are well aware of the nature of the contracts and who have had the opportunity, in a bipartisan way with the Government, to form links with possible suppliers to ensure that the links are not broken in a way likely to be detrimental to British industry and to the possibility of winning foreign orders, if there is a change of Government.

I say that in an entirely non-partisan way, and I hope that the Government will accept the suggestion in that spirit. The proposal was put to me not by an Opposition Member, but by the shop stewards when we met them this morning. Obviously, many of them support us politically, but they recognise that a change of Government might result in loss of opportunity if there was disruption in the negotiation of contracts.

I hope that the Government recognise that export orders can best be gained on the backs of orders being placed by them. The credibility of yards often depends on their having obtained orders from their own Government. The sooner, therefore, that orders for type 23 frigates are placed, the better placed United Kingdom yards will be to bid seriously for overseas orders.

I hope that the Government recognise the needs of our industrial base. I am aware that I do not need to repeat my next point to the Minister. After all, we were told yesterday that

"we have as a Minister of State for Defence Procurement a Member of Parliament who is probably the brightest person in the House, and someone of great competence."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 97.]

I do not know whether that was just an appeal for promotion from the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). I am sure, however, that these issues do not need to be repeated.

We want orders to be placed now, not simply to be rolled over because the Government want to create space in the public sector spending requirements for tax cuts. If yards close as a result of orders being postponed because the Government have sought to save money for tax cuts, the Tory party will truly be placing party before country, and placing short-term electoral needs before the defence of the country. I hope that the Government will consider that point seriously, and that they will move forward as quickly as possible to place orders, especially for the type 23 frigate.

I hope that the Minister will also be prepared to look seriously at whether our reduced civil shipping capacity is sufficient in terms of being able to call up from trade all the vessels that might be required in time of war to move the appropriate equipment overseas. There is a grave worry that the British mercantile marine is becoming so depleted that it will not have the capacity in time of war or in time of need to shift heavy equipment overseas, and that we shall be forced to depend on what can be taken in the spot market and what can be taken from allies—who may not be our allies in those circumstances. I hope that the Minister will reconsider that point.

The next issue is far more political. I, like many others, very much resent the way in which the Government have, today and on previous occasions, cast doubts on the Labour party's commitment to the defence of this country—as if, in some way, it was the preserve of the Conservative party. It is noticeable that there are two deserters from among the Ministers who were here when those statements were made. Given that the boundaries of their seats have been redrawn, they have chosen not to fight but to flee the field of battle and to seek pastures new—in one case successfully and in the other case, not yet successfully.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. James Arbuthnot): On a purely personal point, the hon. Gentleman may like to confirm with his hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), who is sitting here, that my seat has completely disappeared, most unfortunately. Luckily, I have been fortunate in being selected for another constituency.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Although this is a fairly broad debate, it will not encompass constituency arrangements and rearrangements.

Mr. Davidson: The Minister's defence is very poor, given that the entire seat has probably not disappeared. Is he saying that there were no survivors whom he wished to continue to represent? Is he saying that there was nobody at all left? Have they all been decanted to the new constituency?

Mr. Fatchett: They are victims of friendly fire.

Mr. Davidson: Yes, perhaps they are. I rest my case on that matter. The "brightest man in the House" would no doubt beat me if it came to an exchange on the matter.

I hope that the Minister will take the points I have made into consideration, and that he will announce later today that he is placing an order for type 23 frigates as quickly as possible, so that Yarrow can get the order and keep its men in work.

7.7 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): It gives me great and belated pleasure today to welcome the announcement on orders for the support helicopter, the Tomahawk missile and, above all, the attack helicopter for which many of my hon. Friends have been pressing for so long. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his predecessors promised, our armed forces are now among the best equipped in the world, to the benefit of our country, our service men and, of course, our defence industry, even if, sadly, we have not always provided the prime contractor.

I saw Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen squirm yesterday at the bizarre intervention by their new and raw recruit, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). Old Labour, which still believes that British defence policy revolves around what I have heard described as pay, pregnancy and poofs, may welcome him to its bosom, but, luckily, new Labour has sound men who are not shy of recognising that more than 400,000 jobs are dependent on our defence industry, which has an export value of no less than £5 billion and which makes up the largest export sector of United Kingdom manufactured goods.

I am proud to have in my constituency a distinguished company, Racal, which has proved its record throughout the world. It continues to lead the world in certain technologies, such as Racal Radio, which presently holds 25 to 30 per cent. of the tactical radio market outside the United States.

However, the defence industry faces increasing pressure at home and abroad from foreign competition. Its contribution to the United Kingdom's balance of payments, employment and skills base must never be underestimated. In that context, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces knows, I have long been concerned about the staffing levels of British embassies and the number of defence attachés, which is small in comparison with the United States and France. France has now overtaken us to become the second leader in the field.

I have therefore been pushing for an enhanced role for defence attachés which involves the closest possible co-operation between the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that the Government will stick to the yardstick of satisfactory access to the host nation which also involves the right rank structure. I hope that senior serving officers will be used in such roles so that they can talk to Governments at the right sort of level in order to promote British industry.

The latest "Statement on the Defence Estimates" has another cosy, comforting subtitle, "Stable Forces in a Strong Britain". The snag is that, by definition, the armed services are needed primarily to maintain or create stability elsewhere, particularly when British interests are at stake.

Stability has hardly been a well-known feature of service life through the ages. It is not expected. But after three major reviews in three years, it is high time for a period free at least from extra turbulence. I am sure that the House will want to protect the quality of life of service men and women and their families who put up with so much disruption.

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

I believe from my continuing links with the military—I declare an interest as a reserve officer—that there is an increasing and worrying trend outside the forces to equate life in the armed forces with civilian jobs. The distinction is in that very sentence. A job can never be the same as a way of life and there are considerable dangers in regarding the services as a business to be managed rather than led. We want our armed forces to be run not by managers but by leaders—people with flair and initiative. Unless we attract and, above all, retain good-quality recruits, the fine reputation of our troops worldwide will be prejudiced, and the very qualities that we so admire—their efficiency, skill, bravery and, not least, their special brand of humour—will be less evident.

Service men endure long periods of training and often mundane and repetitive tasks offset by deployments to dangerous troublespots around the world at minimal notice. It takes a particular kind of person to cope with that and it was profoundly disappointing to hear the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday that the long-promised 24-month tour interval is yet to be achieved, despite the welcome reduction in tension in Northern Ireland.

In those circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, even at a time of high unemployment, there is a marked shortfall in recruitment. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench not only to be aware of the problem but to continue to emphasise and promote the variety and sort of challenges that soldiers relish—from higher formation training, which sadly has been curtailed recently, to training units in more than 20 countries spreading expertise and good will; from high intensity capability to humanitarian relief work.

Soldiers are very good at disguising their worries about change and its effects on their career prospects. No one expects operational stability, but the time is ripe for at least stability of funding after defence cuts which have resulted in expenditure falling below 3 per cent. of GDP.

I make no apology for concentrating on the human aspect of service life, because unless that is addressed our capability is reduced, and how well we are now using that capability. I welcome the significant British presence in the ACE rapid reaction corps and the announcement of the joint rapid deployment force. However, the mind boggles at what sounds like multi-hatting at a level never before experienced even by our own flexible and tolerant forces—national, NATO, UN and Western European Union roles no less. If rationalisation is needed anywhere, it is certainly needed there.

I share my right hon. Friend's resistance to the WEU's aspiration to be the defence arm of the European Union as well as the European pillar of NATO. Events in the Gulf and Bosnia have demonstrated yet again, firstly, the powerlessness of the United Nations, in the absence of a command structure, properly to respond to crises which blow up in this turbulent post-cold war era; secondly, the absurdity of the dual key arrangement in Bosnia, which paralysed NATO for months, undermining its authority, prolonging the conflict and costing many lives; and, lastly, the need for American commitment and leadership. As Winston Churchill once said, the United States will always do the right thing once it has exhausted all the possibilities. We must be thankful for that and the American role in NATO.

Let my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State continue to resist a defence union as firmly as we resist economic and monetary union. The time is not ripe, and may never be, for either. Close co-operation with other countries in common cause, of course, but, as one of the foremost powers for good in the world, we owe it to our service men and to our country to reject any constraints on pursuing our national interests as a sovereign state.

7.15 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I must begin by explaining why this year's debate on the defence estimates is so important to me. It comes at the end of a year in which we have commemorated the 50th anniversary of the dreadful destructiveness of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and of Nagasaki; a year in which we have also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ending of the war in Europe and in south-east Asia. It also comes at a time when we have celebrated the 50th year since the birth of the United Nations.

If one puts this debate in an even wider context, it takes place at a time when we have supposedly turned our backs on the era of the cold war which so disfigured the way in which we saw other people in society; the common strands of interest and the common threats to our survival. It comes at the end of a year in which the world, or most of it, signed up to an indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty. It comes at the end of a summer in which there has been worldwide condemnation of the French nuclear testing. It is the first time that I have ever encountered a significant number of British people positively shopping for what they described as "non-nuclear" wines. It comes at the end of a week in which Professor Joseph Rotblat, the nuclear physicist, was awarded the Nobel prize for campaigning, throughout his life, for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

If one tries to locate all those huge events—the seismic shifts in public understanding and what is happening in the world—against the contents of the Government's "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995", or the Minister's comments as the estimates have been presented to the House, it is almost impossible to detect that sense of seismic shift that has taken place. That missed opportunity in this year's debate is a matter of great sadness to me.

One can still see a change from last year. There is greater talk of the Government finding efficiency savings or streamlining, but there is no strategic rethink of what defence and common security are fundamentally about. I would argue that this year's "Statement on the Defence Estimates" makes us more rather than less insecure than we were last year. I want to set out the four reasons why I believe that and why I shall be voting against the estimates tonight.

The first reason relates to the nuclear vacuum in relation to Ministers' opening speeches. During the entire period of the Government's life they have recognised that they no longer have a sustainable argument about a nuclear deterrent. What they do have is a nuclear dependence. They are increasingly dependent upon a logic that is not only obsolete but extremely dangerous. It is an obsession beyond the dimensions of rational debate, and beyond any recognition of the huge costs of missed opportunities. These are both the costs involved in cutting

conventional defence services and the wider social and economic costs that society must bear as a result of the obsession with nuclear weapons.

I was greatly relieved by the comments of Field Marshal Lord Carver, who—putting his view in a very technical way—said, "The trouble with nuclear arms is that we do not know what the bloody hell they are for. We cannot use them independently; we can't even run them without the help of the USA. Indeed, no sane person would use them at all."

During the summer, in slightly more diplomatic terms, two more military experts expressed their views. Professor Sir Ronald Mason, who was the Government's chief scientific adviser between 1978 and 1983, said that it was fairly clear that we were "over-egging the pudding" in relation to the arguments in favour of nuclear weapons. He went on to argue that the cost of operating and refitting the Trident submarine would be between £40 billion and £50 billion during its lifetime, and that we could save £10 billion by not ordering the final Trident submarine—or the whole amount, if we mothballed the lot. The same argument was then put by Sir Nigel Bagnall, Chief of the Defence Staff between 1985 and 1989.

The House should remember the scale of those costs when discussing other decisions in regard to where savings are to be found—whether the subject is the defence estimates or other social and economic programmes. This makes Greenpeace's estimate that Trident would cost £33 billion during its lifetime seem positively modest.

For me, the problem with the nuclear weapons programme is that we still refuse to address the fact that such weapons are almost entirely irrelevant to the resolution of any conflict. Certainly they have been irrelevant to the resolution of any conflict in my lifetime. I suspect that they will be irrelevant to the resolution of any conflict during the lifetimes of my children or their children. We shall, however, continue to pay a huge price for the obsession with an obsolete system of defence. It is a distortion of our language that we still presume to speak of nuclear weapons as though they were part of a sensible defence and deterrence strategy, and I feel deeply ashamed of the fact that we do so in the House.

Beyond that psychological dependency, I have a second reason for voting against the estimates. The Government refuse point-blank to condemn French nuclear testing, at a time when the public are appalled and the international community is outraged. What have the Government done? Have they been outspoken in their condemnation of the French? No; they have been "out to lunch" on their indifference. I know that the Government are not used to speaking with the support of the majority of the British public, but I should have thought that, given that only 3 per cent. of the country's population supports the actions of the French, even Polly would have had the sense to take the kettle off this silent support. France's actions are internationally frowned on, and it is a source of despair that Britain remains silent when other countries have spoken out much more courageously.

Why are we doing this? I believe—and this is the third reason why I will vote against the estimates—that we are moving into a new era of Anglo-French co-operation in the development of the next generation of nuclear weapons. I say that with reference to documents that have already been made available to the House. According to the Defence Committee's second report on the progress of the Trident programme, the Ministry of Defence has been

"talking actively with the Americans, and the French, on how to co-operate effectively in the use of . . . facilities"

at the Atomic Weapons Establishment

"as part and parcel of the business of exercising and maintaining proper stewardship of . . . nuclear weapons".

The report adds that

"stronger links could usefully be forged with France who, with untested new warheads, are more anxious to test than are we, and who may indeed recommence doing so following the elections in 1995 unless suitable alternatives are available. Indeed, the UK may itself learn from this co-operation".

This year, in its eighth report, the Committee provided an update, saying:

"Last year we urged greater co-operation with the US and France in non-nuclear testing. MoD reported on some technical discussions with the French on issues related to nuclear weapons stewardship such as hydrodynamic experiments and computer simulation. Progress has not been swift . . . Whilst Britain would want to retain a capability to test independently, an efficient use of resources may involve some specialisation . . . there may be considerable potential for the French and Americans to be invited to conduct work at Aldermaston which may go some way towards filling the void created by a CTBT"—

a comprehensive test ban treaty.

What is that void? It is spelt out on page 77 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates":

"The United Kingdom's capability in nuclear warhead science and technology is principally vested in the Atomic Weapons Establishment . . . at Aldermaston".

Discussing a "streamlined technical programme", the statement says:

"It would, however, also necessitate changes . . . in our ability to develop new warheads which may be required in the future. So, whereas in the past we have used a very small number of underground nuclear tests to provide a cost-effective means of maintaining capabilities, we are now looking to a further enhancement of 'above ground' experiments"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the 10 minutes are up.

7.26 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I hope that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) will forgive me if I do not follow his speech. I want to pick up the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), and, in the short time available to me, to concentrate on the costs of the MOD's ban on homosexuals serving in the Army.

This is not a speech that I particularly want to make, and it is probably not a speech that many of my hon. Friends particularly want to hear, but it is a speech that I think needs to be made—if for no other reason, simply because Ministers ought to be aware of the financial costs of the current ban.

First, let me pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), the Minister of State, for the positive and helpful way in which he has responded to representations that I have made for a number of months. I also thank him and the Ministry for agreeing to set up an internal review, in the light of the recent High Court judgment and the views of one of the judges. I hope that the review will be genuinely independent; I must say that I was a little concerned by some of the comments by one or two senior members of the armed forces that I read immediately after the announcement of it.

[Mr. Michael Brown]

If the review is to inspire any confidence in the Select Committee that eventually considers its findings in the House during this year, it will need to be seen to be genuinely independent within the MOD. I would prefer a much wider review, but I am nevertheless grateful to my hon. Friend for the action that he has taken.

I should like the ban to be rescinded. I do not think that we should wait for the High Court or the Appeal Court, for the review being set in hand by my hon. Friend, for the House to have to consider the Select Committee report or—worst of all—for the European Court. I believe that, in this day and age, the ban is morally wrong.

Nearly 300 people have been discharged from the armed services since 1990 for the crime of being gay. Almost all of them were discharged not because they committed any act of homosexuality while engaged in their duties, but simply for the crime of being gay. No one knew; they were shopped—I know all about that. They were shopped by newspapers, by jealous friends, by people outside who wanted to make trouble. Not once did my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State doubt the courage of all those brave fighting men who fought in the Gulf war and in Bosnia.

The Minister of State might like to know that only a few weeks ago half a dozen airmen—four navigators and two pilots—were discharged. They had been serving this country, putting their lives on the line in Bosnia flying Tornados. We have heard repeatedly from Ministers and hon. Members in this debate about the great courage and the selfless acts of duty exhibited and performed by members of our armed forces in the defence of this country. But if some of them happen to be gay, even though they are not indulging in any gay practices—I agree that that would be unacceptable on active service—it is a different story. They are discharged simply for the crime of being gay. Three hundred of them have been discharged for that crime in the past five years.

Goodness knows how much all the investigations have cost, but I have an estimate that it takes one man investigating a regular soldier who is a suspected homosexual 34 days to complete his investigations on behalf of the special investigations branch; and the total cost of all investigations between 1990 and 1995 is estimated at £7 million.

These investigations are degrading, immoral and wholly unnecessary. While the current ban persists, a person found to be gay should at least be honourably discharged and not put through these degrading hoops.

The training costs of all these service personnel must be horrendous. I do not know what it costs to train a Tornado pilot or navigator, but it must be a great deal of money. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, formerly the Chief Secretary, can ill afford to waste money training people to replace others who are perfectly good at their jobs. No Conservative Member doubts the bravery of those who serve in the armed forces. No one doubts that the half dozen men recently discharged from the RAF fought for their country and put their lives on the line.

Next come the legal costs of the cases currently before the High Court. I would ask the Minister to bear in mind the fact that, ultimately, if this House does not resolve the issue, these cases will end up in the European Court. I suspect that all hon. Members know that that court will rule that this is discrimination, and we shall have to give way. I do not want the laws that we control to be made for us by the European Court, whose judgments usually involve average compensation for cases of this kind of about £50,000. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State, like the Chief Secretary, can do their own sums and realise that millions of pounds will be involved.

I tell the House: this ban will end. It may end if there is a Labour Government; but as there will not be a Labour Government it will end for other reasons. I do not want it ended under duress from the European Court. I want it ended because, as my hon. Friend said earlier, the Army is well capable of coping with change. Hundreds of homosexuals serve in today's Army; some of them are hunted down, others are not discovered. Most of them are congratulated by my hon. Friends; most have tributes paid to them by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby—but most of them are never known. If they are gay, they keep it quiet. They do nothing stupid and they serve their country with distinction. I find it perverse that someone like me can serve in Her Majesty's Government but not in Her Majesty's armed forces. That is ridiculous.

7.34 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on the powerful, impassioned and effective arguments that he adduced in support of his proposition. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson), however, I want to confine my remarks primarily to procurement issues, not just as they affect my constituents—although they do—but more generally too.

I am concerned about how the Ministry of Defence handles major procurement policy matters. The MOD cannot continue to have it both ways. It cannot, on the one hand, say that it is its policy to retain an effective United Kingdom industrial capability and, at the same time, allow major procurement programmes to slide ever further behind schedule.

My hon. Friend the Member for Govan referred to the batch 2 Trafalgar class programme, which provides a vivid illustration of the problem. The batch 2 Trafalgar class submarine programme is nearly two and a half years behind schedule. The main reason for that delay, as the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the right hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), said in the Navy debate in February, is that the Government wanted to generate a competition for the prime contractorship of the programme, and paid GEC tens of millions of pounds to put together a rival bid for it.

I believe that the Government's policy is inconsistent and does not bear serious analysis. In addition to the industrial damage that the delay is likely to cause my constituency, and the shipbuilding industry in general, it is also legitimate to argue that there will probably be operational implications for the Royal Navy. The batch 2 Trafalgar class programme is designed to replace the aging Swiftsure class; many of those submarines are nearly 20 years old. The extra two and half years delay now built into the programme may have an effect on the Navy's ability to maintain an operational fleet of 12 strategic submarines nuclear, even though I understand that that is still Government policy. If possible, I should

like the Minister to reassure the House today that the delay will not have such an implication for the Royal Navy.

There can be no further delay or slippage in the ordering of the batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines. As I have said, the programme is already two and a half years behind. I do not expect the Minister to say today that he is about to order the submarines, but I do want him to say that there will be no further delay and that the Government will honour the timetable that they have proclaimed—to order the submarines, at the latest, by June 1996.

While we are on the subject of the Trafalgar programme, I would also like the Minister to assure my constituents who expect to build the submarines—I have no doubt that they will—that the Ministry will follow the practice that it has adopted for other major submarine building contracts such as Trident and release long-lead funding to allow some of the early steel work needed to construct the boats to begin at the earliest opportunity. That will not at a stroke close the gap opening up in VSEL's order book, but it will go a long way towards doing so.

In addition, therefore, to confirming the new timetable for the submarines, I want the Minister to confirm that the Government are considering issuing long-lead funding.

Secondly, we need to look seriously, in the context of major procurement contracts, at the Government's policy of maintaining competition as the principal driving force behind such contracts. It is becoming increasingly hard, especially at prime contractorship level, to secure competition for major programmes. As our industrial capability and our defence industrial base continues to shrink it will become ever harder to secure contracts exclusively through competitive tendering. In shipbuilding—my particular concern—competition does not apply to submarine construction, because VSEL is the only shipyard in the United Kingdom licensed to construct nuclear submarines. And we know that the Government no longer want to order any diesel-electric submarines.

Frankly, nor does competition apply any more to large ship construction either because VSEL, as the Government have acknowledged—this is a commonly known fact—is the only shipyard capable of building large vessels for the Royal Navy. Instead of forcing many shipyards to go through an abortive competitive tendering process which is entirely bogus, as we know was the case in relation to the batch 2 tendering programme, the Government should be much more upfront about the NAPNOC procedure—no acceptable price, no contract. That is a way of ensuring adequate value for money for taxpayers, which is a perfectly legitimate concern of Government.

On the issue of procurement generally, perhaps we could leave the final word and judgment on the Government's policy to the industry itself. On 21 March 1995, the Defence Manufacturers Association, in evidence to the Joint House of Commons Defence and Trade and Industry Select Committee, said:

> "Sadly, the MoD procurement policies have, until now, done little of a positive nature to support industry's chances of retaining a competitive edge."

I hope that the Government will give that view and comment from industry proper emphasis and consideration.

Again, my hon. Friend the Member for Govan referred to export promotion. I understand that the MOD estimates that the future UK naval shipbuilding requirement in the three remaining yards will be sufficient to support only 8,500 jobs in the UK shipbuilding industry. That is not enough to support even the existing reduced employment levels in the UK shipbuilding industry. Therefore, if we are to retain employment levels, it will be important for the British Government to get behind the UK shipbuilding industry and to support its export potential. The only way they can do that is to do what other European countries do: back effective winners. At the moment, however, it is not a policy of the British Government to back individual yards. Consequently, foreign orders are left to competition between yards. That does not happen in other European countries. The British Government need to get behind successful British yards and back winners in relation to export potential.

I am glad that the Government remain committed to the landing platform dock replacement programme because it will be essential if the policy of the Secretary of State for Defence for a rapid deployment force—his new initiative announced yesterday—is to be brought into being. Amphibiosity will be central to that. In turn, the LPDs are central to ensuring that amphibiosity.

The Government must make it clear again that they want to keep to the timetable for ordering the landing platform dock replacements. As I understand it, that should mean an award of contract at the end of this year.

I want to ask the Minister some direct questions about the landing platform helicopters. I understand that HMS Ocean was quite seriously damaged when launched earlier this month at the Kvaerner yard on the Clyde. How serious was that damage? Will it delay the commissioning of HMS Ocean and its coming into operation with the Navy? In particular, what implication might any further delay have for my constituents at VSEL who, under the contract to construct HMS Ocean, expect that ship to arrive in Barrow for fitting out early in the new year? Where will the work on HMS Ocean to repair that damage be undertaken? It needs to go into dry dock. Where will it go to have that work done?

The Upholders were referred to in speeches yesterday and today. The Minister will be aware that there are four Upholder classes. The entire fleet of Upholders is in my constituency awaiting the conclusion perhaps of an export agreement with the Canadian Government or some other purchaser. I hope that the Government will confirm that such negotiations are continuing to advance and that a prospect exists of an early agreement for a purchaser of the Upholder class to be found.

7.43 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Before you took the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) made a succinct and seriously responsible speech, an example commendably followed by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton). Sad to say, however, the Labour party has somewhat damaged its laboriously pursued aspiration for credibility in defence with a breathlessly long—16 lines without a full stop—and incoherent amendment urging the Opposition not to approve the defence estimates today.

The Labour party then doubly damaged aspiration for credibility with the extremely quixotic intervention of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

argued that Nye Bevan and others had no fear of the Soviet threat in 1951, an attitude not shared by Clem Attlee and an interpretation of history that is in total negation of the facts. Even from the perspective of that year, one could only have remembered what happened to Finland, the loss of the Karelia province and of the northern region to the Soviets, and the rape of the Baltic states in May 1940. The Soviet occupation of the eastern part of Poland was also part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

Also before you came in, Madam Deputy Speaker, the debate was illuminated by the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, whose speeches are never knowingly understated and today was no exception. His ebullience and bravura might have obscured the real problems that the armed forces face, especially in terms of recruitment and retention, and above all of the future role of our troops in Bosnia as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation implementation force. Luckily, those problems are self-evident and were well discussed by my hon. Friends during the debate.

The Minister of State is very good at talking up the reality and his remarks remind me of those of the former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), who spoke with such pride about the United Kingdom punching above its weight—a phrase which, in military terms, candidly terrifies me. All I will say is that, mercifully, the "Front Line First" review has not gone as badly as I had feared, that the slogan—and I loathe slogans in defence matters—of "waste into weapons" is not misplaced, and that, by virtue of the savings in support, extremely important enhancements of our weapon systems and capabilities have been made.

The procurement in air and missile systems alone—more Chinook Mark IIs, the EH101 medium support helicopters, the Longbow Apaches, the C130 Js—will greatly enhance the mobility and flexibility of our armed forces, as will the submarine launch Tomahawk cruise missiles increase their reach and capability to strike.

I hope that there is sufficient leeway in our budgets for the vital procurement of a conventionally armed stand-off weapon for the Royal Air Force, a modern anti-armour weapon, the maritime patrol aircraft to replace the Nimrod and the Astor airborne stand-off radar system. We must therefore continue to attempt to save money and we have sectors in which important savings can be made.

It makes no sense that we should employ 11,903 German civilians to support our armed forces in Germany when bases in Britain are being closed such as Abingdon for the RAF, Chivenor, which is to reopen for the Royal Marines, Brawdy, which was closed but has been reopened for the Army, Finningley, Scampton and many others. The Royal Air Force can operate perfectly from home bases instead of from Germany and deploy rapidly to wherever it is needed.

The same argument applies to the Army. It is not even as if there are proper training grounds for our tanks in Germany. It is true that we are looking for some in Poland, but largely they have to exercise in Canada. There are 33,000 Army and RAF personnel in Germany. I understood their presence there during the cold war under the terms of the Brussels treaty, but it is now an anachronism and needs to be reviewed.

There are major savings to be made in procurement. The National Audit Office report on the Eurofighter programme needs careful study. We must never again involve ourselves in such a bureaucratic co-operative programme with an expensive management agency superimposed, a multiplicity of production lines, and so on. I trust that we will not make the same mistake for the new generation Horizon 2000 anti-aircraft frigate.

There is also the headquarters of the Procurement Executive at Abbey Wood which costs £400 million. There is also the £52 million that has gone down the drain to pay compensation to service women who became pregnant during their time in the armed forces and the risk that we may have to pay compensation to members of the armed forces who had to leave because they were homosexual. As the Chairman of the Special Select Committee dealing with the Armed Forces Bill during a previous Parliament, I must say that I profoundly disagree with the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) as, I suspect, do the chiefs of staff.

I can look at this only from a parent's point of view. Within their ranks the armed forces have many young people at a highly sensitive age when they are likely to be influenced by their superiors and I do not think that it is in any way appropriate for homosexuality to be condoned in the armed forces.

Our party needs to look resolutely to the future to present a defence programme which meets the needs into the next century. As my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said so eloquently yesterday, much more effective use should be made of the reserves of all three services. It is disturbing that the volunteer reserve element of all three services is reducing in size. With the reserve forces legislation, there will be an opportunity to revolutionise our use of reserve forces which will be extremely cost-effective.

We must improve the training of our armed forces rather than do it damage. I bitterly deplore the decision to sell off the Royal Naval college at Greenwich. I have suggested that it should be a tri-service cadet college to provide the discipline and grounding in science and military education that the regular officers of the future will need.

We must improve the mobility and flexibility of our armed forces. The joint rapid deployment force is a step in the right direction, but, in addition to the medium support helicopters and transports that we already have, we will need a strategic transport force. For my money that should be the McDonnell Douglas C17. We need the heavy lift as part of our capability to deploy the full range of our armed forces, including armoured fighting vehicles, rapidly to wherever they may be required. If our Government do that, they will have done well for the future.

7.53 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Since the 10-minute limit on speeches still applies, I am sure that the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) will forgive me if I do not follow his speech in detail. I would have liked to have dealt in more detail with the speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) so as to endorse, not for the first time, his call for consideration

to be given to young people. The Government have done enormous damage to young people over the past 15 years and those activities should not be allowed to continue.

I would have liked to have mentioned hardware at some length, but I shall restrict my remarks simply to asking for an update on the F3. One view needs to be put which may not have been mentioned before. If we buy the American alternative, it will be twin engined but with only one air crew. If the F3 replacement is to be used on long sorties with several air-to-air refuellings, there may be a disadvantage to moving from the pilot and navigator to simply pilot operation. That is a small point, but the Minister will be aware that for many years Finningley in south Yorkshire trained navigators and one would not wish to see them becoming redundant, along with many of the others who worked at Finningley.

My main concern is that the Government seem to be adopting a preposterous approach. We have heard about the strong defence, strong Britain. Everybody has mentioned the speech made by the Secretary of State for Defence at the Tory party conference. There was another speech in which a prospective Conservative candidate was able to boast that he employed people at 89p an hour. It is no wonder they applauded him and it is no wonder that the same people applauded what *The Daily Telegraph* called the "ill-judged rhetoric" of the Secretary of State.

Yesterday's speech from the Secretary of State was more muted and reasonable. It was less aggressive. Perhaps someone has had a word with him and persuaded him that the SAS are not only tough but intelligent. They may be better at French and Spanish than the Secretary of State. They are capable and intelligent people.

The Secretary of State clearly has a great deal to learn and I hope that he listens to the Minister of State, who is rather more familiar with the British armed forces. Perhaps the Minister might persuade the Secretary of State to visit some operational RAF stations to have a look at the squadron programme. We have heard about the 24-month question for Army postings overseas, but the Minister is well aware that many of the air crew and essential ground staff in the Royal Air Force would greatly welcome rather less frequent postings overseas.

I know that the postings are for only three or four months, but I know of people who have done six or seven tours in the past three and a half years. That may be attractive to single young men, but when service men are married with children, the burden on their wives is excessive. It may be one of the factors in a problem to which the House should attend—the morale of Her Majesty's forces.

The morale in the Royal Air Force is higher than the Government deserve, given the sacrifices that it has had to make because of overstretch. I have mentioned strong Britain, but since the Government took office we have dropped from sixth to 16th in the world prosperity league. However, our commitments remain the same and the Government still wish to stride the stage of world affairs. They still wish to occupy a place on the United Nations Security Council. They still wish to play a leading part in NATO.

The problem is that the economic capacity does not match the political appetite. At the moment, the burden of that overweening approach by Her Majesty's Government is borne by a shrinking number of service men and it is not fair. The burden on the men and women in the services and on their families is excessive. If the Secretary of State wishes to take a tough line, let him take it with the Treasury to ensure that we are not placing too great a burden on our service men.

The Minister recognises how serious the burdens are. It cannot go on. We must match our commitments to our capacity or the Government will stand even more guilty of adopting a preposterous position.

Mr. Soames: Not for the first time in a defence debate the hon. Gentleman has put his finger on one of the most serious problems that we face in running defence operations. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that part of the Bett review which has been so maligned in the House in the past two days tried to square the circle by dealing with those matters in a formal way? I believe that Sir Michael Bett appreciated the difficulties.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister will forgive me, but I do not have time to refer to the Bett review. I want to make two more points, one of which it is extremely appropriate for me to mention.

I have been a member of the Western European Union for longer than anyone in the House and I have been heavily involved in the debates and committee work of that assembly for a long time. I recognise that it has, and must have, an important role in European defence. However, the Minister must understand that, as it stands, the Western European Union cannot fulfil the aspirations that both sides of the House have for it. It needs to be given a great deal more attention. I believe that the Council of Ministers has not yet given sufficient attention to the implications of the widening that has taken place over the past year. It is right to point out that, for all sorts of reasons, the Community is not capable of serving such a European role. Discussion must take place in a rather more mature way than has been the case in recent months. Britain cannot afford to be asked to punch more than its weight, as the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood reminded us.

The Government need to be rather more even handed. The taxpayer pays for defence. We all pay tax, regardless of the area of the country from which we come. However, the *Yorkshire Post* told us the other day, in a full and interesting report, about the closure of the RAF depot at Harrogate and the fact that the jobs had gone to Wyton in the Prime Minister's constituency. Also, the Army school at Harrogate is to be transferred to a southern coastal county. Many of us suspect that there is now a retreat of defence expenditure into Conservative political fastnesses—[Hon. Members: "No."] Well, it certainly looks like that. Perhaps I am wrong, but the Government need to deal with the growing suspicion that defence expenditure is being concentrated in areas of Conservative political strength.

The other cause for concern is the excessive eagerness of the Government to contract out. I intervened on the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement in the RAF debate on 4 May and asked whether he accepted that the RAF had to retain sufficient capacity to be an intelligent customer. He said that he entirely agreed with me. What evidence has there been since 4 May that the services—in particular the RAF, which has to maintain high technological capacity—are being given that capacity? The former Minister said that that was why the RAF was to maintain capacity at Sealand and St. Athan, but what evidence is there that the Government accept the

[Mr. Hardy]

point that he made in the House several months ago? Is there not a real danger that the Government's commitment to dogma and privatisation is being taken too far?

This is an important matter because air crews must fly aircraft that have been serviced. They know that those who have trained in the RAF and are dedicated to the service are men of enormous technological skill. What guarantee has the House and the service that those skills will be retained and that the customer, the service and the taxpayer will continue to get value for money?

I have little faith that after 16 years the Government have demonstrated their fitness to maintain responsibility for the defence services. We need a change of heart and a more intelligent approach. The sooner we have a general election—which will at least save me from having to listen to Conservative dogma—the better.

8.3 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): It is not often that I seek to speak in a debate on defence because I am one of those few hon. Members unlucky enough not to have a service base in my constituency—even though the towns of Hastings, Rye and Winchelsea were significant in the birth of the Royal Navy, as three of the original seven Cinque Port towns. If hon. Members want an explanation of why there were seven Cinque Port towns, I would have to explain that at some other time, as Madam Deputy Speaker would rule me out of order if I tried to do so now.

There is an active Territorial Army unit in my constituency, which has invited me to visit it soon. There is also an exceedingly large and enthusiastic group of service cadets. In this day and age, when so many people think that youth services are under threat, it is heartening to see such enthusiasm for the cadets in Hastings and Rye. Indeed, were it not for them and the TA, most of our moving Remembrance Sundays, and, this summer, VE and VJ days, would not have the significance that they have, given the emotional part that the forces play in our civic life.

One issue has recently come to my attention, although I am rather confused about it following the receipt of a letter this evening. I have just heard from some parents that the whole of the air training element of our local cadets is to be moved from RAF Manston, when it closes, to RAF Benson. Without making a plea for something to be done about the appalling condition of the roads in my constituency, I must point out that it takes at least four hours to get from Hastings to RAF Benson. Given the need for cadets to be in school, and the requirement that schools meet the high standards that we are now insisting on, it will be difficult to persuade schools to allow children to leave early so that they can get to RAF Benson and back in reasonable time. At weekends and during the school holidays, the facilities are used by organisations such as the Air Training Corps.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has told my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) that a Bulldog is to be sent to RAF Manston so that the cadets can get some flying time. That is splendid, but only until RAF Manston is closed. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement could clarify the matter so that I can assure the parents of the air cadets that they will have reasonable flying time. We have spent a great deal of time debating the need to ensure adequate recruitment to our forces, so we must remember that many recruits come from the cadets. If they are put off by the fact that they do not have the opportunities to go up in a plane, the RAF will suffer in the long term.

My constituency has more than those enthusiastic cadets. At the other end of the spectrum, the contribution that Hastings and Rye makes to our defence comes through exceedingly high-tech research facilities. One company, Computing Devices, was a key player in putting reconnaissance systems on the Tornados that were so successful in the Gulf war. Since then, technology has moved on at an ever-increasing pace. That company is now a world leader in digital battlefield mapping—so much so that the managing director recently led a presentation to the US Defense Secretary. We are at the forefront of technology in this highly important area of future effective reconnaissance.

One of the developments on which the company is making progress was used in the Gulf war and was effectively described by Frederick Forsyth in his novel about that war. I certainly could not better his description. Since then, there have been further developments. The key feature of the equipment is that from a very great height one can observe what is happening on a battlefield without—this might seem slightly silly—having to worry about the height of hills.

However, I understand that the Army is keen to develop its own digital mapping system. I am sure that 52 per cent. of the population will say that boys will be boys and boys will have their toys. Those of us who run household budgets know that the last thing to do is to allow those toys to put our budgets under pressure. Much of this debate has been about the pressure on budgets.

I have a vision of what the Army wants to do with its own digital mapping system. I can envisage an armoured personnel carrier or something of such size trundling out on to an open area which is not under attack and somehow putting up into the air all the kit that is required for observation on top of—perhaps—a telescopic line.

One of the key factors of such reconnaissance is that one needs a clear picture. If the wind blows, what happens to the quality of the picture from the top of that telescopic line? How high can the telescopic line go before it starts bending under the weight of the equipment at the top of it?

There are many questions to be asked, not all as simple and silly, but to me, the net effect could be that we are indulging in a potentially significant waste of public money. The quality of information coming from the aeroplanes involved in such surveillance is improving—I am sure—on a weekly basis and will instantaneously provide the Army with all the information that it needs without it having to develop its own form of battlefield digital mapping.

I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could assure me that we will not see competitive research going on in an area in which we are already well ahead of the international field, especially as we are now emphasising. There is no point in wasting scarce public resources in duplicating, and duplicating inefficiently, research that is already going on.

I ask my hon. Friend again for reassurances that we will see progress, especially in negotiations with the Germans, to ensure that the Eurofighter goes into production and that the Germans' current demands for a higher percentage of the build to be allocated in Germany is resisted. Granting such a demand would, of course, take jobs from the UK and its defence industry when so much of the technical development and the excellence of the Eurofighter has indeed come from British companies and their brilliant research.

We have talked about a strong defence and a strong Britain. One of the messages that I have taken from this debate is that many people have not yet grasped that strong defence means high-tech defence. It is not necessarily the number of pairs of feet that can march behind the beat of the drum that matters, but ensuring that the armed forces have the best and highest level of equipment that can be developed to ensure that they are more efficient and more effective than the potential enemies that they may face—which in these hazardous days could be anywhere in the world.

I am glad for the sake of the companies in my constituency that we are investing so heavily in high-quality research. Will the Minister assure me that we will continue to do so? Ensuring only that there are people to march to the beat of the drum is not the best way in which to ensure that we win a war.

8.13 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I hope that the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) will forgive me if I do not specifically follow her remarks. I shall concentrate on two specific concerns: first, the future of defence staff training and secondly, the future of the magnificent and historic buildings in Greenwich, currently occupied by the Royal Naval college.

The two concerns are inextricably linked. Following the decision earlier this year to merge the three separate staff colleges into a single tri-service college at Camberley, we have witnessed the shocking and demeaning spectacle of a British Secretary of State for Defence hawking some of the country's finest buildings and one of its most historic sites around the world in search of a buyer. I entirely endorse the regrets expressed by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) about the proposed sale of the Royal Naval college.

We know that the Secretary of State is an ardent privatiser, but this proposed privatisation adds an entirely new dimension to what a former Conservative Prime Minister described disparagingly as "selling off the family silver". It is difficult to imagine any other country in the world possessing a complex of buildings of such quality and historical associations being prepared to sell off its national heritage in such a way—so much for the Secretary of State's absurd pretence in Blackpool last week to be standing up for British interests. "Do not mess with Britain", he might have said, but "would you like to make me an offer for one of our finest national monuments?"

The Secretary of State's action is all the more deplorable when one realises that he has a dual responsibility, not only as Secretary of State for Defence, but as sole trustee for the Greenwich hospital estate. It is worth summarising briefly what that involves.

Greenwich comprises a remarkable complex, including the Queen's house, the national maritime museum and the Royal Observatory, which are all managed by the national maritime museum. It includes the Dreadnought seaman's hospital and the Devonport nurses home, which are both now sadly empty—one has been empty for getting on for 10 years and is showing signs of serious neglect and decay. There are also the buildings occupied by the Royal Naval college, including the famous painted hall and chapel, the King Charles, the William and Mary and the Queen Anne's quarters, and the Pepys building and other associated buildings—one incidentally containing what I believe is the country's smallest nuclear reactor.

The very names of the buildings convey much of the history and significance of the site. The estate was originally a royal palace, in which both Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I were born, and was subsequently converted into a hospital and refuge for elderly and disabled seafarers—a foundation which celebrated its 300th anniversary last year. More recently, over the past 130 years, it has been a centre for naval training of the highest calibre, as all hon. Members who have visited the Royal Naval college will testify.

The site has been of fundamental significance to the Royal Navy for centuries. It was where Nelson's body lay in state after Trafalgar, and has also for centuries been associated with the development of navigational skills, presided over as it is by the observatory standing on the meridian line from which the whole world measures time.

The complex was built by the greatest names in British architecture: Inigo Jones, Christopher Wren, Webb, Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh, to name just five. It has been described by, among others, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the previous Secretary of State for Health, as the British Versailles. One only has to pause to reflect on the likelihood of the French putting the palace of Versailles on the market to realise the enormity of what our Secretary of State is doing.

How did it come to this? A little over a year ago the Ministry of Defence decided to merge the three separate service colleges into a single tri-service college. There were essentially two candidates as sites to accommodate the new college: Greenwich, the home of the Royal Naval college and the Joint Service Defence college, and Camberley, the home of the Army staff college. The way in which the choice of the preferred site was made tells us—I am afraid—a great deal about how the government of this country is currently conducted.

As I highlighted in a debate on the Royal Navy on 16 February, the so-called consultation was characterised by obfuscation, secrecy, dubious and misleading figures, and tendentious interpretations, all designed to prove that Camberley was the best buy. The doubts that I expressed in the House, in correspondence with the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and, indeed, in a meeting with him at the time, were brushed aside, and the Government confirmed their preference for Camberley. Interestingly, in the light of the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about the political geography of defence procurement, the preferred site is located in Conservative-voting Surrey, rather than in Labour-voting south-east London.

We learn, however, from yesterday's edition of *The Independent* that the figures on which the decision was based have had to be revised. It said in *The Independent*:

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

"Detailed studies into the cost of refurbishing the existing Army Staff College have disclosed that 'tens of millions of pounds' will be needed to carry out the work.

The cost is substantially more than predicted in initial studies, raising fears that savings might not be seen until well into the next century.

'There is a lot of teeth-sucking going on about the scale of the costs involved in the refurbishment of Camberley,' said a senior defence source.

Alternative sites to Camberley are now under consideration to see whether greater savings can be made. And there are grave doubts whether the 1997 deadline for forming the tri-service college can now be met."

In response to my earlier intervention, I was somewhat surprised to discover that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces had apparently not seen this report but that he has undertaken to look into it. I hope that he will, as a matter of urgency, and inform the House whether the claim was made in the defence estimates that substantial financial savings will be made by the concentration on one site and that the closure of the four existing colleges in 1997 can still be achieved.

I must also ask the Minister to recall that in his correspondence with me dated 10 February this year he said:

"you are right to conclude that the principal reason for the difference in cost between the Greenwich and Camberley options is the need for significantly greater capital expenditure in the early years at Greenwich."

If the report in *The Independent* yesterday is correct and the costs involved in establishing the tri-service college at Camberley are proving to be substantially greater than previously estimated, it must call into question the validity of the assumptions which led the Government to decide in favour of Camberley rather than Greenwich. If, as *The Independent* implies, alternative sites are now being considered, I trust that Greenwich is among them.

In the meantime, Greenwich has been handed by the Secretary of State to the estate agents to be disposed of. Even worse has been the revelation that the Secretary of State intends to introduce measures in the forthcoming armed forces Bill to amend the Greenwich Hospital Act 1869 which governs the use of the Greenwich site. Section 7 makes it clear that the site can be used

"for the purposes of the naval service or any department of Her Majesty's Government".

That remit would, of course, permit continuing use of the site by the Navy or the Ministry of Defence or any public service use—for example, heritage or educational activities sponsored by the relevant Government Department. It would not permit a private use of the premises and that, I fear, is the reason why the Secretary of State is seeking to change the legislation.

After the fiasco of county hall being flogged to a Japanese corporation that has left the building empty and appears incapable of using it other than as an aquarium, we have every reason to feel real anxiety about the intentions of the Secretary of State for Defence. Not surprisingly his actions have prompted a national outcry. People, not only in Greenwich but throughout Britain, have made it clear beyond doubt that they do not want our magnificent architectural and historic heritage treated in that way. What should be done?

The first priority must be a further examination of the cost and feasibility of using the Greenwich site for the tri-service college. I hope that the Minister will tell us a little more about the latest estimates of the cost of the Camberley option or, if he cannot, that he will return to the House and do so in the near future.

Secondly, the Secretary of State should immediately withdraw Greenwich from the estate agents' brochures and make it clear that the site will remain in use for appropriate public services within the terms of section 7 of the 1869 Act. If it is not possible to continue its use as a tri-service college, another appropriate public service use—either for heritage purposes, possibly run by the national maritime museum, or educational purposes—would clearly be appropriate.

The way in which the Secretary of State who, as I stressed, has a dual responsibility in this matter, has treated the Royal Naval college site in Greenwich over the past year has been deplorable but, unlike county hall, it has at least not yet been sold. The Secretary of State therefore has the opportunity to repair the damage and act in the national interest. I hope that we shall hear—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

8.23 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I wish to refer to some of the issues raised earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). In the year of the 50th anniversary of the use of atomic weapons against Japan and the year in which the nuclear non-proliferation treaty has been extended, I make no apology for wanting to speak about Trident and nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty has been extended this year but that should not be a cause for complacency about the future. Nor is it any guarantee for the future. Some countries that have not signed the treaty almost certainly have nuclear weapons or nuclear capability—Israel, Pakistan and probably India.

The difficulty is that there is a fundamental contradiction in the United Kingdom's defence policy. We try to convince would-be nuclear proliferators that nuclear weapons are not an effective way for them to guarantee their security. In fact, we go further and suggest that nuclear weapons are not a legitimate way for them to protect their national security because those other nations cannot possibly be trusted with nuclear weapons. At the same time, however, we retain and extend our own nuclear capability. As long as we insist on the importance to us of nuclear capability we do nothing but strengthen other people's perception of possible gains to them in becoming nuclear powers, especially when they know from experience that being a non-nuclear power is no guarantee that threats will not be used.

North Korea is a case in point. I hold no brief for North Korea. None of us would wish that state to have nuclear capability. Since the 1950s, the United States had maintained tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea. They were removed in 1992 but in 1994 the United States Senate was urging their reintroduction into South Korea. What are the North Koreans expected to do in that situation? How are they expected to react? That contradiction in US policy has been matched precisely by the contradictions in the United Kingdom's policy.

One simple but serious question has been asked a number of times in this debate but has been answered very dismissively as if there were no real question to be answered. That question is, what is Trident for? Is it for use in war? If so, where and in what circumstances might the United Kingdom use it? I can accept that there may be some logic in arguing that there are circumstances in which we would have to use Trident. I might not agree with that point of view, but there is an element of logic in it. However, the argument usually used is one of deterrence and the need to deter an aggressor. It is suggested that we have to be aware of the possibility of unstable regimes obtaining nuclear weapons. The trouble is that such an argument is merely an acceptance that proliferation will occur and is inevitable.

We would be much better off focusing on how to stop proliferation and how much more secure we would then be in the long term. I am sure that if proliferation occurs, sooner or later so will the use of nuclear weapons. The biggest danger of all is that proliferation will eventually lead to one or other, or both, the protagonists in a regional war having nuclear capability. There is certainly no record over the past 50 years that the theory of deterrence works in stopping regional wars.

We have now reached a point from which, over the next few years, there will either be significant moves towards the progressive removal of weapons of mass destruction or an inexorable proliferation. The question that we should be asking ourselves is how do we, in our defence policy, help to move that process one way or the other.

If we are serious about using Trident in moves towards disarmament—perhaps in multilateral negotiations—what are the best ways of going about it? Is Trident to be a bargaining counter? There are two possible ways in which the United Kingdom might be involved in disarmament negotiations—as a participant in trading off, which is always a part of such negotiations, or as a broker in some sense. Is there a serious possibility that Trident—for all the massive destructive power in just one Trident submarine it is still only a tiny fraction of the weaponry in the United States and Russia—would carry real weight as a trade off or bargaining counter? What weight would we carry with Trident in those negotiations? I can see no possibility of our agreeing to reduce the Trident capability. After all, we have only four submarines when they are all in operation. At some point, even in that scenario, we would face the decision of going for all or nothing.

We should seriously consider the real alternative, which is to become the first major ex-nuclear power, with the moral weight that that would carry, and the ability to act as a broker that would come with it. We have seen in recent peace negotiations examples of the way in which non-aligned nations can become involved in those negotiations and act as brokers. Norway's role with regard to the middle east is an obvious case in point. Is it not time that membership of the United Nations Security Council is not so directly and obviously linked to membership of the nuclear club?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) spoke about the financial implications, and I do not have time to go through those again in detail. But I agreed with my right hon. Friend when he spoke about the possible impact on our economy, and related the sums that we are still spending on defence to what is happening in the other public services, with welfare cuts and so on.

I understand the position of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have defence industries in their constituencies, who are concerned about what will happen to the people who work there and about the efforts necessary for diversification and arms conversion. However, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield I believe that diversification can be achieved.

In our economy we have started to develop an unhealthy reliance on arms sales to countries that we know are unreliable and sometimes despotic. I am not proud of the fact that we exported £5 billion worth of arms last year although the world market was declining. Why, in that effort, did 10 times as much Government money go towards promoting arms exports as went towards promoting civil exports? Why is the British taxpayer subsidising those sales? About one fifth of arms sales are paid for not by the foreign Governments concerned but by the British taxpayer, sometimes through tax credits and sometimes through subsidies.

Who is being armed? In third-world countries violent conflicts are being fuelled, debts increased and social spending undermined. I do not believe that many British taxpayers want their money to be spent in that way.

We need more than a review of our spending priorities. We need a fundamental shift in our policies away from reliance on nuclear weapons. We need real cuts in spending and we need to do something about the arms trade.

8.32 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I shall not detain the House long. I start by congratulating the new Minister of State for Defence Procurement; I trust that he will enjoy his stay at the Ministry of Defence, which is a most enjoyable Ministry, and that he will ensure that we receive written answers to the questions that he cannot deal with in the time available at the end of the debate.

Yesterday the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), the Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, talked about the Gurkhas. I have not seen an official statement from the Ministry, so I should be obliged if we could be given an official notification if Gurkhas are to be recruited in the Parachute Regiment. If not, the story should be denied.

If Gurkhas are to be recruited, what numbers are contemplated and what terms are to be offered? I am asking much the same questions as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. Will Gurkhas be employed on the same terms as the existing Gurkha battalions, or will they be paid on the same terms as British soldiers in the British Army? I foresee difficulties either way, if they are to be in a combined British-Gurkha unit. We should be told what structural organisation is proposed.

I do not share the views of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), who made an extraordinarily eccentric speech. I take the view that the Gurkhas are admirable in any capacity in which they are prepared to serve this country. We are extremely lucky to have them, and I wish that we could increase the numbers of them who serve with the British forces.

I have one or two things to say about nuclear disarmament. It is beyond me how the Government have got themselves into their present position regarding nuclear weapons. When I consider the list of nuclear disarmaments that they have introduced in terms of

[Dr. John Gilbert]

weapons systems—I am not talking about the capacity of the Trident system—I am surprised that they have not been awarded honorary membership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Once we had nuclear depth charges; they have all gone.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Unilaterally.

Dr. Gilbert: Unilaterally, as my Front-Bench colleague helpfully reminds me. We used to have Lance nuclear artillery; that has gone too. For a time we had cruise missiles; they have all gone. Now we are getting rid of the free-fall bomb, without any replacement. So we have no airborne delivery and no land-based delivery system. We are reduced to Trident alone.

I do not accept that Trident is satisfactory as a sub-strategic system. It was never designed as such. I know that one can adduce arguments as to how it could be used, but I remain unconvinced. I ask the Government what would have happened if Saddam Hussein, whom we all now know had a biological capability, had chosen to use that capability against British troops in the Gulf? What possible response could the British Government have offered—sending a Trident to Baghdad? Surely Her Majesty's Government did not contemplate that course. Would they simply have relied on the poor British troops having to sweat it out in nuclear protective clothing, leaving them at a great disadvantage in operational conditions?

I am the last to think that we should allow an enemy to dictate our targets or the weapon systems that we use, so what I am saying does not constitute an argument for our procuring a biological weapons capability and using that against the enemy. But surely we must be prepared when we are dealing with people such as Saddam Hussein. It could be anyone else; it could be the Libyans next month, or the Algerians or the Iranians. We never know where we shall find ourselves. Whoever would have thought that we would fight a war in the Gulf? We cannot be reduced to having only one option—Trident—for a nuclear weapons system. I greatly regret what the Government have done.

Finally, what is being done and what attention is being paid in the Ministry of Defence these days to what the Americans call communications warfare? There is a serious body of thought in the Pentagon that suggests that the next war, if there is one, will involve few immediate casualties in battlefield terms, but will mean instead the total destruction of a country's communications systems.

I do not believe that the figures are classified, but I do not have them at my fingertips, so let us say that about 80 per cent. of the day-to-day communications of the United States armed forces pass through the public telephone system. I should be surprised if the proportion in this country were very different. What research is being done in the Ministry of Defence? Is the question being seriously addressed, both in terms of self-defence and in terms of our ability to deter other people? To what extent are our communications systems dependent on the Internet, and how vulnerable will that be?

Have the Government had discussions on the subject with our American allies? If not, why not? What proposals do they have for our national defence in that respect, and what will they tell the British people about it? It is high time that we had, if not a White Paper at least a separate chapter in the annual defence estimates to instruct us what our plans are and how much they will cost. I have a nasty feeling that we are extremely vulnerable in that area, and I have yet to hear a peep from the MOD that it is aware of such matters. I do not have the pleasure of serving on the Select Committee on Defence these days. [Hon. Members: "Shame."] I serve on another very enjoyable Committee instead.

These are serious matters, and there are more and more suggestions in serious journals on the other side of the Atlantic that enormous amounts of research are being carried out by the Americans—and, I surmise, by the Russians and other potential enemies—into the matter. I hope that the Minister will give some assurances on these important points either in his wind-up speech tonight or in any correspondence that he might address to me.

8.40 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I shall not join in the ritual criticism of the Secretary of State for Defence's speech at Blackpool, other than to say that I think on reflection the right hon. Gentleman might consider that it was a rather fickle speech to make. I believe that most of his colleagues, privately, consider its contents to have been immature.

I want to address a matter that relates to the European Union, and I would ask the Minister to consider this point. It seems to me that membership of the EU provides an implied security guarantee. I genuinely want to know the Government's view on that proposition. It seems inconceivable to me that a member state of the EU could alone be subjected to external aggression, as that would not be tolerated by other members. It would break up the Union and frustrate commerce and the markets, as well as affecting the concept of European citizenship which, while one may or may not agree with it, is nevertheless an enshrined concept.

Membership of the European Union must mean that external aggression on one member state would be intolerable to the rest of the EU. I wonder if the Minister could state whether he concurs with that view? I raised this matter with a senior official at NATO recently who, to my surprise, took a different view. I was genuinely surprised by his opinion, and therefore consider that the matter needs to be clarified.

I wish to humbly, but proudly, speak on behalf of the Visegrad group of countries which aspire to membership of the west. I shall speak in particular, although not exclusively, about Poland in which I take a keen interest. I believe that that country should have its rights recognised by the UK and other western countries. I believe that Poland is currently being unfairly neglected.

Reference was made during the tributes to Lord Home yesterday, by both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, to the fact that he thought that Poland had been dreadfully treated by successive Governments. In 1940, Winston Churchill said,

> "The gratitude of every home in our island, in the Empire and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by the odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of this war by their prowess and devotion. Never before in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

About 17 per cent. of those "few" were Polish or Czech-Slovak pilots. I agree with Churchill that the battle of Britain was pivotal in the maintenance and defence of

parliamentary democracy in this country and elsewhere. With that in mind, it is not inappropriate for me to draw attention to the fact that I believe that we have a moral obligation to those countries, albeit 50 years on. We have not dealt with those countries properly.

In the half-century from 1945, we said constantly to the countries of central Europe, "Look over the wall. Look how wonderful capitalism and democracy are." If some of our propaganda was to be believed, one would have thought that in the west the sun always shone and the rain never fell. After communism collapsed and the wall came down, they asked to join our club, but we said, "Hang on a moment." We then produced a load of reasons why we wanted to frustrate those countries' aspirations to be members of both the EU and NATO.

It is blatantly dishonest and shameful for us in the west to be frustrating the legitimate aspirations of those countries in central Europe which wish to join both NATO and the EU for a variety of reasons, one of which is the security guarantees provided by membership. Let us look at the excuses advanced for frustrating the admission of the Visegrad group of countries, and Poland in particular, into NATO. The first is the need for interoperability which, in simple terms, means that their bullets do not fit our muskets. There is more to it than that, but that is the broad excuse.

The second reason is the political dimension in the countries. It is suggested that the west is not certain that there is democratic control of the military and that we are worried about the generals. That is an offensive argument, particularly in relation to Poland. A distinguished diplomat to whom I spoke recently said, "You have to see the posture of the generals at the war memorial in relation to the Minister of Defence." I would have thought that we would need a more sophisticated judgment than that. After all, there have been problems in the west with regard to the political accountability of the security services. I remember Watergate and the Elsberg papers, and there is presently a problem in Belgium about helicopters. We are not all whiter than white. There are established democracies now in Poland, the Czech republic, Hungary and Slovakia and, while I concede that there are problems, the so-called political considerations against their admission are bogus.

The political arguments and the question of interoperability were never raised when it came to Spain's accession into NATO. An abundance of Spanish generals at the time had been brought up as part of the Falangist tradition, but we decided that it was appropriate for Spain to be brought in. That was quite right, as I think that membership of NATO was one of the factors which led to the maintenance of constitutional democracy in Spain at the time of the abortive coup. I think that membership of NATO buttresses democracy, rather than frustrates it.

The real reason for delaying the accession of these countries—this is what makes me so angry—is that we are frightened of offending Russia. I do not agree with that, but it is a legitimate subject for us to debate, while the other reasons offered are bogus. Let us look at the question of Russia. In 1946 in Fulton, Missouri, Churchill said:

> "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across Europe, behind which we must refer to it as the Soviet sphere."

Reluctantly, we must accept that there was a Soviet sphere. Hon. Members on both sides of the House and people elsewhere in western Europe now acquiesce in a Russian sphere of influence, or almost a Russian veto over the development of the legitimate aspirations of the parliamentary democracies in Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak republics. That is wholly disgraceful.

If hon. Members cannot be persuaded of the moral arguments for the early admission of those countries to NATO, I must say that naked self-interest dictates that Poland should come in. One need only get a school atlas to see its strategic location on the Baltic to the east of Germany. It has a large land mass, and a population of 40 million people. It has some of the best and most sophisticated armed forces in the countries of the former Warsaw pact.

Poland has no minority problems. I notice that the Select Committee on Defence has suggested that there are such problems. I have never heard such nonsense in my life. Of all the countries in Europe, Poland probably has the fewest minority problems. We should reflect on that, and I hope that the Minister will respond to my question regarding the implied security guarantee that comes from membership of the EU.

I am deeply concerned that there are only 12 fluent Russian speakers in NATO's headquarters. That is breathtaking. We are spending money in our defence review on teaching people in central and eastern Europe to speak English, and I applaud that. We ought to spend some greenbacks on enabling our own officers and NATO diplomats to speak, understand and communicate with the Russians. That is probably the best contribution we could make.

I am mindful of the problems of Russia, and I want to be sensitive towards the subject. In that same speech in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill went on to say:

> "I have a strong admiration and regard for the valiant Russian people . . . There was deep sympathy and goodwill in Britain . . . towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to persevere through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting friendships."

That is absolutely right, but we do not do it by giving them a right of veto. That is a sign of weakness and foolishness. It is foolhardy in the extreme. It is not in the Russians' best long-term interests, or ours, at a time when things are unhappily decaying in Russia.

8.49 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I am grateful to be called, even as a tail-end Charlie in this two-day debate. In the few minutes that I have, I should like to go back to where we began the debate—with discussion of the notorious speech by the Defence Secretary last week in Blackpool. I wish to discuss the Europhobic tone of that speech. The reality of contemporary defence thinking is precisely the opposite of the direction in which the Defence Secretary seems to want the United Kingdom to go. The reality is that no serious person can contemplate Britain's defence needs today without concluding that, far from Europhobia, what we need is ever closer collaboration and co-operation in Europe, indeed perhaps integration in some areas, if that would produce practical, concrete benefits.

If the reasons for the need for co-operation have escaped the Defence Secretary, they can put up with some repeating, although more than one hon. Member has already made similar points in the past two days. There is first and foremost the increasing pressure on defence budgets. Electorates are increasingly unhappy with high

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

defence spending in the aftermath of the cold war. They want to see some evidence of the peace dividend that we were all promised. That puts severe pressure on Governments to reduce or constrain defence budgets.

At the same time, the costs of defence procurement are increasing astronomically. The costs of research, development, manufacturing, and purchasing equipment in every field are skyrocketing because ever more sophisticated technology is now available. It is clear that we cannot opt out of those costs because we must keep abreast with developments, especially as our forces become numerically smaller. They must have the punch to carry out the job that we ask them to do.

For a country the size of the United States, with its economies of scale, those financial pressures are just about manageable. For the European nation states, however, the pressures have become intolerable. The fiscal crisis point has now been reached. That has been clear from debates in the House in the past couple of years in which we have discussed cuts in defence expenditure. The sooner we admit that we are at this crisis point and face up to the consequences of it, the better.

There are only two responses to the fiscal crisis which now faces defence establishments across Europe. One is to give up the unequal struggle and accept a second-rate future of fewer items of increasingly inferior equipment for ever smaller forces. I do not believe that we should go down that road. We have a duty to our service men when we ask them to endanger their lives on their country's behalf to provide them with the best equipment and support possible.

So the only right answer to the financial crisis which is pressing on defence budgets is ever closer co-operation within Europe. We have to extend and deepen existing methods for planning, developing and purchasing jointly the best equipment possible for the armies of Europe. We must also, as a consequence, but also on its own merits, co-operate ever more closely in matters such as training, military doctrine and defence policy. That is truly the only sensible way forward. Indeed, it is already happening to an ever greater degree. That is why the Defence Secretary's speech last week was not only embarrassing but utterly empty of content. All the trends are going precisely in the opposite direction to the one in which the Defence Secretary urged us.

The pressures for European co-operation are not only financial and economic. There is also a political and strategic need for closer European action. We have seen over the summer a resurgence of American diplomatic involvement and presence in European security matters in the former Yugoslavia. Thank God for it. It is to our collective shame as Europeans that we should have to look to the Americans not merely for military muscle but, I am sorry to say, for moral leadership in responding to the holocaust which has consumed a quarter of a million lives in the past four years in Europe.

There was no passage more empty in the Defence Secretary's speech last week in Blackpool than his vainglorious boast that

"we taught the Bosnian Serb generals that the slaughter of civilians will not go unpunished."

It is clear that he has a short and selective memory. What about the slaughtered civilians of Vukovar at the beginning of the conflict? What about the civilians of Dubrovnik, of Omarska, of Srebrenica and Zepa? At each and every act of slaughter there was invariably a British Minister on hand openly and without apology washing his hands of any responsibility whatever. British Foreign Office and Defence Ministers repeatedly dismissed air strikes as ineffective and claimed that it would need hundreds of thousands of NATO troops to turn the military tide in Bosnia. It was a junior Foreign Office Minister who infamously flew to Sarajevo in 1992 to tell them that there was no seventh cavalry coming over the hill.

Four abject years of European appeasement led by this Tory Government cannot be absolved by one summer of American-led resolution. However, this belated American involvement should not blind us to the long-term trend, which is for Americans to become less and less inclined to be involved in European security matters to the same extent and more and more impatient with Europe's failure to deal with its own security problems.

Europe is rich. The European Union has a gross national product comparable to that of the United States. We have a bigger population. Indeed, we have more people serving in our armed forces than the United States. Of course, many of those people are conscripts, but many of them are regulars. According to the latest edition of *The Military Balance* published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Britain, France and Germany have between them 340,000 regular soldiers—not conscripts but regular soldiers. If one takes the regular armies of all the European states that are also members of NATO, which includes Spain, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Portugal, the total number of regular soldiers serving in the European Union is 490,000. That compares with the American regular army of 525,000. Although it is smaller, it is not so much smaller that it would not have an impact if it acted in a more cohesive, planned and co-ordinated way.

We have a duty to look after our security interests to a greater extent if we are capable of doing so. Defence dependency is a vice just as much as the welfare dependency that Conservative Members always talk about. As Europeans, we must get together and co-operate. The Maastricht treaty already commits us to precisely that. Article B commits the European Union to framing a common defence policy. The Government have signed up to that treaty and it is crazy to begin to draw back now. I agree with my Front-Bench colleagues—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

8.59 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): That was a great note for my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) to finish on, and it has been the unanimous verdict of most Opposition Members who have spoken.

This has not exactly been an all-ticket game, but the quality of the contributions has made up for that. Anyone who missed the debate missed something special: to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) impersonate Winston Churchill so well in a cockney accent was worth coming for alone.

I take this opportunity to welcome the new Minister for Defence Procurement to his post. It is fair to say that, in his relatively short period in post, his predecessor showed that he had some standing in the House because he

recognised the strategic importance of the British defence industry. To some extent, we were sorry to see him go as he brought a great deal of common sense to discussion of the defence industry. Despite that common sense, he somehow managed to be promoted to the Cabinet. We shall miss him, but we trust that his successor will follow where he left off. I shall comment on the Minister for the Armed Forces later.

Tonight's debate has been not just about the 1995 defence estimates but an opportunity to examine the last five years of fairly dramatic change in the Government's performance. As the Minister for the Armed Forces said, during that quinquennium there has been a number of dramatic changes and challenges. First, the nature of the perceived threat changed radically away from the conventionally defined threat of intention and capability, which was obvious when we cast our eyes eastward, to a more complex series of risks—a plethora of risks—part of which arose because of the decline of the former Soviet Union.

Secondly, the demise of the Soviet Union seriously affected the conceptual framework and the operational premises on which major international institutions had long been based. For instance, it initially left NATO without an obvious raison d'être. On a global level, it left the United States as the only real super-power in the United Nations. Thirdly, those changes coincided with, and were symbiotically related to, changes or proposed changes in European defence architecture—a subject that obviously bores the Defence Secretary, who constantly refers to it as "theology". Apparently, it interests him only when it is a platform for attacking those wicked foreigners. Finally, there were increasing pressures on the defence budget for domestic and internal reasons. The Government's fiscal incompetence caused them to scurry around looking for cuts in any budget, and defence was regarded as an easy option.

Before I wind up the debate, I wish to comment on the individual issues that have been raised and also on the strategic issues that we feel are important. As I have already outlined, the challenges have been great. We admit at the start that they would not have been an easy task for any Government. Unfortunately, for the most part the Government have failed miserably to rise to that challenge. Whereas foresight, clarity, strategy and long-term stability should have been their objectives, they have produced incoherence and short-termism. They have been constantly reactive to the course of events rather than proactive in shaping events. The result has been, for the most part, muddle and incoherence.

Only this week, we had another prime example of the manner in which the Government have got us all into a muddle. We heard that our infantry regiments were grossly undermanned. The shortfall—perhaps we will have this confirmed tonight—is to be made up by drafting in the Gurkhas, a point made by several hon. Members.

I have the highest respect for the Gurkhas. I had the opportunity to spend some time in jungle training with them in Belize some years ago through the armed forces parliamentary scheme, which I again recommend to anyone who would like to undertake it to give them some idea of the ethos and spirit of the armed forces. I am sure that if the Secretary of State for Defence were to put in a late application he would be welcomed with open arms. *[Interruption.]* On reflection, I would not wish that on the Gurkhas; perhaps the right hon. Gentleman has already left. After all, they are not Europeans, so he might get along with them.

It really does take a bunch of geniuses—the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) referred to his "Front Bunch"—to contrive a situation where the Ministry of Defence has just got rid of 111,000 personnel, 42,000 of them soldiers, and end up short of soldiers. And it takes a peculiar sort of genius when we have 3 million unemployed in Britain to decide to make up the shortfall by recruiting people in Nepal.

The Government do not see the irony of the muddle they have got into or the logic of their position. They have spent the past five years denying that the infantry is overstretched; now they are shouting publicly that the infantry is undermanned. They do not have the mental capacity to put the two facts together. Let me help the new Minister with this great intellectual problem. I want to make it easy for him and to try to be helpful. Will he say after me, "If the infantry are under strength in numbers in relation to tasks, they must by definition be overstretched in tasks relative to numbers." I challenge the Minister to repeat that. I will give him a copy of the speech and he can study it overnight. It is nice to have been vindicated on that point.

There are some things in the Government's approach that we welcome. We welcome the increase in the awards to holders of the Victoria Cross. I shall not be churlish and say that it is not overgenerous because, after all, past Labour and Tory Governments have failed to deal with the matter.

We welcome moves toward joint working, the purple arrangements already mentioned by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. We also welcome the announcement tonight on Rosyth and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) for all the work that she has done on that.

We especially welcome what is now referred to as the long-range rapid reaction force, which was announced in Blackpool last week by the Secretary of State for Defence. We welcome it but wonder whether it is the same one as was announced in July in the House of Commons and whether it is a different long-range rapid reaction force from that which was envisaged 12 months ago in the last debate? If it is the same one, I am very impressed. To manage to deploy that announcement all the way from Westminster to Blackpool in only 12 months is a credit to the logistics corps in the MOD. If they continue at the same rate, I have worked out that they will able to announce its establishment again next year in Edinburgh or in the north of Scotland, and by God, that will frighten the earth out of our enemies.

The hon. Members for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and for Wyre (Mr. Mans) may agree with me and many Labour Members that the level of contractorisation is worrying. Recently, I was down at RAF Valley. We take a pragmatic approach to the matter but would urge two elements of caution. Remember not to watch the minutes and lose the hours. A private contractor used, for instance, on maintenance of RAF aircraft may be able to put in a bid lower than can the MOD precisely because he is recruiting trained personnel who have been made redundant by the MOD. Five years down the road, if the private company has to budget for

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bringing in apprentices and if it cannot get them from the RAF, either the quote will go through the roof or we shall be left with a crisis.

My second point on contractorisation is that it is not sensible to understand the cost of everything and the value of nothing. I am glad that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces spoke with pride about the esprit de corps in the armed units. It is not an abstract concept of Queen and country that causes a squaddie at the bottom of Mount Longdon, having yomped for 16 hours, to go out freezing and to try to take that mountain from Argentines sitting on the top with night sights when he does not have any: it is the fact that he does not want to let down his mates, his family and his regiment. I ask the Government please not to allow the privatisation of units in the British armed forces ever to go in a direction that begins to undermine that morale.

Having welcomed a number of issues, I must say that the most current issue on which we separate from the Government is their attitude towards nuclear disarmament. I know that many Conservative Members wished to stand up tonight and to say how proud they were to see that the Labour party had put forward a concrete series of proposals within the context of a multilateral position towards nuclear disarmament. Time, however, obviously prevented any of them from having the opportunity to make that gracious gesture tonight.

We should still make it clear that we are different from the Government. On nuclear testing, we have long made plain our view that with the advent of computer simulation, nuclear testing is not necessary to secure the safety of our nuclear weapons. The Government obstinately refused to admit that until, basically, a moratorium was introduced by President Clinton. Is it not funny how often this Government suddenly discover a principled position when ordered to do so by the United States? Their reluctance to take such a position, just like their reluctance to criticise the French over nuclear tests, will on its own, even without the help of the Secretary of State of Defence at Blackpool, help to isolate us from the rest of the civilised world.

It is noticeable in terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty that many countries that supported the decision did so reluctantly and were deeply critical of the nuclear weapons states. Three of our allies refused to sign a joint European Union position because they were not satisfied with the record of Britain and France in fulfilling article VI treaty obligations to pursue disarmament. The future credibility and effectiveness of the NPT will be undermined unless this Government and one or two others start to deal with honour and pragmatism in pursuit of the nuclear-free world which the Government say, for the first time this year in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995", they believe in and wish to pursue.

One item that has not been mentioned in many debates but which was, I am glad to say, mentioned tonight by the hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) is the cadet forces. Our cadet forces are rarely mentioned. Let us make it plain to everyone that they are not merely a means of recruitment for the armed forces. They fulfil a valuable and much-needed function in youth leadership and allow thousands of young people to develop character and leadership skills.

My wife and I recently had the opportunity to spend some time, courtesy of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—I thank him for this—on what was called a challenge and adventure weekend. It was not an official cadets' activity. It involved groups of young people from deprived backgrounds, inner-city kids, who were at risk. They were not at risk in terms of the probation service; they were not kids who had offended. They were brought for the first time to the countryside—to canoeing, command tasks and challenge leadership. They were kids who had never before been given the opportunity to develop the potential within them. In many cases, they had been told by their teachers, by their background or by their families that there was nothing in them. The cadets are a much under-used asset.

Incidentally, for those who take an interest in racial and ethnic matters, many of the young people were from Asian backgrounds. They were boys and girls whose parents, of Muslim persuasion, were allowing them to go to the weekend, which they would not normally do, because the British Army was running it. There are thousands of young folk whose potential has been confined by circumstance or by background. The cadets are a grossly under-utilised national facility which I hope, if Labour is elected, we shall develop to an even greater extent as part of a new offer to a new generation.

I mentioned earlier the challenges that have faced the Government. Now that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has arrived—I have already welcomed the Minister of State for Defence Procurement—I take pleasure in welcoming the fact, if it is not too embarrassing for him, that he stayed at his post when all others were deserting the defence team. I say that because I believe that his continued presence will offer at least some hope to many in the armed forces who were verging on despair even before last Tuesday.

I know from many meetings throughout the country that the Minister's dedication and commitment and his persona—despite some of his rather aggressive tendencies towards us tonight—are held in deep respect. He has managed not only to be held in respect by the armed forces but, something which I thought was impossible for someone who is a Minister of State for the Armed Forces and a Tory, some of them actually like him as well.

However, we now have a genuine problem in defence. Of course, none of us likes to deal in personalities—which allows me to talk about the Secretary of State for Defence—but if the Secretary of State continues to make speeches in the way that he did, the persona and the message that is being conveyed will be inseparable.

Last week in Blackpool we heard of a fairy tale defence world, a sort of fantasy defence league, where Secretaries of State were resolute and resources plentiful, presided over by a new warrior king. Let me place the facts before the House. Before we disagree on our opinion, let us agree on the facts.

During the last decade the story in defence has been one of almost unparalleled reductions in defence expenditure. As a proportion of national income, the defence budget has fallen from a previous high of 5.8 per cent. to 3.9 per cent. five years ago to 3.3 per cent. It is now scheduled, under the present Government, to fall to 2.9 per cent. They have, and should be given credit for it, in practice carried out the Labour conference resolutions which they have condemned for many years.

As I have said, the defence budget is scheduled to fall. It means a cut in the procurement budget at the moment of 19 per cent. between 1991 and 1994 alone, while the defence budget will be cut by almost 30 per cent.—111,000 off manpower, 42,000 of them in the Army. They are, by any standards, staggering cuts. Anyone who cares to check what the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said last night will see that he confirmed that there are more on the way. That should not surprise any of us.

The man who inflicted those cuts on the armed forces was not the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He constantly told us that he was fighting against them. We have had 16 defence Ministers. The Government have gone through more Ministers at the front here in order to cut the defence budget by 30 per cent. than Scotland has players in qualifying for the European championships. The cuts were not inflicted by the three Ministers on the Treasury Bench. The man who inflicted them, the man who cheered every regimental closure, was the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury—now Secretary of State for Defence. He is not on the Treasury Bench tonight. I do not know where he is. Perhaps he is out having a pint with Jacques Santer. The current Secretary of State for Defence was given a reward of promotion for having slashed the defence budget.

Perhaps "reward" is the wrong word. The problem and tragedy of the latest reshuffle from the word go is the obvious fact that a once-proud Department of State, particularly prided by the Tories, became a dustbin for the enemies of the Prime Minister. It became the Tory equivalent of the guardhouse. The Secretary of State was to be stuck there and the substantial figure of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces would sit on him, as has obviously happened between last week and this week. The news of the appointment was met with despair. Gone are the days in the Admiralty, the Royal Air Force and the Army when the telegram appeared with the stirring announcement, "Winston is back". Hon. Members may imagine the bemused look of despair which greeted the letter saying, "Polly has been appointed". It does not have the same resonance.

As if it were not an insult to the armed services, the hero of this story—I have not, so far, mentioned his name—is now trying to use them as a bridgehead into Downing street. Last week, he was on active service in Blackpool. In a speech variously described in a very generous fashion as guff, hyperbole, chauvinism, rabble-rousing, poncing and posturing—I have only checked the quality press, because this is a family show—he managed to demean himself, and to debase his party and the relationship between the armed forces and the Minister. No one really cares what he does to himself and his party, but he will not be forgiven for two things: one was the cheap attempt to exploit the armed forces for party political advantage; the other was the abuse that he heaped on our European allies.

Let it be known that Opposition Members—and, I believe, the vast majority of Conservative Members—completely dissociate themselves from the vitriol poured on our European defence partners. We pay tribute to those in Holland, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Germany and elsewhere who have stood shoulder to shoulder with this country for the past half century, and our French colleagues who have acted with us on the political wing of NATO and in Bosnia.

Incidentally, one would think that after three months in post the Secretary of State for Defence would have been told by someone where the headquarters of NATO are, and where the supreme headquarters of the allied powers in Europe are. In case any of the Ministers do not know, it begins with "B". No—not Bradford, but Brussels.

There was only one consolation to be had from last week's speech. As is obvious from all the comments made on this occasion, no one takes the Secretary of State seriously. It is his own fault.

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Reid: I am rather pressed for time.

It is the Secretary of State's own fault. Here was the hero who tried to commandeer "Who dares wins" as his personal slogan; but this is the hero who, when the challenge for the leadership was issued, sneaked to safety beneath the Cabinet table, daring to emerge only to order 40 more telephone lines—a strategic thought—presumably in order to be able simultaneously to assure up to 40 candidates of his own undying loyalty.

Here was the warrior who spoke with pride of our armed forces: the man who, from his position as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, slashed the defence budget and dictated a reduction in the regiments. Here was the braveheart who told us—this is the moving bit; this is where we get to the peroration—that we had to feel the passion for defence in our hearts, bones and guts. This is the man who refused to join the Army cadets—on aesthetic grounds, if you please. Presumably they did not have enough Christian Dior cap badges.

It is obvious that the right hon. Gentleman approached these matters with the zeal of a convert—the fanaticism sometimes shown by those who have just seen the light on the way to Camberley. I recommend the book that I consulted: it is called "Michael Portillo—The Future of the Right". His political biography has been written before he has arrived in Downing street. I found a marvellous phrase in the book, which is a study of Michael Portillo's development of his view on defence. When reading that phrase, I could not help reminding myself of the stirring words with which the right hon. Gentleman addressed the Blackpool assembled faithful. He said:

> "Anyone, they say, is entitled to change his mind. Not about the defence of Britain, they're not."

It was, therefore, with some surprise that I read on page 25 of the book:

> "Malcolm Rifkind was the first Tory defence secretary never to have served in any of the armed forces, even as a conscript."

Then his biographer, a man who had studied his life, added:

> "Michael Portillo may well be the first former conscientious objector to be placed in charge of the nation's defences by a Tory government".

Yet this former pacifist and conscientious objector now stands up and tells us:

> "Anyone, they say, is entitled to change his mind. Not about the defence of Britain, they're not."

What I attack is not the right hon. Gentleman's sincerely held beliefs about pacifism, although I have never held them, or his sincerely held conscientious objections, although I have never held them either—what

[Dr. Reid]

I challenge is his right to demand that others should not change their minds and to describe others as wimps and cowards after having held the same views himself.

Mr. Bill Walker: At what age do young boys join the cadet forces?

Dr. Reid: If any Labour Member could be done down for believing in Santa Claus, the Conservatives would do it to him. His age does not matter. In any case, he held these views long after he left the cadets—in fact, until he went to Peterhouse—I have taken the trouble to read beyond page 25 of the book. The point is that people are sick and tired of a Tory Cabinet telling them to do as they say and not as they do.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As the hon. Gentleman is raising this issue with some force, has he asked my right hon. Friend whether the story is actually true, because he has assured me that it is not?

Dr. Reid: I made the naive assumption that the warrior king who dares would have the guts to come along tonight for his first defence debate and oppose me face to face while I raised the issue. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] Installing telephone lines, perhaps.

All this could perhaps be excused on the grounds that the Secretary of State, as an hon. Member said last night, may be a sinner but is a sinner who has repented. So the standard apparently is that repentance is fine for those on one side of the House only. Another hon. Member put the speech down to immaturity, and indeed some things can be excused on that ground. After all, the Secretary of State for Defence is under 50, which I suppose qualifies him as a young Conservative.

There can be no excuse, however, for the right hon. Gentleman's degradation of the concept of patriotism, which has been mentioned by almost every Member who has spoken in the debate, including the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. *[Interruption.]* I am now honoured to be in the presence of such a man as the Secretary of State for Defence. I was just coming to the end of my speech and discussing patriotism. *[Interruption.]* I wish the Minister of State would stop briefing the Secretary of State. He fed him his lines all last week; he need not do the same again today.

I do not question the depth and sincerity of the right hon. Gentleman's patriotism—no one in the House does—what I question is the form that his patriotism takes. Patriotism is not naked chauvinism. It is not narrow nationalism. When it is reduced to a mere dislike of foreigners, it is baseless—

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Portillo): Read the speech.

Dr. Reid: I have been reading it. I am quite prepared, unscripted, to take on the Secretary of State in debate anywhere, any time. He did not have the courtesy or the guts to turn up to hear my accusations, so he should not come in now and start shouting from a sedentary position.

Patriotism is a function of national unity, not an instrument of national division. It is not a monopoly of any party, social class or group. The next time, therefore, that the Secretary of State makes a speech in which he recalls the veterans, he should remember that people in here recall the veterans as well. On both sides of the House, we recall those who came from the dank jungles of Borneo, who burned in the searing deserts, and who sailed and sometimes drowned in the icy waters of the north Atlantic, and we recall them because we all have personal as well as patriotic reasons.

I recall Arromanches and Caen. I recall Nijmegen because my father fought there for this country with the Guards Armoured Division. I recall the Sicily landings, where his oldest brother died, and the invasion of France, where his youngest brother gave his life for this country. So do not tell us about patriotism or claim it as a monopoly: it belongs to all of us and everyone in the House has their own reason for remembering.

We remember, too, the forgotten army of everyone's speeches here. We have remembered those who died, but we have forgotten the ones who came home, the millions of service men and women who came back to this country after the war, who understood Churchill's caveat, if they had never understood it before, that there is no use ruling the waves abroad if one cannot flush out the sewers at home. They were determined that they would act together to construct for themselves, their children and their grandchildren a country that was marked by fairness, opportunity, decency and social justice, that they would construct together, all of them, all social classes, one nation bound together by the very rich diversity of the nation itself, united together in peace, in just the same way as they had been in adversity. That was their patriotic pledge and, if no one else in the House wishes to fulfil it, this party stands ready to fulfil it for their grandchildren.

9.31 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. James Arbuthnot): We have just heard a generally enjoyable speech from the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). It was based partly on a book that was untrue, but let that pass. It was also rather rabble-rousing, to take a phrase from my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). It certainly seemed to have done the trick of the rousing at any rate, but there is one point that I must draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention: the headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is not in a place that begins with a "B". It is in a place that begins with an "M" and it is not Motherwell; it is Mons.

Dr. Reid: I am sorry, but if the Minister checks he will find that the headquarters of NATO is in Brussels. The headquarters of SHAPE—Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe—is in Mons. If he has enough time, I can run him through a better briefing than the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have thoroughly enjoyed today's debate. I found it better than yesterday's debate. We have had some thoughtful and constructive speeches. It is the first defence debate that I have had the privilege of answering and I feel lucky and proud to be able to do so.

We had several important speeches. One of them was from my hon. Friend the Member Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), to whom I am grateful for his remarks about the Tornado and about transport crews. I agreed with much of what he said about Eurofighter 2000 and air cadets.

I agree with my hon. Friend and with the hon. Member for Motherwell, North that the cadets help young people to develop qualities of good citizenship. They are an

important element of the country's voluntary youth movement and the Government recognise the enormously important role that they play in society. My hon. Friend will understand, however, that the cadets cannot be immune from the proposals for increased efficiency which the whole of the armed forces have. We have asked the cadet forces to consider how that might be achieved, but no decisions have been taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) made a constructive speech and I am grateful for much of what he said, not least his comments about our equipment programme. His comments about overstretch will be listened to carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) and the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) talked about the shortfall in recruitment. I can confirm that we are considering using Gurkhas to fill shortfalls in other areas of the Army. No decisions have been made. We are also looking at other ways of dealing with the shortfalls such as a vigorous recruitment campaign and the introduction of a re-engagement bounty.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Minister give a commitment that if the Gurkhas are to be used in the way that he envisages, they will receive their full pension entitlement rather than the shortfall of pension that they receive now?

Mr. Arbuthnot: As I have said, no decisions have been made and, in any event, the difficulties that can arise as a result of using Gurkhas have been raised by the right hon. Member for Dudley, East and I agree with much of what he said.

My hon. Friends the Members for Blaby and for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) disagreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) who made a distinguished and courageous speech about homosexuality in the armed forces. It is well known that my Department takes the view that homosexuality is incompatible with achieving the aims of the armed forces as it can undermine the good order and discipline that are essential for military effectiveness. This policy is not a matter of moral judgment but stems from a practical assessment of the implications of homosexual orientation on the unique circumstances of military life and, therefore, on combat effectiveness. The policy was supported by the Select Committee considering the Armed Forces Bill in 1991.

Earlier in the year, as the House will be aware, the High Court ruled on the exclusion of homosexuals from the armed forces. It confirmed that the policy was lawful and that any decision on its future must properly rest with Parliament. The High Court urged that the policy should be reviewed to take account of changing social attitudes and the experience of other countries where homosexuals are allowed to serve in the armed forces. In the light of that judgment, we decided to conduct the internal assessment of our policy, which is currently under way.

The aim of the assessment is to present a paper of objective evidence to the Select Committee considering the forthcoming armed forces Bill in order to assist in any deliberations on the subject. The assessment team is considering advice given to Ministers by senior military advisors as well as consulting service personnel of all ranks. It is also examining the full range of arguments put in the High Court together with the situation in the armed forces of other countries.

Mr. Michael Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said and I thank him for his comments. Can my hon. Friend tell me whether the review will be prepared to receive information from those of us not inside the Ministry of Defence? Will it be possible for an organisation such as Stonewall or even for me to make representations during the internal review?

Mr. Arbuthnot: As I have told the House, it is an internal review but my hon. Friend the Minister of State will have heard what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend is being most helpful and I welcome Her Majesty's Government's approach. It must be right for the Parliament at Westminster, after the next election, to make a decision on matters of such importance to our armed forces and to our country. Can my hon. Friend give an undertaking that it will be the Parliament at Westminster, during the passage of the armed forces Bill in the next Parliament, which will make a decision and that it will not be at the behest of the European Court if the matter comes within the jurisdiction of that body?

Mr. Arbuthnot: As I have said, it is for the Select Committee on that Bill to consider.

As always, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made a speech that I found fascinating. Like the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), he referred to the independence of our nuclear deterrent. Our nuclear deterrent is operationally independent and under the absolute control of Her Majesty's Government. The deterrent is committed to NATO except when supreme national interests require and we are not dependent on the United States to fire our nuclear weapons.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), in what I though was a slightly unbalanced speech, referred to the Royal Naval college at Greenwich. Following the decision to locate the Joint Services Staff college at Camberley in 1997, a marketing campaign has been in hand to seek an appropriate future use for the site by non-Government tenants. We are seeking imaginative but appropriate uses, which must be fitting to the history and architecture of the site and which will allow Greenwich to be appreciated by a wider audience.

I fully appreciate the importance of the site—a point that the hon. Gentleman rightly made. The site will remain Crown property. The marketing campaign will be concluded on 15 November, but the final decision will not be made until the middle of next year. The Defence School of Languages remains my Department's preferred occupant for the site if no other suitable non-Government tenant can be found.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) asked about the launch of the landing platform helicopter—the LPH. When it was launched on 11 November it sustained minor damage when the forward launch cradle collapsed prematurely. Repair of the damage is not expected to impact significantly on the programme.

One speech that I must deal with before moving on is that of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) yesterday. He asked me to meet a deputation about

[Mr. Arbuthnot]

Raytheon, which I am happy to do. Perhaps at the same time we could discuss the other important issues that he raised in his speech.

The debate has given the House an opportunity to consider our defence strategy at a time of significant change. The Government are committed to maintaining the high quality, capable and properly equipped forces that we need to underpin our defence and foreign policy aims. In an age increasingly dominated by technology, proper equipment is vital. I want to take this opportunity to say something about our procurement policy, which is the key to ensuring that we get the best equipment and the best value for money from the defence budget.

Before doing that, I must do what my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces promised earlier today and refer to Rosyth. Following our decision that Rosyth should become a support establishment, we have been actively seeking to market the core industrial naval base area as a single entity for commercial port and related activities. A detailed assessment of the bids received is now taking place. I am pleased to tell the House that the Rosyth 2000 consortium has emerged as our preferred tenderer to progress the sale of the naval base by the end of March 1996. The consortium consists of the Bank of Scotland, Forth Ports plc, Scottish Power plc and the Babcock International group, with Evans of Leeds as an associated partner.

I am confident that the consortium has a credible business plan for the development of the naval base area and the expertise and financial resources to sustain regeneration in the longer term. It is prepared to make a substantial investment in Rosyth, with potential opportunities for the creation of new jobs. The new injection of capital will complement the investment that the Ministry of Defence has made in Rosyth over many years. I am satisfied that the Rosyth 2000 bid represents a fair return to the taxpayer for the sale of the site. Negotiations continue with Babcock International over the proposed sale of the adjacent dockyard. Our aim is to conclude those negotiations as soon as possible, but a decision on whether that transaction should proceed has not yet been made.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I thank the Minister for giving some good news to Rosyth and to Scotland and for recognising the importance of planned economic regeneration to an area that is so devastated by defence cuts.

After 90 years of operation as a naval base, will the hon. Gentleman join me in paying tribute to all the naval personnel and civilian employees who have served this country so loyally and so well at Rosyth?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I will indeed. I also pay tribute to the hon. Lady for the close interest which she has taken in the naval base.

Since the mid-1980s, our policy has been to achieve value for money through the use of competition wherever practicable. My Department is the United Kingdom industry's largest single customer and we must ensure that we maintain a proper commercial relationship with our suppliers. The return of large sections of the defence industry to private ownership in the 1980s helped, as has our willingness to open up our requirements more widely to overseas suppliers, but competition has been the key.

The policy has produced real improvement for the taxpayer and for the armed forces. We estimate that competition has reduced the costs of procurement by more than £1 billion a year for equivalent output. It has given us a UK defence industry which is better placed to take on its competitors worldwide and win, as defence export orders averaging £4.5 billion a year over the past five years demonstrate. That has helped industry through the undoubtedly painful transition to the post-cold war world, but it has also allowed us to concentrate our resources on enhancing the capabilities of our front-line forces.

Of course not all of our current industrial capabilities are strategic. National self-sufficiency in armaments is not achievable.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I would like to ask a question before the Minister moves off the point about competition policy. If competition policy is so important, will he reconsider the Government's decision to exclude Vosper Thorneycroft from the right to bid for at least part of the refit work on Sandown class minehunters—vessels originally built by that warship yard? At the moment, the yard is not entitled to bid for the work and therefore the Government will not know the realistic price for that work.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman again fights valiantly for his constituency. I shall obviously consider the point that he raises, but I do not think that it would be in the long-term interests of competition to agree with his immediate point. We need to identify which defence industrial capabilities we would prefer to sustain in the United Kingdom. We must ensure that we do not, perhaps for lack of proper thought, lose those elements important to the future health of the defence industrial sector.

We are part of a long-standing and close alliance. A degree of military interdependence has been a reality for decades. There is not a single major item of defence equipment in our infantry which is wholly British in origin. Not even the United States can realistically achieve total self-sufficiency in defence equipment.

We already take industrial factors into account in our procurement decisions—for example in offset or in industrial participation proposals. We do not believe that the size and shape of the UK defence industry should be primarily determined by Government. In that respect I completely disagree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield who said:

"Do not tell me that we cannot diversify".

Nobody has told him that we cannot diversify. But we do tell him that Governments are not well placed to direct that diversification. How industry is structured and what products it makes should be determined by commercial decisions within the market, subject of course to national and European regulatory authorities.

Our overriding aim must be to ensure that our armed forces are provided with the equipment which they need to conduct the whole range of missions that they face. In the changed security environment since the end of the cold war, it is less easy to predict where our armed forces will be deployed, who our allies will be, and what will be the capability of our probable opponents. Our forces need to be prepared and equipped to take on a wide array of tasks covering both combat and other operations other than war.

There has been an increase in the number of operations being undertaken, and that higher level of activity looks set to continue. Flexibility, mobility, combat power and utility will be key factors in determining force structures and equipment provision, and ensuring that we have the right military capability in both peace and war. We will continue to keep under review the commitments faced by our armed forces, the capabilities that they require and the resources available so that we can ensure that the services are equipped for their job and that we achieve best value for money in providing the necessary equipment.

While the overall defence budget is reducing in size, we have succeeded in reducing the costs of supporting the front line and cutting administration and headquarters costs. That has enabled us to plan on increasing the amount spent on equipment as a proportion of the total. Part of that success has been due to the defence costs study and we are on track for the implementation dates and the savings. We are confident that the £720 million a year of DCS-related savings that we have so far identified for 1996-97 will rise to more than £1 billion a year by the end of the decade. That is a remarkable achievement. The aim of the exercise was to ensure that every £1 spent on defence contributes directly or indirectly to our fighting capability. The DCS savings have enabled us to enhance our front line strength and contributed towards the excellent shape of our forward equipment programme.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that we have ordered conventionally armed Tomahawk land attack missiles. They will provide a significant addition to our military capability. Also, for the Royal Navy, we placed a main production order for Spearfish torpedoes with GEC Marconi last December. It is the most advanced anti-ship and anti-submarine torpedo in the world and it will replace the Tigerfish torpedo in all Royal Navy submarines.

We are continuing to modernise our fleet of destroyers and frigates with Type 23s replacing older vessels. We have received and are assessing bids for the design and build of a second batch of the Trafalgar class submarines—

Mr. Mackinlay: Rabble-rouser.

Mr. Arbuthnot: You wait. We are in contract negotiations with VSEL for the design and construction of the new landing platform docks for use by the Royal Marines and, looking further ahead, the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995" highlights our plan to introduce the common new generation frigate.

For the Army, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in July our intention to place a contract with Westland Helicopters for 67 Apache attack helicopters. For the Royal Air Force, the key equipment programme is Eurofighter 2000. We plan to take a production decision next year on this project which is intended to provide the cornerstone of our future air defence capability.

We announced last December our decision to purchase 25 C130J aircraft. The Hercules was the only new build aircraft available in the required time scale to meet the RAF's urgent operational needs and the contract was signed on 3 March this year. Quick progress is being made and the first aircraft is due to be delivered to the Royal Air Force by June 1997.

The Government and British industry are working hard with our future large aircraft partners to ensure that our criteria—that it is managed on a commercial basis and meets our requirements on price and specification—are met. We very much hope that the FLA will prove suitable to meet our requirement to replace the balance of the Hercules fleet and other possible longer-term air transport needs from the early part of the next century.

Mr. Mans: My hon. Friend mentioned—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members are going to be disappointed. My hon. Friend mentioned the Hercules C130J. Can he give us any information about the cost of that aircraft and whether the Royal Air Force will be paying any more for it than the United States air force?

Mr. Arbuthnot: One of the advantages of our procurement exercises and the foreign sales that we managed to procure is that we are able to tag on to the end of long runs provided by other air forces. I believe that that is precisely the case with the C130Js.

Our programme is outstanding and is evidence of our commitment to getting the best equipment that we can for the people at the sharp end. It means that we can provide the equipment that our armed forces need, but let us consider for a moment what the Opposition parties have in store for us. I begin with the Liberal Democrats. I listened with interest to yesterday's speech by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). I read it again today in *Hansard* and I must confess that at the end of it I was no clearer about what he wanted than I was at the beginning.

The Liberal Democrats have not troubled us with an amendment to the motion—presumably in order to leave themselves free to promote different policies in different areas of the country. However, their recent defence history is striking, because theirs is the party that called for a 50 per cent. cut in defence spending one month after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

Last year, the Liberal Democrats reversed that policy, calling for a comprehensive defence review. This is 1995—new year, new policy. Yesterday the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East attacked the Labour party for wanting a fundamental defence review—because, he said, it would damage morale. How right he was, but what will next year bring from the Liberal Democrats? We wait with bated breath.

However, we know what the Labour party wants. It wants to cut defence spending further. After all, where else would it find the money to pay for its spending? There is a limit to the amount that Labour could milk from the taxpayer and run up in credit. As has been said, "You can't trust Labour on defence."

We know that Labour is not satisfied with what has happened already as a result of the end of the cold war. The estimates that we are debating promise a period of stability for the front line, but we know that that is a promise that the Labour party would not honour, and that stability is not on its agenda—because, "You can't trust Labour on defence."

The Labour party calls for a full-scale defence review. Although the Liberal Democrats did not bother to table an amendment, the Labour party gave us the pleasure of two. The amendment tabled by the Labour Front-Bench spokesman calls for a review, and to see what that review would produce we need look no further than the amendment tabled by Labour Back Benchers.

[Mr. Arbuthnot]

There is something funny about that amendment. Yesterday it looked rather different, because then it was signed by 37 brave and honourable Labour Members who were prepared to stick their heads above the parapet and say what they believed even though that is forbidden in the Labour party at the moment. Today we see only 11 signatories. What are we to think? What has happened to the anti-nuclear 26? Have they all become nuclear overnight?

What has happened to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), who yesterday made a courageous speech against his Front Bench and proudly nodded when asked whether he had signed the amendment? His name is not on the amendment now.

Mr. Llew Smith *rose—*

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does the hon. Gentleman genuinely think today that what he said yesterday was a load of rubbish? It was, but what has happened to make him think so?

Mr. Smith *rose—*

Mr. Arbuthnot: I know the answer. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was more persuasive last night than even he imagined. When he was winding up the debate not even he thought that the result would be queues of Labour Members outside the Table Office desperate to establish their warlike credentials.

What are we to say about the 11 brave souls who are left? Clearly their chance of preferment is gone. "For you, the war is over." I salute them, because they, at any rate, are true to their principles, and they have the comfort of knowing that they represent the core of the Labour party.

What is left is an amendment that could properly be called an iceberg amendment—the tip of the iceberg. It sets out what the Labour party really wants to emerge from its review—not just 11 or even 37 people, but the heart of the Labour party. If 26 of them can suppress their feelings overnight so can 226 of them—because, "You can't trust Labour on defence."

The amendment says that we should reduce spending to an average of what the other western European countries spend—in other words, cut spending by one third. We also know that Labour wants to scrap Trident, because the amendment says so.

Labour's problem is that the British people are genuinely interested in the defence of this country. The Labour party's policy on defence is to keep it low-profile. It is not so much a policy as a desperate concern. I hope that the hon. Member for South Shields will forgive me for suggesting that the low-profile policy may be one of the reasons why he has the job of Opposition defence spokesman, because his name is not exactly household.

This year was the first year since 1989 that the Labour party conference did not pass a motion calling for defence spending to be slashed by a third. That was because the party did not dare put such a proposal to the vote at the conference because it knew what the result would be. It is not just the British people who cannot trust Labour on defence—not even Labour trusts Labour on defence. The Opposition do not trust themselves. We do not trust them. The people do not trust them. Let us have none of their amendments, none of their policies and none of them.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 301.

Division No. 215] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Davis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald

Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCartney, Robert
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Stephen Byers.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing North)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter

Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Burns and
Dr. Liam Fox.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:-

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There seems to be some intimidation going on. There are gentlemen standing and preventing people from going into the Lobby opposite. They seem to be Labour Whips.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I see no intimidation anywhere.

The House having divided: Ayes 304, Noes 28.

Division No. 216] **[10.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver

Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Diana
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Sir Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgld)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bed'yn'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Burns and
Dr. Liam Fox.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dafis, Cynog
Gerrard, Neil
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Parry, Robert
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Welsh, Andrew
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Llew Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister complimented me on making a courageous speech against nuclear weapons yesterday. I saw that speech not as courageous, but as sensible: I have no ambitions to destroy this earth of ours with nuclear weapons.

The Minister went on to say, however, that along with 25 of my hon. Friends I had withdrawn my name from the amendment. Will you confirm, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that none of us did so? The confusion seems to have arisen because the Minister does not understand the procedure. The six original signatories are named, as well as five additions—which means that more than 40 people signed the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It may help the House if I remind hon. Members that the House's practice is to print only the top six names on a motion or amendment each day when it appears on the Order paper. Below the top six, only new signatories' names are printed on the second and subsequent days.

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the House has no concessions or penalties that it can raise, but I find it rather strange that 28 Opposition Members are voting against a three-line Whip—and this is the party that would be king.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that that is not a point of order.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Sir George Young be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Michael Jack to be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That Mrs. Cheryl Gillan be discharged from the Select Committee on Procedure and Mr. Robert Atkins be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together motions Nos 4, 5 and 6.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Roger Knapman be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. William Powell be added to the Committee.

DEFENCE

Ordered,

That Sir Nicholas Bonsor be discharged from the Defence Committee and Mr. Keith Mans be added to the Committee.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ordered,

That Mr. Roland Boyes and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Sebastian Coe and Mr. Roger Stott be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Highland Communities NHS Trust

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am grateful for an opportunity so early in the reconvened Session of Parliament, before the beginning of the new Session next month, to raise an urgent matter—the financial crisis that has struck the Highland Communities NHS trust.

In August, the trust discovered that it was carrying a potential deficit in the current financial year of £1.8 million, £1 million of which was due to an apparent unallocated sum in its contract with the Highland health board. Health board finance officers and accountants take the view that the sum was not noticed on their purchaser side of the contract, as the total figure involved seemed in line with the previous year. Trust management acknowledged error on its provider side, and in consequence, the then director of finance departed; but the problem has not gone away.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): As a result of the mistake, redundancies are likely. Nursing staff are likely to lose jobs. However, the chief executive and chairman are unaffected. Does my hon. Friend think that that is fair?

Mr. Kennedy: Inevitably, the question of the apportionment of blame will have to go wider than the previous director of finance at the trust. Indeed, I think that it would be wrong in principle if the eventual outcome of the controversy simply established a benchmark—not just in this context, but elsewhere in Scotland—that difficulties run into by management over the operation of their budgets in hospital trusts or community trusts could be dealt with by recourse in the first instance to redundancies at staff and ward level. I hope that the Minister will give serious consideration to that issue of principle. It would be an extremely damaging precedent if it were set.

I want to make two immediate observations. First, the eventual agreeing of the contract between the health board and the trust seems to me to have been too long drawn out. That cannot have helped early anticipation of and dealing with potential problems. In my discussions with senior representatives from each side, I have heard criticisms of the other. Accordingly, I repeat my call tonight for an independent assessment of the way contracts are drawn up between the purchaser, the health board, and the provider—the health trust.

Secondly, there appears to be, as my hon. Friend has just made clear, no disagreement over the morality of the situation. Had these confusions not arisen, that £1 million should and would have gone to the trust. The board has a policy now—I endorse it—of not holding on to budget surpluses until near the end of any given financial year: instead, releasing steadily such sums for specific projects over the course of the year. As such, the bottom line is crystal clear: the money is simply no longer there.

Last month, the trust identified a hit list of potential cuts and savings, by way of response—what both it and central Government euphemistically label "the recovery plan". Among the possible recovery indices are the

closure of a ward at the Royal Northern infirmary in Inverness, between 35 and 45 redundancies, as well as a cross-section of smaller items.

The Minister responsible for health, who will reply to this debate, confirmed his status as euphemist extraordinaire when he wrote to me on 22 September to say:

"What is recognised and accepted by all concerned is the importance of formulating a plan which maintains the level of quality of service previously provided for patients and that proper systems are put in place to ensure that the need for change is more adequately planned for in the future."

Quite. The next question, therefore, is: what steps have been taken in that direction so far? On 28 September, on BBC Radio Scotland's "Drive Time" programme, the Minister described these planned service and personnel cuts, along with the parallel difficulties which by then had erupted in the Grampian area, as "minor difficulties". They may seem minor problems to him—

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that two out of 47 trusts in Scotland were having their problems, and that, in the context of the general situation, these matters could be resolved? I shall say why in a few moments.

Mr. Kennedy: In terms of the arithmetic, the Minister is correct. But these two trusts were at the head of the queue, and became trusts before most others in Scotland, and if I were the Minister I would be worrying that they might be the tip of the iceberg. How many of these difficulties may arise with the other 47 trusts? The time ahead will be difficult, not just for the communities liable to be affected, but for the politicians who will have to deal with the problems during the run-up to the election.

The difficulties are not viewed locally as minor problems by the patients facing closed wards, or by the health service employees facing redundancy. I want at this point to say a word about the distinct but related problem represented by the closure of ward 3 at Invergordon's county hospital, again with attendant staff redundancies. It too is covered by the trust, although this controversy has been separate.

On Saturday last, I joined the local march and rally about this matter. It was characteristically well organised by Mrs. Gary MacLennan, the Unison regional officer, and extremely well supported by staff and local community alike. I also pay tribute to the work done by Councillor Isabel Rhind to advance the interests of those in the area on this issue.

Tonight I ask the Minister to require the trust to halt further moves towards redundancies at the hospital, and to require it to sit down at senior level with staff and union representatives, as well as the health board, to consider a better way forward. I also seek a statement from the Minister that, if required, he will be prepared to meet me and a small representative delegation on this subject.

Returning to the broader picture of the trust, in the past 24 hours, two significant developments have taken place. Last night, the Minister issued a press statement welcoming the decision in principle by the health board—incidentally, this applies similarly to the position in Grampian—to make additional funds, amounting in the context of the trust to £500,000, available to help ease the trust's plight. Describing this as "very good news", he said that this

"will ensure that patient care is not affected"

while the trust works on its recovery plan.

I appreciate that the new Secretary of State for Scotland is keen to sharpen media awareness of his ministerial team, and to improve its street-fighting capabilities. Equally, I know that, on the day of the Skye bridge opening, the Scottish Office would be glad to trumpet any grain of good news from a Highland perspective. The only problem is that, last night, the Minister was welcoming a decision that had not yet been announced.

This evening, the general manager of the Highland health board has issued a statement of his own, and I should like to read it in full:

"To avoid any detriment to either the range of quality of patient care, I am prepared to recommend to the Board that additional finance be provisionally allocated to Highland Communities Trust. Such finance would be for schemes agreed with the Board. It must be recognised that any additional finances for Highland Communities Trust would come from money already earmarked for service maintenance and development in a number of Trusts. This means that the Board would not be in a position to enhance services to the population of the Highlands to the extent intended."

The sound that one hears there is of teeth being pulled, and understandably so. By his pre-emptive press release last night, the Minister has admitted that he has responsibility here, yet he has so far refused to progress from being a commentator on the scene to being a contributor towards a solution. He is being passive, where we need active participation.

In conclusion, the Scottish Office should make good the deficit. It should not be squeezed from existing health care provision at local level. There should be an independent inquiry into the contract negotiations and finance overviews regionally. That refers also to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) made in his intervention.

Crucially, the requirement on the trust to secure a 6 per cent. net return on its £50 million asset base is proving too great a burden to deliver. At present, it is on line for a return between 3 and 4 per cent. The Minister must accept that for this year, and show flexibility over the next three to four years.

This sorry tale, I fear, reflects systemic shortcomings in the national health service reforms. Tonight, we can seek only short-term palliatives. The real solution, I suspect, lies in the ballot box.

10.42 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on his success in obtaining this Adjournment debate, and on being so generous as to give me plenty of time to reply. Of course, health boards receive their funding from the Scottish Office. We are in constant touch with the health boards, and the management executive gives advice to trusts and health boards in situations of this nature.

Turning to the specific problem of the Highland Communities NHS trust, we have here a trust whose costs are currently higher than its incomes by 2.85 per cent. approximately—£1.4 million. Let me make it clear that the trust is not bankrupt. It is perfectly able to continue providing a high level of service for the people in its region and to keep paying the salaries and wages of its staff.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

So that the House will be in no doubt, let me repeat that the Government, the health board and the trust are determined to ensure that patient care is not, and will not be, compromised while the trust recovers from its financial difficulties. Furthermore, I wish to pay tribute to the many innovative schemes that the trust has introduced for the benefit of its patients. Those include new facilities for the treatment of Parkinson's disease, and a new drug and alcohol dependency centre. The trust has also begun upgrading Belford hospital in Fort William, as well as completing new community health centres in Gairloch and Dundonnell, and I could continue with other examples.

Trusts receive the bulk of their income from contracts with the health boards, which in turn receive their funding from the management executive. In 1995-96, the Highland health board received from the management executive a 3.65 per cent. increase in its base allocation compared with 1994-95 against a national average increase of 2.44 per cent. There is therefore no question of the highlands being inequitably treated in the distribution of NHS resources—quite the reverse.

In examining the trust's financial situation, I should explain that the trust has contract income for 1995-96 of some £48 million, and, as the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye said, when its forecast deficit first came to light, it was projected at £1.8 million.

In responding to the specific financial points raised by the hon. Gentleman, I should explain that the shortfall arises from a combination of factors. The largest single issue relates to non-recurring developmental moneys being used to finance recurring day-to-day expenditure during the last financial year. In essence, the trust delayed implementing certain developmental measures, and did not fill staff vacancies immediately they arose. That had a knock-on effect into the current financial year.

In addition, the trust was unable to make the necessary financial planning and accounting adjustments to compensate for the resources being transferred by the health board from the trust to Highland regional council for the care of mentally ill patients under the care in the community programme. The trust has not achieved its cash-releasing efficiency targets for 1994-95 and 1995-96. These efficiency targets are set for all trusts requiring them to generate improvements in efficiency in the way they deliver their services. That is good management practice, which is embraced throughout the private and public sectors.

I can assure hon. Members that there is simply no question of the Highland health board having retained money not claimed by the Highland Communities trust. The fact is that the trust never had the expectation of the £1 million error quoted in the newspapers as the sum which should have been forthcoming from the health board. It is the imbalance between the trust's expenditure and its anticipated income which is at the root of the problem. The trust had, in effect, managed to contain the problems it faced last year by using non-recurring funding from the health board to fund recurring developments, and the trust is having to meet these recurring costs this year.

My officials in the management executive have been in regular contact with the trust since it first became clear that the trust was going to be unable to balance its books in the current financial year. The first round of discussions and action which followed identified measures which have reduced the shortfall to £1.4 million. Scottish Office officials have earlier today received details of the trust's recovery plan and that is being examined.

I can reassure the hon. Gentleman, in answer to one of his questions, that flexibility on the 6 per cent. rate of return will certainly be considered in the context of the trust's recovery plan.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I very much welcome that last point. It is a crucial block in this difficulty. In the detailed points being made by the Minister, some of which I have heard before in the discussions I have had with the health board and the trust, he is confirming the point I made. There is a great deal of allegation and counter-allegation going on at regional level in Inverness about who was carrying what forward, who was anticipating what, and who was contracting for what. One would need to be not just an accountant but a psychiatrist to understand all that. Does that not underline the need for a proper outside look at the way in which the discussions and negotiations have been conducted?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is taking me out of sequence, but I will answer him now. I do not see the need for an inquiry into contracting, and I shall say why. Contracting is not an annual event: it is a continual and continuing process. The board and the trust meet regularly to discuss contractual difficulties that may arise. In addition, the management executive is giving advice and will continue to do so on contractual issues, and it will mediate in the event of any dispute. So this is a continuing process. It is not my purpose tonight to apportion blame. I am determined to ensure that patient care does not suffer, and to get properly in place the necessary recovery programme and plan.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will come back to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, as I want to answer some further points raised by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye.

Against the background of the trust's financial difficulties, I welcome the recent decision in principle by the Highland health board to make additional funds of £0.5 million available to the trust in the current financial year. That will ensure that patient care is not affected while the trust works to deliver its recovery plan.

I should explain to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye that these are funds that the board had earmarked for future service development, as he suggested, and that are likely to become available later this year. We were aware from our contact with the Highland health board that, given the circumstances of the trust, the board had it in mind to agree that this funding could be used to assist the trust with its recovery plans. I am sure that this additional resource—and it is additional—will be appreciated by the trust, but it will have to produce a sound and viable financial plan.

Our officials in the management executive will be keeping in close contact with the trust in the days and weeks ahead, and, together with the health board, will be considering whether there are any other avenues of support available to assist the trust. By that I mean that there is a possibility of further funds being made available by the health board.

However, we are only halfway through the year, and the trust still has to deliver its financial recovery plan. I will monitor that closely, as will Scottish Office officials. It will remain our top priority to ensure that patient care continues to be delivered to very high standards.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will give way to hon. Members in a moment, but first I want to answer a few more of the points raised by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye. He raised a significant point. He said that he was concerned about the possibility of redundancies arising from the recovery plan. However, the planned reductions across the whole of the trust arise not from the trust's present financial difficulties but from changes in the reshaping of services.

For example, with the move from long-stay hospitals into care in the community—a policy which is widely recognised to be in the best interests of patients—it is inevitable that adjustments to staffing levels will have to follow, and many trusts across the country are having to plan for those changes. The Highland Communities trust is no different from many other trusts in that regard. Of course, more jobs are being created in the coming year as a result of the care in the community programme, and some staff will have the opportunity to switch to community care posts.

However, in relation to those planned reductions, I can assure the House that the trust will first be seeking reductions by a process of natural wastage, which will include voluntary early retirements and staff prepared to go under a voluntary scheme. If there are any proposed compulsory redundancies arising from the recovery plan, I would have to be convinced that they are entirely necessary. In the meantime, I will monitor the position and keep it under close consideration.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye also, quite properly, questioned the way in which the trust has managed its affairs. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of the trust's director of finance to ensure that financial systems and controls meet the requirements of propriety and good financial management.

As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the finance director has already resigned, but of course financial accountability is a corporate responsibility of the trust board. Scottish Office officials have met the trust board, both executive and non-executive directors, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that the trust board is very concerned about the financial position which has arisen.

The strength of the trust's recovery plan will be indicative of the extent to which the trust board has addressed the position effectively.

I assure the House that the Scottish Office, the Highland health board and the Highland communities NHS trust are working hard to ensure that the trust can return to a sound financial base, and that it can do so without any detriment to patient care.

I am aware of the points made by the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye and for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) about the county hospital in Invergordon, and the Royal Northern infirmary.

Sir Russell Johnston *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall just deal with this point before giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

With regard to the proposal to close a ward at the county hospital in Invergordon, my information is that the hospital is under-occupied. I can give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that there will be no loss of services to patients, but there might be a need to transfer patients from one ward to another in the same hospital. The same applies to the Royal Northern infirmary.

Sir Russell Johnston: It seems from what the Minister has been saying that he concedes that there has been a major financial bug-up, but is unwilling to allocate any responsibility for it at all in a plethora of words.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The facts speak for themselves. Obviously, matters got into a state of disorder. I specified very clearly at the outset of my remarks that the extent of that disorder is that the trust's costs are currently higher than its income by 2.85 per cent. Relative to its total income, that is not an insurmountable problem, but it needs to be addressed urgently by all those concerned. We are doing that. As I mentioned, an extra £500,000 will enable a substantial step in the direction which is required. We are giving further guidance, and will continue to do so.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye asked about the position of the chairman and the chief executive of the trust. The trust board corporately, and the chairman specifically, are accountable to the Secretary of State for Scotland for delivering patient services and meeting the financial targets. The trust board is taking the situation seriously.

I should go on to make it clear that there is no question—

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Ewing: The Minister has said repeatedly that he is going to monitor the situation following the announcement that additional funding will be provided by the Highland health board, which also of course applies to the Grampian area. When he speaks about monitoring, how will he relay to hon. Members who represent those areas and to the public exactly what is happening?

There is a genuine concern that that money was earmarked for future developments in other trusts. We want to know what will happen to those other proposals. How will the situation be monitored, and how will we be able to tell our people at home exactly what is happening?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady will be well aware that the NHS trusts have been very successful in bringing in innovative measures throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. For example, I was in Glasgow the other day, where 7,000 patients have been treated through day surgery. That is a wholly new concept, and I mention it as one example.

Of course, the trust cannot get on as quickly with its developmental plans if funding has not been applied with the strict rigours that it should have been. The recovery plan must be put in place with all possible speed. An extra £500,000 has been allocated for this purpose. We believe

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

that it will be forthcoming. I have also mentioned that there may be the possibility of further funding, but the trust must get that recovery plan properly in place in a way which will safeguard the interests of patient care and all those concerned.

There is no question of the NHS being underfunded, nor is there any so-called cash crisis. Such suggestions are nonsense. Gross expenditure on the NHS is Scotland in 1995-96 is planned at £4.3 billion. That is an increase of some £190 million, or 4.6 per cent., over 1994-95, and an increase in real terms of 1.5 per cent. after taking account of movements in pay and prices.

There are 47 trusts in Scotland, and in the past financial year they not only met but frequently exceeded their targets in delivering an increased amount and quality of health care. That includes meeting their financial targets and staying within their operating budgets. We are only halfway through the current financial year, but I assure the House that the vast majority of trusts are in a healthy financial state, and are delivering an increasing standard of health care for the people of Scotland.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: That was apparently true of the trust in question until July; it was only in August that the balloon went up publicly. I have rarely experienced anything so complicated at a constituency level. It depends on whom one speaks to, but well-placed sources—accountants and other finance people—have widely differing views about the extent of the problem, and that is the big worry. Some people say that they do not think that there is any deficit at all. That is why there is so much concern.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman reads my remarks tomorrow, he will see that each one will stand the test of time. What is important is that we work out an effective recovery plan. Once that is in place, I shall of course be happy to see the hon. Gentleman and a deputation. However, the recovery plan must be in place first. The hon. Gentleman has made his views and those of his constituents clear, and they will be of assistance.

Competition between trusts serves to raise the standard of health care, and gives patients and general practitioners real choice. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye expressed concern that trusts were turning former compatriots into competitors, but surely he is not suggesting that inefficiency and poor-quality service should be accepted. The challenge for the trust is to improve efficiency and quality for the benefit of the most important people in the health service—the patients.

The objective of our reforms is, of course, to put people first, the aim being to provide better health care, improve services to patients and give staff in the NHS greater job satisfaction. Changes have been made in the structure of the service, but the underlying principles of the NHS are the same—services are available to all, paid for out of general taxation and are and will remain free at the point of delivery. There is a great deal to recommend our reforms.

I look forward to having further discussions with the hon. Gentleman in due course. His comments will be borne in mind. We are absolutely determined to see the recovery plan effectively in place with all possible speed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 October 1995

The House met at Ten o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Latin America

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

10.4 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am most grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for granting this debate on Britain's relations with Latin America. This is the eighth successive annual debate on Latin America and it is the only such debate that this House holds on regions of the world.

The debate brings together members of the all-party British and Latin American parliamentary group. We have here our chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), many colleagues on both sides of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), to stress this morning the importance of the region.

Latin America, stretching from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, contains 8 per cent. of the world's population. It has outstanding potential, abundant natural resources, skilled work forces and few of the extremes of poverty with which we are so familiar in Africa and in Asia. Above all, Latin America has a close cultural identification and rapport with Europe.

I sometimes think that we in this country overlook the considerable weight of the region and its component countries. How often do we remember that the region as a whole economically outweighs Africa, the Indian sub-continent and south-east Asia all put together? Furthermore, the individual republics are powerful economies in their own right. How many of us realise that Mexico alone has a greater gross domestic product than those of Sweden, Hong Kong and Nigeria put together?

The economies of the neighbouring republics of Venezuela and Colombia are, together, almost as large as that of South Africa, a country that occupies this House greatly. Chile alone almost equates to either Malaysia or Singapore. Brazil, on the other hand, has an economy equal to that of Spain and its Sao Paulo state alone has a similar GDP to that of Belgium. Not to be outdone, Argentina, with its GDP of $250 billion, is rapidly catching up with Australia. So we are not talking this morning about lightweights or about the backwoods.

Britain has long taken a leading role in this region. In every debate over the past eight years, I have highlighted how, in the House of Commons on 12 December 1826, the then Foreign Secretary, George Canning, referred to Britain's role in the independence struggle in Latin America, declaring that Britain had—I quote from *Hansard*—

"called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old."

It is, therefore, with pleasure that we noted the stress on the transatlantic free trade area in the speech to the Conservative party conference last week by the current Foreign Secretary and, indeed, the similar point made by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the same conference. Indeed, the Prime Minister is the first serving Prime Minister of this country to have visited Latin America. His visits to Colombia and Brazil for the earth summit were very popular. I hope that they will be the first among many visits he makes to this important region.

It gives a perspective to look at our first regional debate on Latin America in 1988, which I also had the honour of opening. At that time, we covered the general agreement on tariffs and trade, British trade, the Falklands crisis and the teaching of the Spanish language in Britain. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) lauded Nicaragua and condemned Chile. How things have moved on! Today, democracy has broken out all over Latin America, with the depressing exception of Cuba. Privatisation and sound finances are the objective and frequently the achievement of so many of the republics. I sometimes think that our debates have become dull, even if most worthy, with the departure of the ideological battles that used so to excite the House when discussing Latin America. Both Chile and Nicaragua are proud democracies with directly elected presidents, and our debates are dominated by economic management, investment, trade and cultural relations.

The affairs of the Falkland Islands remain a concern of particular interest to the House. We have made considerable progress over the 13 years since the south Atlantic conflict—a tragic conflict, and so unnecessary, pitting friend against friend. This country remains committed to the principle of self-determination, and the Falklanders clearly remain committed to self-government under the Crown.

Before 1982 a position leading to a constitutional link with Argentina might have been possible, but as a result of the conflict such a link is impossible, certainly for the present generation of islanders. The Argentines have only themselves to blame, if only for allowing their military rulers to commit such irresponsible folly.

Argentina must understand that our commitment to self-determination precludes any of their ambitions concerning sovereignty. We have no hang-ups over relinquishing sovereignty; our loss of sovereignty over the real estate of Ottawa, Sydney or New Delhi are proof of that. But we stand firm over the legitimate holding of sovereignty and its transfer only in response to democratic will. Any misunderstanding of the view of the House, and in particular the view of those of its Members who are genuine friends of Latin America, would serve only to repeat the tragedy.

Nevertheless, we are admirers of the profound good sense of President Menem in setting the sovereignty dispute to one side and developing the rapidly strengthening bilateral relations. Over the past year alone we have had the presence in the House of both the Foreign Minister, Guido di Tella, and Eduardo Menem, the President of the Senate. Their visits, and the warm

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reception that they received from colleagues on both sides of the House are a testimony to the excellent relations that are developing.

There are many other examples of the growing relationship between Argentina and Britain. The fourth Argentine-British conference was held in Keble college, Oxford last month, bringing together politicians, business men and journalists not only from Britain and Argentina but from the islands. At such conferences it is moving to see the way in which the wounds inflicted 13 years ago have been overcome, and two great nations are being brought back together.

We must press ahead with the co-operation between Britain and Argentina. That is why I welcome the working agreement on fisheries, and the recent agreement on oil exploration. There are wonderful prospects for co-operation between the islands and Argentina in developing oil production. Clearly Argentina can contribute greatly to, and benefit from, the support infrastructure that the oil business will require. It seems to me that that would be best located on the mainland of Argentina; the challenge for the islanders is to obtain the financial benefits of the oil industry without sacrificing either their outstanding environment or their unique way of life.

In the time available it is not possible to cover the events of the past year in each of the republics. Suffice it to say that considerable progress is being made. Both Brazil and Argentina have made great strides in throttling inflation. That has been accompanied by significant social costs, but the forecast of 5 per cent. growth in Brazil puts the matter into context.

The courage shown by the Government of Colombia in dealing with the scourge of the drug trade is most welcome, and I am delighted by the discreet and effective support given by Her Majesty's Government in that fight. The maturity of the Latin American nations today is best exemplified by the way in which they have helped Peru and Ecuador settle their frontier dispute.

Bolivia's economic and privatisation progress is commendable. We wish Chile success in carrying through peaceful constitutional reforms that will build further on its remarkable economic record. In Peru progress continues to be made with the economy and in the battle against the perennial challenge posed by the Sendero Luminoso, a terrorist movement, and its heirs.

Both Venezuela and Ecuador suffer from instability, and I hope that by next year's debate, if you are kind enough to grant one, Madam Speaker, we shall have seen considerable progress in those two republics.

In recent years much has been said in the House concerning the tragic situations that developed over a long period in central America, and it is probably a blessing that we no longer see that region on our television screens. That seems to suggest that quiet progress is now being made.

Cuba remains, having still to make the great leap into the new Latin American era of proper democratic elections. Nevertheless, progress is being made on the basis of liberalisation and trade, even if the legacy of communist restrictions and controls inhibits faster progress in the island.

The key issue of the year for Latin America holds an uncanny echo of events in Europe. The continent is groping forwards to a new era of trading blocs. Mexico has enveloped itself in the North American Free Trade Agreement, with dramatic consequences. Other nations, notably Chile, are toying with the idea of joining.

Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay have joined together in Mercosur, which is making significant progress. Established as recently as January this year, the organisation covers 200 million people and a GDP of $700 billion. Progressively eliminating internal barriers, it presents remarkable opportunities, especially for British investors and traders.

Last month Mercosur concluded a successful negotiation with the European Union, providing for an agreement that will lead to a free trade treaty. I welcome that, and look forward to ratification at the summit of European Union and Mercosur leaders in Madrid on 15 December.

That raises early echoes, perhaps parallel echoes, of the Foreign Secretary's references to a transatlantic trading community. The most significant aspect of my right hon. and learned Friend's scene-setting both at Chatham house and subsequently at the Conservative party conference was his vision of a close transatlantic free trade area between NAFTA and the EU, in which Britain can play a great part. He will know, of course, that a more accurate and ample vision is that of an association between Europe and all the Americas, covering an area that shares a common cultural and economic heritage. I hope that the debate will do much to stress the fact that not only North America and Europe alone but all the Americas and Europe should be the basis of that new and exciting development in British foreign policy.

We bring to that vision of a transatlantic free trade area a powerful political, economic and cultural inheritance, involving not only the United States but Latin America. Britain can play a vital part in those developments, drawing on our strengths. With the inheritance of George Canning, of the Legion Britanica, which served with Bolivar, of Admiral Cochrane in Brazil and Chile, and of decades of investment in the public services, industry, trade and commerce, we are well placed to play a pivotal role in the developments in transatlantic policies now arising.

Canning house, the outstanding Latin American centre in London, recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, and it plays a significant role in developing trade, investment and cultural links between Latin America and Britain. London is in so many ways the first port of call for Latin Americans to Europe, and it is vital that those relationships, both commercial and with the city, are developed and strengthened by every means and every assistance that the Government can provide.

Ministerial visits in both directions have increased phenomenally in recent years. I hope that there will be many more such visits, and that President Cardoso of Brazil will make an official visit to Britain next year. I look forward to a year of success and further development of our relations with Latin America, and the House will wish my hon. Friend the Minister of State well in his new role as Minister responsible for Latin America.

Latin America shares with the Pacific rim the prospect of being the focus of the 21st century. I hope that this debate will add impetus to Britain's participation in that great potential.

10.19 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is difficult for me to follow the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), as I found little with which I could agree in what he said, and his interpretation of history should be filed under "Sycophantic". The idea that Britain was the mainstay of the Latin American independence movement rather ignores the roles of Simon Bolivar and many other people, and turns history on its head. The hon. Gentleman also failed to mention that while George Canning might have been in favour of independence for the Spanish colonies, he certainly did not exert the same influence when it came to British colonies or British and other European imperialism.

The House may have noticed an early-day motion in my name deploring the fact that General Pinochet visited Britain two weeks ago. Conservative Members might well smile about that, but their party was the mainstay of his regime during his reign of terror in Chile when the British Tory Government were happy to supply him with arms. I want to put on record my disgust, and the disgust of many other people, that such an evil man was allowed to visit this country and be feted and allowed to do business with British companies to buy arms. General Pinochet authorised the murder of the elected president of Chile in 1973 which led to the reign of terror in which thousands of people disappeared. There are many grieving families in Chile still looking for missing relatives who they know are buried in unmarked graves somewhere in that beautiful country.

While I recognise that things have changed in Chile, which now has an elected Government and President, there are still some flaws in the constitution. Pinochet is still the head of the armed services, and he is able to appoint people to the senate and travel freely around the world. Frankly, he should answer for the crimes he committed against the people of Chile and for the human rights abuses which occurred during his period of control in Chile.

We are talking about a continent which is fascinating and extensive, and it is difficult to cover all the matters relating to Latin America in a short debate such as this. In his little tour of Latin America, the hon. Member for Gravesham failed to recognise that the United States has always sought to dominate Latin America through the Monroe doctrine. The hon. Gentleman ignored that completely, and spoke as if the whole continent was some kind of ex-British colony. In fact, the United States has the dominant hand throughout the continent.

In the past two years—particularly since the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the US and Mexico—we have seen the true face of the United States and what it wants to do. The US wants to make Mexico a cheap labour pool for the—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why the hon. Member for Gravesham finds this so funny. On his next free trip to Latin America, the hon. Gentleman should visit some of the shanty towns outside the capital cities in the region, and he will then see what structural adjustment programmes, the IMF and the World bank are doing to the poorest people of the continent.

In Mexico, the NAFTA is forcing down wages, creating a vast amount of unemployment and encouraging cuts in public expenditure, and the lot of the poorest people in Mexico is very serious. The recent rising in Mexico and the role of the Mexican army in attempting to control that uprising are symptoms of the anger that many people feel about the loss of their land and livelihood and about the way in which multinational capital increasingly controls their lives.

While the results of the changes in Haiti have been mixed, one must recognise that the agreements increasingly being reached in the Caribbean basin by the United States and by United States companies are resulting in the most appalling exploitation of people in that region. The hon. Member for Gravesham mentioned Cuba. While he and I would probably diametrically disagree on much of what has happened in Cuba, the hon. Gentleman must recognise that there is a universal free health service in Cuba, unlike any other country in the region. There is a universal free education service in Cuba, unlike any other country in the region. There is more or less full employment, despite the present blockade.

Cuba has been abominably treated by the United States since 1959. First, Cuba suffered several years of military attacks and military blockades, and there has been an economic blockade for more than 30 years. It is amazing that the Cuban economy has survived at all. While the British Government have never endorsed or taken part in the economic blockade of Cuba, I hope that they will at least put pressure on the United States Administration to lift the blockade of Cuba, which is causing incredible suffering. The blockade is making it difficult for the Cubans to restructure their economy to produce more of their own food or to export medicines, as the Cuban health service is the envy of every country in Latin America.

The economic problems facing so many countries in the region—particularly the former British colonies and the others which have gained independence in the past 30 or 40 years—are now serious. I have received a letter from Father Bobby Gilmore, who used to be a priest at the Irish chaplaincy in Islington and has gone to preach and live in Jamaica. He wrote a nice letter, asking me

"to press the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to cancel debt owed them by the poorest and most debt burdened countries . . . Many severely-indebted countries accept World Bank and IMF structural adjustment loans, because these loans provide the international currency countries need to pay their foreign debts. These practices, in fact, underline the economic health of the borrowing countries by bringing about lower wages, deteriorating educational systems, and reduced medical care . . . What I am witnessing daily here in the Jamaican countryside is general decline in those areas of life, particularly in education, which put democracy and general human wellbeing at risk. Violence is on the increase threatening the tourist industry and other possible investment."

The letter ended by urging me to do something to "prevent modern slavery" which is what Father Gilmore believes the conditions imposed by the IMF on the poorest countries of the region to be. There are problems throughout the region, and the economic solutions are being increasingly imposed on countries by the IMF and the World bank. Britain is a major participant in these organisations, and we have a voice on the governing bodies of both of them. But I hear few arguments that the structural adjustment programmes being imposed on countries to encourage an export-led solution to their economic problems are resulting in people paying a terrifying price, with the loss of their social structures, high levels of unemployment and low levels of wages.

Recently, I attended a conference on central America, where I heard a fascinating talk by Victor Hugo Tinoco, the international relations secretary of the Sandinista front

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

in Nicaragua which lost the elections towards the end of the Contra war, on the situation in Nicaragua today. I quote from the briefing which accompanied his talk:

"70 per cent. unemployment, crumbling social services, local production destroyed by a flood of cheap foreign imports, lack of credit for small farmers producing for domestic consumption, rising malnutrition and illiteracy and 40 per cent. of the population living in acute poverty."

When the Sandinistas were leading the Government of Nicaragua, health care, education, housing and employment all improved, despite the US-supported war against that Government. One must ask what that war was all about. Was Nicaragua such a threat to the United States? It was no threat whatsoever. There never was a military threat from Nicaragua to the United States, any more than there is a military threat from Cuba.

It is the threat by example that the United States could not cope with, and that is why so much money and effort went into destroying the achievements in that country. What is now happening in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala is that a large number of demobilised soldiers from the national army, or demobilised Contra and other guerillas, are looking for work and an existence, but all that they have are the weapons left at the end of the war. So a number of illicit bands are roaming around those countries, causing mayhem, crime and all the rest—something that will get worse.

We must take the problems there seriously, or there will be a complete breakdown in society as a whole. That can be avoided only if sufficient aid and real support are given for a democratic process, and I do not call the imposition of structural adjustment programmes by the International Monetary Fund any part of the democratic process as I understand it.

There is a similar position in El Salvador, where the United Nations happily was able to negotiate a peace accord and bring about a ceasefire and the development of democratic politics—something that must be seen as wholly welcome. Unless support is given to the agricultural economy of El Salvador, however, people will continue to flood from the countryside to the shanty towns around El Salvador and the other cities and unemployment will continue to grow. All the conditions that led to the civil war in the first place will return with greater vengeance and there will be an even greater collapse in society than there was then.

It is all very well for Conservative Members and, indeed, the United States, to say, "Hang on a minute. We now have quasi-democratic Governments installed in virtually every country in Latin America." The problems of the human rights abuses, which were caused by the destruction of social systems, are very serious.

A Peruvian woman came to my advice surgery last week to ask what could be done about her husband, who had been arrested in Peru. He is not involved in military activity of any sort—either in the Tupac Amarù brigades or the Sendero Luminoso—and totally deplores what they are doing. He was speaking out against unemployment, poverty and so forth and was accused of being a member of Sendero. He was beaten and tortured by the police and is now in prison, in a very serious situation. Because of the way in which martial law effectively operates in much of Peru, his human rights and rights to any decent judicial process are limited, if not virtually non-existent. That is the price that is being paid by ordinary people in countries throughout the region. I do not want to over-generalise as I am talking of the situation in Peru.

While one welcomes any progress towards a genuinely democratic society, to have such a society human rights must be guaranteed for all people. Clearly, they are not. One has to have the right to work, to be educated and to have a decent health service, which is also part of the process. Generally, democracy does not come at the hands of multinational corporations or a visit from the IMF and the World bank.

Likewise, the situation in Guatemala is very serious, as I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) will mention later, when he speaks for the Opposition. While there has been a reduction in violence since the height of the war, the armed forces and the police, who were unaccountable during the worst days of the problems, are still unaccountable and abusing human rights. The very perpetrators of all those human rights abuses are still at large and anyone who speaks out against them is liable to receive a bullet in the back of the head on a dark night for daring to do so. That is the reality of the life of ordinary people who do not accept that it is right for so many to live in such appalling poverty.

Latin America is a huge subject and I do not want to detain the House any longer, save to say that these debates are very welcome because they at least give us an opportunity to mention important points about economic relations between western Europe, north America and the peoples of Latin America.

I have one question on Antarctica for the Minister and I would be grateful if he could answer it when he replies to the debate. Has he reached any agreement with the Argentine Government about the siting of the secretariat to carry out the functions of the Antarctic treaty that was negotiated and endorsed by the House a couple of years ago?

10.33 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I think that I speak for the rest of the House in saying that the contributions of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) would be greatly missed if we were not given the benefit of them because he brings to these debates a consistency and a whiff of nostalgia that are distinctive. He has the consistency of having been wrong in virtually every forecast that he has made in such debates and he brings us a nostalgic whiff of the totally discredited Marxism of the 1960s, which brings happy memories for those of us who used to read what was then called the *New Statesman*, but have learnt better sense. His other contribution is to remind us that, despite the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition to paint the picture of new Labour, old Labour is alive and well on the Opposition Benches and marching firmly in the wrong ideological direction.

May I return from the world of the hon. Member for Islington, North to the real world, and add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) for yet again—the eighth time—giving the House the opportunity to discuss this subject. Small though the numbers of Members present in such debates are, the debates are significant and have some contribution to make to Britain's relations with Latin America.

Today, I hope that we can awaken a stronger understanding of the opportunities for British business in Latin America. That is the aspect on which I shall dwell in the few minutes available to me. On the whole, the year since our last debate has been a good one for Latin America. Inevitably, there have been ups and downs, as in every other part of the world, on most of which my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham touched with his profound knowledge.

As I want to concentrate on the economic aspects, I must highlight the upset in the Mexican economy in January. The important point was how quickly the whole of Latin America recovered from what was undoubtedly a serious shock. That was in significant contrast to what happened in 1982, when a severe setback in the Mexican economy had long-lasting ramifications throughout the region, which has not been the case this time. Recovery is well under way in Mexico and the rest of the region has not been affected to nearly the same extent. There is evident attachment to free-market, liberal economies, with all the pressures that those undoubtedly cause. The medicine is not pleasant. Indeed, it is painful, but the results are beneficial, as everyone in the rest of the world knows, with the exception of a few lost souls, one of whom—the hon. Member for Islington, North—spoke just before me.

This year, there were elections in Argentina and Peru, which demonstrated that those Governments, who are dedicated to such difficult free market economic policies, have democratic support. The political and economic outlook for Latin America is favourable for stability and for commitment to the democratic process throughout the region, although there are various problems. I hope that Cuba will come into line before very long.

The economic outlook is particularly encouraging. I must draw the attention of the House to the World bank study completed earlier this year, which predicted that

"the region's economy as a whole could grow at . . . 6 per cent. a year between 1998 and 2005, provided that governments learn the lessons of the Mexican upheaval."

Let us consider the statistics that my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham gave on the economic power that Latin America already possesses, which most people in the rest of the world underestimate. Add to that the growth prospects that the World bank thinks that the region could achieve and one has a challenging and interesting market.

Of course, it is a two-way market. Believers as we are in the benefits of free trade and investment—certainly on the Conservative side of the House—we are talking about a two-way, everyone-wins development and we must concentrate on that. I was particularly glad, therefore, that the United Kingdom Government launched their Link into Latin America campaign at the beginning of the year. Unhappily, it coincided with the problems in Mexico, but I do not think that that has derailed the programme. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister of State will have something to say on that.

The campaign has led to a general and growing awareness in British business of the opportunities in Latin America, which was demonstrated by the large attendance at the conference that the CBI organised on Mercosur on 21 September. I strongly endorse the warm tributes paid to Canning house by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham. The Canning house conference on a free trade area of the Americas on Monday 16 October again demonstrated the efforts that are being made by LATAG, Canning house itself, the Department of Trade and Industry and all the bodies charged with developing our interests in Latin America.

However, we still have more to do and I refer the House to one aspect: the European Union's programme for industrial co-operation with Latin America, Alinvest, voted last month 41 million ecu of European Union funds for a five-year programme of technology transfer, know-how initiatives and strategic alliances between the two regions. As I understand it, there are 170 trade multipliers, as they are called, of which only seven are from the United Kingdom—less than 4 per cent. of the total—while 60 per cent. is in three countries: Spain, France and Italy. Keen as I personally am on taking full advantage of our membership of the European Union, I hope that British exporters, led if necessary again by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office, will take full advantage of the European Union funds which are available to them.

The panorama is extremely encouraging. The latest agreement between Britain and Argentina on Falkland Islands oil exploration is a development greatly to be welcomed. Neither side must be put off by the rhetoric that is occasionally directed towards that difficult issue. We have experience in our recent past of the dangers of rhetoric going too far. We must concentrate on the practical realities and I believe that the oil exploration agreement is a good example of what can be achieved by responsible statesmen working together for the general good. The agreement will further enhance relations between Britain and Argentina, which are remarkably strong and have withstood the inevitable pressures exerted by the Falkland Islands dispute. There will be a further spin-off effect on Britain's standing with the rest of Latin America.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham said, the historical and continuing, deep-seated cultural, family and trade links that we already have mean that there is a great basis on which to build. The message of this debate should go out to Latin America that we in Britain recognise what has been achieved and know that there are problems but that we congratulate those countries on the restoration of democracy, the political stability that is developing throughout the region and the economic progress that is being attained. We look forward to working together, possibly through a free trade area of the sort that is now being discussed. There are difficulties with that, but let us hope that we can make progress on it. We look forward to collaborating with Latin America.

The other message is to our own countrymen, especially those engaged in trade. It is the smaller companies to which we must address ourselves and say that while there are opportunities with the Asian tigers and in eastern Europe, they should not forget the vibrant, positive, encouraging opportunity in Latin America. I hope very much that the Government will take the lead in reinforcing the initiatives they have already undertaken.

10.44 am

Sir Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I, too, am glad to take part in this debate and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) for the enthusiasm and zest with which he has encouraged good relations with the whole of Latin America and encouraged these debates in the House over the years.

[Sir Kenneth Carlisle]

This morning, I want to concentrate on Argentina because I have long family connections with that great country. My family first became involved in Argentina in about 1820. My father was born in Buenos Aires. I had the good fortune to work there for two years in the 1960s. I still have family who live and work happily there. For me, as for my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) who has spent time in the embassy in Argentina, it is a joy that they have come through difficult times and that relations between our two countries are now genuinely warm, constructive and show great promise for the future.

I believe that our now firm relations with Argentina are at a juncture where there is great scope for further growth over many facets of our friendship. That potential exists not only because of our old and enduring links with Argentina but because of the impressive economic promise of that country and its democratic stability.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Argentina is one third the size of the United States—1 million square miles. It is a huge country with one of the best agricultural industries in the world, which has great potential. It also has enormous reserves of raw materials which are in the process of being developed and which offer it great promise of prosperity in the future. Added to that, of all countries in Latin America, Argentina has one of the best educated and professional middle classes. It has the structure to make good use of its potential.

Those natural qualities always existed, but they are linked now to the prospect of financial stability with low inflation. We all remember those decades when inflation in Argentina seemed extraordinary to us in Europe. Now inflation is low, running at European levels. There is also the promise of stability guaranteed by democracy. We were all impressed by the recent election in Argentina, when the Government had an austere budget before the election to meet the financial crisis and went on to win a genuine victory. Of course, the future will be tough; it always is. Argentina has to bed down those reforms but we can all recognise the promise and the stability. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe said, that provides great opportunities for British companies.

Many British companies are already investing in Argentina. Lloyds bank is a long-established investor there and British American Tobacco, British Gas, Cadbury Schweppes, Glaxo, Unilever and a host of others are investing in Argentina—not simply trading, but putting money into bricks and mortar and enterprises in that country. In fact, UK investment in Argentina is the highest of any European country. There is scope for much more such investment.

The World Bank estimates that for Argentina alone, the investment needed in all sorts of infrastructure by the year 2000, only five years away, is colossal. For example, it requires investment of over £2 billion in railways, £4 billion in gas, £5 billion in water, over £10 billion in electricity generation and nearly £10 billion in telecommunications. So the list goes on. Those requirements offer huge opportunities for British firms. Although we are taking some of those opportunities, we could do much better. There is scope and hope for Argentine investment in this country. We are the natural gateway for Argentina to get into Europe, and London can provide the banking services and other areas of expertise that Argentina needs if it is to exploit European markets.

Although it has been growing, direct trade—the import and export of goods—has not been so good. It came from a low point after the Falklands war and although figures have been encouraging in recent years, our exports to Argentina are still not as high as those of France and Germany, nor as high as our direct investment in Argentina merits. This country must invest in, and work hard at, that. There is an encouraging amount of activity, including trade missions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), who has just stepped down as Minister for Trade, was a leading light in taking trade missions around the world. He did not neglect South America. Nor did my hon. Friend the Minister's predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). They understood the importance of Latin America and helped to create potential here.

I am glad that this country is in the process of creating a British-Argentine chamber of commerce. One already exists in Buenos Aires but we have now created one here to encourage activity and interest in Argentina and to help companies that wish to trade with Argentina. We must continue to work on those links between the United Kingdom and Argentina.

Although we have come some way with trade and investment, we must make the most of that potential. We still have much work to do. I welcome the growing links, not only in trade, business and investment but in all other areas. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), I welcome the fact that the potential now exists to exploit and develop the raw materials around the Falkland Islands. That is good for all three countries involved: the Falkland Islands, the United Kingdom, and Argentina. Once we start to do that, those links will inevitably grow stronger and work better.

The growing affection and practical working between Argentina and the United Kingdom was emphasised last year when a statue was unveiled in Belgrave square to San Martin, the founder of Argentine freedom. That was a great symbolic event which I hope and believe will, over the next few years, set the tone for the enduring links between our two countries, which go back so long and inevitably have such potential.

10.52 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I congratulate the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on once again being one of the major participants in a debate on Latin America. He may be pleased to know that I have followed these debates with interest over the years. He may not know that I have a long-standing interest in the region. However, it has always struck me as perverse to have a debate that covers the whole of that massive area.

I have listened with interest to points made on both sides of the House this morning. While I accept that the euphoric view of the world put forward by Conservative Members is reflected in reality in some areas, it disguises the fact that the major problems in Latin America have been glossed over, except in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). The problem of poverty in the region is enormous and human rights abuse in different parts of Latin America is at

horrendous levels and is no better than in previous years. Debt and the way in which structural adjustment programmes have borne down on the poorest people in the region have led to massive human catastrophe. In addition, the problem of drugs—narco-trafficking and narco-terrorism—present challenges not just to that region but to the entire world.

So we should not enter this debate complacently. I recognise that, in such a diverse region, there are areas of great success and I wish to deal with those first. I commend to the House the excellent report, produced in July by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, on trade with Brazil and with Argentina. The report pays considerable attention to the massive power of those markets and points out that Mercosur is well on the way to becoming the fourth most important economic bloc in the world. That is vital for Europe because, if we are to avoid the serious danger of the world breaking up into competing economic blocs, Europe's relations with Mercosur are central to Britain's interests and those of the Latin American countries, particularly the four countries within the Mercosur union.

Brazil is already an economic super-power with a tremendously important economy. Unfortunately, our balance of trade with Brazil is highly unequal. I do not criticise Brazil for that; it is up to British industry and business to get out there and sell itself within that region. Our relations with Argentina are enduring despite history, particularly the Falkland Islands war. Britain is still a major investor in both those countries and British industry, business and employment have a considerable base in those areas. That is part of the success.

Conservative Members talked about political stability in Latin America. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile and other parts of Latin America, there is now a level of political stability that must satisfy all those with an interest in our relations with the area.

Because of the lack of time, I shall now move on to some slightly more contentious issues. I apologise to those with an interest in the areas that form pockets of stability. While those are important to us, it is equally important that we recognise and place on record some of the problems that exist in the region. We must recognise that debt and the structural adjustment programme that brought on the debt crisis have produced massive social consequences in many countries of Latin America.

For example, in Peru 12 million people—some 55 per cent. of the population—live in abject poverty. Nearly 50 per cent. of children under five suffer from malnutrition and the level of human rights abuse is connected with that poverty. Peru's drugs trade places it firmly as the narcotics regime of the world. That is not surprising when we examine the figures that underlie the problem. For 1 hectare of land in Peru devoted to the cultivation of coffee, a farmer would expect to receive $1,300 a year in return; for 1 hectare of land devoted to the cultivation of coca, the same farmer would receive $10,000 in return. British farmers—I say this without ill will to British farmers, who are particularly good at making as case for the best crops and prices here—will understand why farmers in Peru are forced to make the same harsh economic choices. We must recognise the crude economics of the drugs trade in poor countries.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Would the hon. Gentleman tell us what he would do about the debt problem?

Mr. Lloyd: The world must heed the calls for debts to be restructured or written off. No progress will be made unless we are prepared to recognise that the poorest people in the poorest countries can be relieved of that burden of poverty only by debt write-offs.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Gravesham is aware of the relationship between poverty, debt and drugs trafficking. He must be aware that that has created a problem in this country. If he wants to do something practical about it, he should accept the need to deal with the debts of certain countries. The hon. Gentleman cannot escape the logic of that conclusion.

The lack of proper international co-operation in tackling the drugs industry is also a problem. Narco-terrorism occurs throughout the world, but specifically in Latin America. If our country is not prepared to play a constructive role in combating it, we shall miss an opportunity to do something about a problem that affects our people directly. We must also be prepared to develop crop substitution programmes and offer investment in alternative farming techniques and methods to people in drug-producing areas; otherwise we will miss an opportunity to do something that would also practically benefit our people. I concede to the hon. Member for Gravesham that such practical steps have been taken, but we are not doing enough and no one should pretend otherwise. We have not recognised the scale of the drugs problem that exists in Latin America and in our country.

Certain Caribbean countries are on the narcotics route from Latin America to Europe and the United States. The stability of their societies risks being destroyed by the power of the drug barons.

Mr. Arnold: What would the hon. Gentleman care to say about the banana regime, particularly in relation to the Caribbean islands and the offsetting effect in Latin America?

Mr. Lloyd: The problems of the banana regime reveal some of the worst excesses of believing the mantra that free trade is the solution to all problems. There is no doubt that the United States is exerting considerable pressure to open the market for bananas to Europe. That pressure is being exerted in the interests not of Europe or the banana-growing nations, but of those United States companies which, through their own commercial decisions, have been squeezed out of the European market.

It is not in the interests of Britain nor in the interests of our long-term relationship with Jamaica and the Windward Islands for the banana regime to be ripped up. I hope that the Government accept that Britain's long-term interests have already been set through the type of investments that the Government have made in the banana industry in the Caribbean. It would be gross folly to throw away that investment and to see Europe flooded with bananas imported from central and south American countries that have not cheap labour, but practically slave labour.

I urge the Minister to acknowledge that not only do we have a moral obligation to maintain the current banana regime but that it is in our long-term economic interests to do so. I hope that that answers the question of the hon. Member for Gravesham. If the banana regime collapsed, Jamaica would be plunged into abject poverty and the

[Mr. Lloyd]

destabilising effect would be hard to comprehend. Such economic destabilisation has already resulted in human rights violations in large parts of Latin America.

I have a long-term interest in Guatemala. The latest intelligence reports suggest that its human rights record is not measurably better than it was at the height of the war there some years ago. It may be better according to absolute numbers, but that is an odd calculation considering the work of death squads organised by the paramilitaries and the police. In that country, not only political opponents but people from all walks of life disappear. The United Nations' verification mission reported "grave and repeated" human rights violations and blamed "persistent impunity" for the lack of progress in ending those abuses.

I must put on record that the current President of Guatemala has done precious little to rein in the security forces and the army, who are most guilty of persecuting the innocent and the blameless. The world cannot simply sit back and ignore what has happened in that country. We cannot ignore the fact that we are training Guatemalan police. We must be given some account of the function of that training at a time when that police force is not subject to proper control.

We know that Colombia has many problems because of the narcotics trade, but it is also suffering because of the violation of human rights. According to Amnesty International more than 1,000 people have been extrajudicially executed by the armed forces or paramilitary groups. We know that attacks against community leaders and human rights activists are a significant feature of daily life in Colombia. No great steps have been taken to improve human rights there. The country is locked in anarchy; Colombian political leaders have said that the budgets of the drug barons and the drug cartels are so enormous that they threaten to subvert totally that state.

Once again, the links between poverty, human rights abuses, an army out of control and the narcotics trade are overwhelming. The hon. Member for Gravesham may smile at the idea of the army being out of control, but I must remind him that the Colombian army was able to sabotage a change in the law which would have meant that cases involving kidnappings and disappearances at the behest of the army were brought before civil courts. Instead, those cases are still heard before military courts and are therefore not subject to the control of the elected Government of that country.

The existence of a notional democratically elected Government does not offer any guarantee of the basic freedoms and standards that we would expect of those with whom we would like to deal on an equal basis. The hon. Member for Gravesham and other hon. Members have mentioned Cuba. I have just returned from that country. I am not an apologist for the Cuban regime, and I raised the issue of human rights abuses with the Cuban Government. Human rights are indivisible from all other issues whether one is talking about Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala or anywhere else.

One of the great problems from which the Cuban people suffer is the misguided blockade that America continues to impose on that small country. A recent editorial in *The Guardian* described it as an act of "gross pettiness". That is an appropriate description given that at a time when the United States has eased restrictions on China, Vietnam and North Korea, it still continues its peculiar ideological battle with a tiny island in the Caribbean. I was pleased to note that when the Minister for Science and Technology went to Cuba, he described that blockade as blinkered. He spoke not only for the Government but for people in Britain and Europe.

It is not in the interests of the Europeans or of Latin America that Cuba continues to be isolated. Cuba should be brought back into the family of nations in that region and the family of nations of the world. The United States would do us all a service and a favour by recognising that and removing the blockade.

This is the first opportunity that I have had to speak in a debate about Latin America. I said at the beginning that such debates are, by the nature of the region, diverse and wide-ranging. I apologise for the fact that I have missed out far more subjects than I have been able to mention in such a short space of time, but I freely concede that such debates are important. It gives us an opportunity to discuss a region that is vital to the United Kingdom.

I repeat that Britain's self-interest, Europe's self-interest and our role in the world depend heavily on our forging the strongest possible relationships within and between the countries of Latin America. We should be part of the process of supporting their development, and we should take our share of exchange with Mercosur and, more generally, with the whole of that region. It is important for the world; it is important for Britain's narrow self-interest. In those terms, the fact that this debate exists pays tribute to the fact that this is a region that is perhaps as important as any for the future of Britain and of the world.

11.10 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Sir Nicholas Bonsor): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on introducing the debate and on bringing the subject back before the House. His expertise on Latin America is well known and his knowledge is invaluable. His contribution to the debate took us a long way forward in the discussion of our relationship with Latin American and south American countries.

I welcome what the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said about the importance of our relationship with Latin America and that region. I agree that we should trade heavily with the region, in our own interest and in their interest, and continue a dialogue designed to help them in their development.

Remarkable political and economic changes have occurred in the region. Apart from Cuba, democracy is universal and has been further consolidated in the past few years by a series of peaceful and open elections. In 1995, elections have been held in Argentina and Peru, and next month they will be held in Guatemala.

There has been an economic transformation. The economy has been opened up and inflation has been reduced. Structural changes have been adopted, privatisation programmes pursued and debt re-scheduled. The pace and depth of change may vary from one country to another, but the trend is unmistakable and, in my opinion, irreversible. Latin American economies have grown at a rate second only to the Asian Pacific rim countries, and their import markets have grown substantially.

Everywhere there is evidence of Latin America entering the world stage: Mexico's joining the North American Free Trade Area and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Chile joining the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation and negotiating to join NAFTA; the summit of the Americas, which achieved more concrete results on regional free trade than did the rival APEC summit in Bogor; co-operation on non-proliferation issues; participation in United Nations peacekeeping; aspirations to the UN Security Council; or movement towards closer relations with the EU by Mercosur, Mexico, Chile and Latin America as a whole.

Not all has been plain sailing. The hon. Members for Stretford and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) concentrated heavily on some of the problems that have arisen. In 1995 the Mexican economic crisis occurred, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said, but there has been rapid recovery. We should all welcome that, as he did. There has also been a dispute between Peru and Ecuador, some problems between Venezuela and Colombia and political uncertainties in Ecuador.

The Mexican crisis and the economic adjustment that it necessitated have been traumatic for the people of Latin America and for the whole world. Argentina was affected when the crisis created liquidity and banking difficulties, and Brazil was hard hit for a while. However, all those countries have acted decisively and I believe that they are now back on the road to economic prosperity and are making progress.

The hon. Member for Stretford mentioned some problems in the region. He emphasised the problem of human rights abuses, and I assure him that the Government are conscious of the need to work with the Governments of all countries concerned to ensure that such abuses are wiped out. There are still far too many instances of such abuses throughout the region. We shall work closely to try to resolve that problem. It is, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, partly the result of the poverty in the region, as is the drugs problem. We are working, as much as we can, to help them on the road to prosperity and to help combat the drugs trade.

The hon. Gentleman appeared to complain about our training some police forces, and especially about some training that we give in Guatemala. However, only by giving proper training and by encouraging police forces to act as responsible police forces should act can we help to prevent the abuses to which he rightly drew our attention.

Despite all those difficulties, the United Kingdom remains confident that Mexico specifically and Latin America as a whole have laid the basis for an increasingly prosperous and stable future and will overcome the problems that we have discussed and any future setbacks.

One lesson that the international community could learn is the need constantly to be vigilant in the surveillance of key economies, even when monitoring a country with an excellent track record of economic reform. I believe that the Mexican crisis took most experts by surprise. We must ensure that we are not taken by surprise again.

Mr. Corbyn: Which Mexican crisis is the Minister referring to? Is it the financial crisis or the earlier crisis in the Chiapas region? There is a connection between the terrible poverty in southern Mexico and the uprising and the later agreement that was reached—forced on Mexico by the United States of America.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I was referring to the economic crisis. I believe that that has been resolved. I was in Mexico earlier this year and I discussed the Chiapas problem with the Mexican Government. They are conscious of the difficulties. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that poverty is a significant factor. The Mexican Government are now trying their hardest to resolve those difficulties and to reach a democratic, stable and peaceful solution to the Chiapas difficulty.

The conflict between Peru and Ecuador has obviously caused us substantial concern, not least because both countries are very good friends of ours. Such conflicts are anachronistic and they damage not only the images of Peru and Ecuador but the whole region. We were impressed, however, by the determined effort of the Rio protocol guarantors to achieve a ceasefire and set in train a process leading to a long-term settlement of the dispute. I believe that that is now achieving its ends and that the relationship between those countries is rapidly improving.

The long-standing border disputes between Colombia and Venezuela lead to raised voices from time to time. They were exacerbated earlier this year by a clash between Colombian guerillas and Venezuelan marines, resulting in the loss of some Venezuelan lives. However, both countries, as close partners in the increasingly successful economic group of three—Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela—are working hard to settle those problems diplomatically.

Thankfully, neither the important structural reforms to economies nor the new spirit of regional co-operation has been put at risk by disputes in the region. The transformation is irreversible. Moreover, the changes in Latin America are opening up new opportunities for Britain.

We once enjoyed a predominant economic position in the region, and it is important that we now recover it. There remains a large reservoir of strong good will towards Britain and we must ensure that we tap it to the full.

British assets in the region are considerable. We have diplomatic representation in every country. British academic expertise on Latin America is second to none. The British Government are actively encouraging those positive developments.

In 1992, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made the first ever visit by a serving Prime Minister to Latin America. The former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), visited Latin America three times in the past four years. There is a regular and growing flow of Ministers travelling in both directions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On the issue of sustained ministerial relations, the Minister will know that the question of the Brazilian Atlantic rain forests was discussed, and indeed it was discussed by the Latin American group with Paolo e Flecha Tarso de Lima and the present ambassador. It concerns economic policy and cocoa prices. I do not expect the Minister, off the top of his head, to give any answer to this, other than an assurance that the specific European concerns in relation

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

to trade, prices and possible consequent damage to the Atlantic rain forests have been taken into account. Indeed, that subject was mentioned by the Prime Minister at Rio.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that issue and for not expecting me to give him an impromptu reply. I shall consider the subject closely. The importance of the rainforest is fully recognised by Her Majesty's Government.

I am glad to be able to announce to the House that, with effect from September 1995, the United Kingdom has acceded to the Organisation of American States as a permanent observer, with our ambassador in Washington, Sir John Kerr, as the United Kingdom representative. The OAS is a unique forum for discussion of hemispheric affairs throughout the Americas. It has been given an important new responsibility by the summit of the Americas, especially in overseeing the consolidation of democracy and good government in that region. Most of our European partners are already observers. We have been applying for some time and the fact that we have now acceded to that organisation is a useful step.

Several of my hon. Friends have mentioned the Falkland and Argentine oil agreement. It is, of course, extremely welcome and marks a step forward in the relationship between our two countries. It is important. It demonstrates the fact that we can set aside our long-standing disputes over the sovereignty of the Falklands and re-establish good relations with Argentina. We hope that we shall be able to use the oil agreement as a catalyst to improve the already excellent bilateral relationship that we enjoy. The non-governmental Argentine-British conference in Oxford in September discussed ways of improving links between the two countries. I think that it was held in my old college, which I take as a good omen, especially in a sporting and cultural context.

Military contact talks to be held in Buenos Aires later this month will discuss a graduated improvement in military relations—part of a step-by-step process that has been in progress for two or three years. We hope to sign a double taxation agreement later in the year.

I should like to concentrate my remarks on the trade that we enjoy with Latin America. As the hon. Member for Stretford recognises, it is of vital interest to this country. The trade is growing at an impressive pace, and increased by 27 per cent. in 1993 and 21 per cent. in 1994 to more than £2 billion. This year, following the Mexican crisis, the increase is lower, at more than 11 per cent., but exports to South America generally are up by a further 20 per cent. Despite that growth of UK exports, our share of the market is disappointingly low—1.7 per cent. compared to our share of world trade which is about 5 per cent.

British investment in the region offers a better picture. After the United States, Britain is the second largest investor. British investment rose by 60 per cent. between 1991 and 1992, to £4.7 billion. But we do not seem to be able to carry that increase over into our export markets, which is a matter of substantial concern to us.

It is for that reason that the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in association with the Confederation of British Industry, have launched the Link into Latin America trade campaign. My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister formally launched the campaign at a conference in January at CBI headquarters in the presence of every British ambassador accredited to Latin America. The aim is to make British companies aware of what Latin America is like today rather than the stereotyped image of it which some people seem to hold and which is outdated and inaccurate.

A co-ordinated media strategy has been developed to generate wide coverage of the positive changes that have taken place in Latin America and the increased business opportunities in the region. A programme of conferences, seminars, trade missions and VIP visits to the region have been organised. In the eight months since the campaign was launched, more than 30 events have been attended by more than 1,200 UK companies and representative bodies. For example, a highly successful and well-attended conference was held on 21 September in London to promote opportunities in Mercosur. The conference was opened by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and a keynote speech was delivered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Ministers from each of the Mercosur countries were present and spoke at the conference.

Nine export promoters from the private sector have been seconded to the DTI with specific responsibilities for Latin America. A significantly larger programme, supported at trade missions and trade fairs, has been run this year and is in the pipeline for 1996. As Latin American Governments have opened their markets, the Export Credits Guarantee Department has returned to the region. A series of premium rate reductions has been made for markets where competition was particularly acute.

The Foreign Office's network of commercial sections in British embassies in the region stands ready to support the campaign. Trade promotion is one of Britain's fundamental foreign policy aims. Britain's prosperity depends on success in external trade, and the emerging markets of Latin America offer one of the most promising areas for the expansion of that trade. In parallel with the launch of the Link into Latin America campaign, commercial sections throughout the region have been strengthened and new posts have been opened, including ones at Porto Alegre and Curitiba in Brazil, and Monterrey in Mexico.

We have also sought, with success, to increase bilateral co-operation. We have negotiated investment protection and promotion agreements and double taxation conventions—or are in the process of doing so—with the most important markets. Visa abolition, anti-narcotics and air services agreements are other examples of the practical advances in co-operation that have been achieved with Latin America.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe said, there is a need to focus on medium-sized and smaller companies. In the past, some of the attention has been focused wholly on large companies and what might be described as the great and the good. I believe that the greatest opportunity for expansion lies in attracting our smaller companies to trade in the region. To do so, we need, first, to focus on what is needed in those countries and, secondly, to identify the British companies that can provide it. It is to that end that the Link into Latin America campaign is now directing its attention.

On the more general issue of United Kingdom and European Union aid and trade co-operation with Latin America, our technical co-operation programmes in the region are modest in size—they were £27.3 million in 1995-96—but they are much valued locally. Their size has roughly doubled over the past five years. The scheme focuses on natural resources, the environment and aid to the health and education sectors. We are also strengthening the assistance that we give towards promoting good government. Our aid programmes have been highly praised by many Governments in the region for their effectiveness and value. We also contribute substantially to EC aid in Latin America.

The British Government also strongly support the move towards closer relationships between the European Union and Latin America. Last year the EU agreed a basic document on policy towards the region. In 1994 and 1995, successive European Councils at Corfu, Essen and Paris agreed to develop proposals for deeper relationships with Mercosur, Mexico and Chile.

The EU already has a high-level dialogue with Latin American groupings. The UK values both the EU-Rio group dialogue and the San José dialogue between the EU and central America. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), attended both the EU-Rio group and the EU-San José ministerial meetings in Paris and Panama last year. I hope, if my diary permits and the party Whips allow me, to attend meetings in Bolivia and Italy next year.

We welcome recent moves to re-assess the San José dialogue in the light of democratisation of the region during the decade that the dialogue has been taking place. We support recommendations that the focus of the dialogue should be widened to cover economic as well as political co-operation. There has been considerable progress in negotiations on political and economic agreement with Mercosur, Mexico and Chile during the Spanish presidency.

We welcome the initialling of the new EU-Mercosur framework agreement in Montevideo on 29 September. The final agreement should be signed in Madrid at the European Council in December. We also support the ultimate objective of agreeing to an inter-regional association agreement, including the progressive and reciprocal liberalisation of trade in accordance with World Trade Organisation rules.

We welcome the decision taken on 10 April by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee for a new EU-Mexico agreement that would provide for trade liberalisation and enhanced political dialogue to replace the existing EC-Mexico trade and co-operation agreement of 1991. The scope of the new agreement was set out in an EU-Mexico joint solemn declaration signed on 2 May this year. I hope that we can make early progress to enable approval of a negotiating mandate for talks with Mexicans at the Madrid European Council in December.

We also greatly welcome proposals to strengthen EU relations with Chile to reflect its economic development and political stability. The UK supports the decision of the 17 July Foreign Affairs Council to adopt the most ambitious option for a new bilateral EU-Chile agreement, which will provide enhanced political dialogue and trade liberalisation.

Mr. Corbyn *rose—*

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am afraid I have only one minute left. I had intended to answer the hon. Gentleman's question about Antarctica at the end of my speech, but I shall do so now. We have not yet agreed on the placement of the secretariat for that operation. We are prepared to consider any country that is not in competition with us with regard to our Antarctic rights, but Chile and Argentina do not accept the United Kingdom's claim and, therefore, would not be suitable places to locate the secretariat. However, our views remain open as to where it should go.

Mr. Corbyn: That is short-sighted.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not think that it is short-sighted. The United Kingdom Government must protect the United Kingdom's interests.

In conclusion, the area is a very important to us. The trading opportunities are magnificent and the whole region is becoming more democratic and prosperous. We must ensure that we take full advantage of any opportunities that may arise.

Drugs Misuse

11.30 am

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The fact that the House of Commons has responded to the request by many hon. Members for an Adjournment debate on the issue of drugs misuse shows that the House can respond to a situation that is causing concern in the country. If anyone in Scotland had any doubt about the scale of the drugs misuse epidemic—especially among our young people—events this summer have confirmed the seriousness of the situation. The level of concern in my constituency is unfortunately reflected in the constituencies of many of my colleagues and that concern is unique in my 13 years as an elected representative.

Deaths in the Strathclyde region directly connected to drug abuse will almost certainly reach the horrific figure of 100. The issue of drugs misuse has been pursued by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but I do not hesitate to mention my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster). I do not think that anyone would take exception to my mentioning the courage displayed by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), who has had a lasting effect on public perceptions by taking on the violent and criminal men and women who supply the drugs to Scotland's streets.

Concern about drug misuse is expressed not only by politicians, but by a number of responsible Scottish institutions. The *Glasgow Evening Times* has conducted an extremely effective campaign which enabled the public to report anonymously the names of drug dealers and their areas of operation. It has been sobering and frightening for me to recognise in the newspaper's reports people and locations known to me in my constituency. I think that other hon. Members have had similar experiences.

The Scottish media have expressed concern about the drugs problem and have got behind the campaign to encourage the Scottish Office to do something about it, particularly with regard to Temazepam. The *Daily Record*, *The Herald* and *The Scotsman* have played an honourable role in that campaign. The immensity of the problem has also been recognised by Strathclyde police, who have launched Operation Eagle—an operation against drug dealers the size of which has never been seen before. It is aimed directly at dealers and traffickers who ply their evil trade, spreading misery, disease and despair throughout the towns and cities of Scotland. Operation Eagle was directed particularly at the Strathclyde region and it has been assisted considerably by media and public co-operation in Scotland.

Determining the exact extent of drug misuse and abuse has been difficult in the past, but, despite the lack of precise information, all indicators point to the conclusion that drugs misuse has increased substantially in the past 10 years. Scottish Office statistics suggest that the number of drug misusers nationally includes about 20,000 people who primarily inject illicit or prescribed drugs, although many other people may be involved in poly-drug abuse—the abuse of more than one substance at a time.

It is estimated that between 8,500 and 10,000 intravenous drug abusers frequent the Greater Glasgow area, which encompasses more than merely the city of Glasgow. Of particular concern is the estimate that between 33 per cent. and 40 per cent. of all young persons experiment with cannabis.

As the drugs habit must be financed, there are undoubted links between drugs and the incidence of petty crime—which may be labelled "petty" in the statistics, but is far from petty to its victims. Drugs misuse has an enormous financial and emotional impact on family and community life and, as I have said, by the end of this year more than 100 people will have died as a result of drugs misuse.

Institutions other than those in Scotland have recognised the scale of the problem. The British Retail Consortium is involved in a project designed to produce a code of practice to assist retailers and staff to recognise signs of abuse and to advise them of the appropriate procedures to adopt when faced with that situation.

Drugs misuse is a widely recognised social issue and the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), has done excellent work in the area. In its report published in May 1994, the Committee found that the increasing drugs problem in Scotland costs almost £1,000 million per year in drug-related crime. I do not think that anyone would suggest that the situation has improved since then. Returning to the youth aspect of the problem, one Glasgow general practitioner told the Select Committee that almost half the children from a secondary school class in his area had injected drugs. That is a frightening statistic and we all have a duty to do something about the problem.

The Scottish Office also produced a report entitled "Drugs in Scotland: Meeting the Challenge", which raised several points. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) has observed acutely, the rhetoric was fine but when it came to allocating money to finance the initiatives there was not as much as was spent in other parts of the country. I am aware that several communities in my area, such as Cambuslang, Rutherglen, Halfway, Toryglen and Castlemilk East, face serious and growing problems with drug abuse.

The local paper *The Reformer*, which is in a good position to gauge the severity of the situation, is leading the fight against drugs. I am delighted that the local paper has undertaken such a campaign as it shows that it recognises its responsibilities to the community in leading the fight against drug abuse in my constituency. Like all hon. Members, I have my differences with the local paper on occasion, but I have nothing but respect and admiration for the campaign that *The Reformer* is undertaking, which will prove a direct benefit to my constituents.

Other hon. Members who manage to catch your eye to speak in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will cover many aspects of drug abuse and I am sure that most of them will mention Temazepam—a substance that has become the scourge of Scottish streets. Concern about Temazepam is not new. As early as 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) highlighted the fact that something must be done to tighten the supply of the drug. He was a pioneer in that area.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I am glad that my hon. Friend has highlighted the fact that the use of Temazepam and Temgesics is arguably the greatest danger facing people today, particularly the young. It is particularly bad in our cities, especially the city of Glasgow. Does my hon. Friend agree that banning the

prescription of those drugs is only part of the answer? Perhaps an important part of the solution would be to ban the manufacture of such drugs entirely.

Mr. McAvoy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments; he has outlined exactly the approach that I believe that my other hon. Friends will take.

I turn now to the Government's position with regard to the problem of drugs misuse. I do not like scoring party political points against the Government as we should all be on the same side when it comes to the problem of drugs misuse. However, my sense of good will is stretched when I consider the Government's activities in the field. I had intended to give the Government the benefit of the doubt in the debate as I understand fully the need for caution in such matters. I gave the Secretary of State for Scotland the benefit of the doubt when he announced recently the tightening of conditions for the possession of Temazepam, despite evidence that leakage from the prescription process has been shown to be not the main source of supply to drug dealers.

Just in the past few weeks police elsewhere in the United Kingdom captured a haul of Temazepam with a street value of millions of pounds. It had been obtained allegedly for export, but was actually destined for the streets of Scotland. Although it is a problem throughout the United Kingdom, one fifth of the supply of Temazepam is distributed in Scotland, which has only 10 per cent. of the population. The Scottish Office should recognise the disproportionate use of Temazepam in Scotland.

The tightening of restrictions by the Secretary of State for Scotland does nothing about the supply of Temazepam. I take no pleasure in saying that his initiative was clearly a cosmetic device to create the impression of doing something in his first few weeks in office.

The scale of supply shows that prescription misuse is not a significant source of supply to the dealers. The main source is organised crime by hardened criminals who do not care about the physical and mental consequences of their evil trade. I am further confirmed in my cynicism about the Government's motives by yesterday's announcement by the Secretary of State for Health banning the prescription of the drug in gel capsule form from 1 January 1996. When that form of Temazepam is used for injection, it can lead to amputations.

Everyone will welcome further steps towards the Government banning the drug, but I have no doubt that the pressure exerted by my colleagues over a considerable time and the fact of today's debate forced the Government to make an announcement yesterday in an attempt to stave off public criticism. It is a sign that the Government are detached from reality when they believe that manoeuvres and devices in the House of Commons are a satisfactory response to a serious problem facing people in Scotland.

It is crazy that the restriction on prescribing Temazepam in gel form which was announced yesterday by the Secretary of State for Health will not be imposed until 1 January 1996. Although a Scottish Office Minister is replying to the debate, the people of Scotland and the United Kingdom are entitled to ask why 1 January 1996 was chosen. Is there some special reason for the delay other than the suspicion that cost is a factor in allowing people to run down stocks? How can a drug be safe on 31 December 1995 and unsafe on 1 January 1996? It is not logical or rational and arouses suspicion that the Government are not seriously interested in the problem and are more concerned with the costs both to themselves and to suppliers and manufacturers than with people's safety.

The Government will bear a heavy responsibility for what happens between now and January. The announcement by the Secretary of State for Health does nothing about the real problem, which is not the prescribing of Temazepam, but the manufacture and supply of the drug which will still find its way on to the streets of Scotland. Why will the Government not ban Temazepam? The medical world is quite clear that there are alternatives and, in the absence of any reply from the Minister, the only logical reasons can be cost or stockpile, but how can they be measured against the misery and death of a whole host of people in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Many people acknowledge that society is changing. The matter was raised by the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and there is support for a review of how drugs feature in our changing society. The Government show no sign of realising that we need a strategy with vision and have no grasp of the action required now to protect our young people who are coping with massive youth unemployment and a culture that includes the social use of drugs.

People of my disposition—and probably my generation—find it hard to understand the concept of the social use of drugs. I accept that older generations are not the best judges of younger generations. The problem has also been identified by the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. Although I am on the conservative side of the debate, we owe it to society to have a clear view of where we are going and give young people proper advice. I am not much given to using dramatic language, but I have no hesitation in condemning the Government for their drift and delay which will lead directly to many deaths in Scotland.

11.44 am

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) was absolutely right when said that drugs misuse is not a party issue but one that should concern all parties. Everyone should be concerned because it is doing our nation no end of harm and we are not finding the answers that we need. Like my hon. Friend, I would like to concentrate on Temazepam, the drug that has affected my constituency most over the past few years.

It is now some two and half years since I and my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) approached the Scottish Office with our misgivings about the use and misuse of the drug in our constituencies. We were first approached by doctors at our local hospital, who were concerned about the increased number of amputations which they said was due directly to the misuse of Temazepam. The jelly form of the drug is melted down and injected straight into the veins of addicts. Unfortunately, the drug resolidifies in the veins and that leads to amputations and severe maiming.

At the time, the Scottish Office issued a directive asking health boards in Scotland to inform general practitioners about the misgivings surrounding the drug and to ask them to be careful about prescribing it. General practitioners responded to that and a voluntary ban on

[Mrs. Irene Adams]

prescribing the capsule form of Temazepam was fairly effective. In the past three years, however, problems have increased, not only in Scotland but in the north-east of England, particularly in the Manchester area, and the misuse of Temazepam still continues.

We decided to find out why so much of the drug was on the streets if GPs in Scotland were not prescribing it. We now understand that, on paper, Britain exports more Temazepam than it manufactures. We found that difficult to understand until we realised that the drug has run out of its patent.

Temazepam is manufactured by some 10 manufacturers in the United Kingdom. Anyone can set up as a pharmaceutical wholesaler, as no particular expertise is required, and obtain export licences for particular drugs from the Department of Trade and Industry. Armed with an export licence for Temazepam, one can buy any quantity of the drug from the manufacturer. However, the system seems to be breaking down and it would appear that such licences are not being policed in the way we had hoped. Will the Minister look at that issue in particular, because the drugs are not leaving the country, but finding their way on to the back streets? They are causing abject misery the length and breadth of the country particularly among young people, although many people who were prescribed them in the first place became addicted to them.

Temazepam is really a sleeping pill, but it is also hypnotic and hallucinogenic. It is used by drug users as a downer after amphetamines have been used as uppers. Those people are addicted to more than one drug, but it is the prescribed drug that kills them. Temazepam is a real killer. It is wrecking lives and families. In Strathclyde alone, many deaths this year have been attributable to it.

During the recess, the new Secretary of State for Scotland has taken some action. Two and a half years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) and I asked for the drug to be rescheduled, so that unless someone caught in possession of a large quantity—and I mean a large quantity; I refer not to addicts in possession of two or three capsules, but to dealers in possession of 5,000—had a prescription for that amount, he would be guilty of a criminal offence. Over the summer, Temazepam became a schedule 3 drug, and only yesterday we heard that its prescription in capsule form was to be banned.

I am afraid, however, that that action was too little, too late. It might have had some effect if it had been taken when we asked for it. The banning of the capsule may still have some effect—it may discourage some manufacturers—but I fear that the health service may not now be those manufacturers' biggest customer. Will the Minister examine the position? Who are the biggest customers? Is the industry exporting far more of the drug than is being used in the health service? If all that we suspect to be happening is indeed happening, the continuance of the manufacture of the drug is a serious problem.

The medical profession tells us that there is no longer any real use for Temazepam—that there are many alternatives, and that the banning of the drug would not constitute a loss to the profession. I am not a great believer in bans of any kind, but the further I have gone in investigating this drug, the more convinced I have become that there is no legitimate use for it and no reason for us to retain it. Not only has it caused the misery that I have described; it has led to drug wars in my constituency, with drug barons fighting it out on the streets for territories—very lucrative territories. The drug is manufactured at a cost of 3p a capsule, but sells on the streets for between £1.50 and £3 a capsule. It does not take a mathematician to calculate the profit margins.

We must first consider banning the manufacture of the drug in its jelly form before, perhaps, banning it in its entirety. It could be phased out over a period if the Minister considers that a helpful option—although I must tell him that every day for which it is available poses the danger of another death: another family left motherless, or without a much-loved son or daughter. There is no longer any need for the drug in the health service; the only need seems to be that of abusers on the streets.

We are not addressing ourselves to the wider issue of drugs in general. Temazepam is no more than a drop in the ocean of that misery. Other drugs are abused much more widely; Temazepam just happens to be the drug that was abused in my area, and my area just happens to be where the bubble originally burst. The increase in the misuse of drugs over the past few years has given us all cause for concern. We need to take an overall look at the misuse of drugs, perhaps through the establishment of a royal commission, and we must be willing to accept all that such a commission has to say, although some of it may not be palatable to all of us. We must approach the matter with open minds, and ask ourselves what people mean when they talk of "social drugs".

I am of the same generation as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), and I am not sure what is meant by "social drugs", but perhaps we should be big enough to try to understand. We should examine the long-term effects of such drugs: what are they doing to people, and what are they likely to do to them in 10 years? We should have a complete policy on drugs, covering both criminals and addicts. We are not currently addressing the problems of drug addiction. People are suffering great ill health because of their addiction and the absence of help. It is very easy for the young to take to that way of life, and very hard for them to return from it.

I congratulate Strathclyde on playing a particularly important role in controlling the misuse of drugs in Scotland. Strathclyde has been on the ball from day one—far more than any politician. It is on the front line: it knows what is happening on the streets, and is addressing the problem. But it can only deal with one side of the coin—the criminal aspect. It cannot deal with the health issues; only the Government can do that, and they can do it only by appointing a commission to examine the overall problem of the effects of drugs on society and the other crimes to which they lead. There is no doubt that drugs lead to petty and, in some instances, very serious crimes. In my constituency, they range from shoplifting, through petty burglaries and car thefts, to murder.

I ask the Minister to suggest to his colleagues that a commission be established as quickly as possible, so that we all know where we are going and have a clear purpose.

11.56 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I broaden the debate slightly? The subject is drug abuse

generally, although my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) and for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) have spoken specifically about what is going on in Scotland. Of course I am not unaware of the problems there—who could be, after reading the newspapers?—and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North for taking such a brave stand. We know of the personal problems associated with that stand.

One of the problems with Temazepam is the fact that it is legally available, like other substances that are not banned and can be bought by kids in shops—as well as from dealers who push prescribed drugs. Last week, I visited various universities in the United States, and the subject of drug policies in both that country and the United Kingdom, and attitudes towards those policies, arose continually. As I have made clear, I take a particular stand on the matter; but there is no difference between the enforcement policies of the Government and those of the Opposition. Both parties need to rethink their position, because enforcement is not working, as the examples that we have heard today clearly show.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Temazepam is not legally available except on prescription?

Mr. Banks: The distinction does not really constitute a difference. We all know that; what is interesting is that cannabis—a soft drug that can relieve pain—is, ludicrously, not available for doctors to prescribe. The whole drug regime is riddled with nonsense. That is why I endorse what my hon. Friends have said: we must take a careful look at this matter and stop our knee-jerk responses. We need to look at it coolly and rationally, and I believe that a royal commission is the best way forward.

Billions of dollars and pounds are being spent on both sides of the Atlantic to try to stop the drug trade, but as a result of all this expenditure, more people are now doing drugs and the drugs that they use are cheaper. That proves that enforcement policy is not working. There is no point in the police and the enforcement agencies announcing that they have captured another large supply of cannabis, heroin, crack or cocaine, and everyone applauding, while the price continues to fall on the streets because more and more drugs are coming in.

The prisons are full of people who are there for drug-related offences. Statistics in the United States—their statistics are accurate because our Home Secretary is not in charge of their prisons—show that 70 per cent. of inmates in federal and state prisons are serving time for drug-related offences of one kind or another. I suspect that if we ever had a proper look at this country's statistics, we would come up with a similar percentage.

As to health, it should be remembered that people taking soft drugs do themselves less damage than those who smoke or drink—yet the latter do not have to buy their products on prescription. Alcohol and nicotine are freely available in the shops, under licensed conditions. Imagine what would happen if any Government tried to ban them—which they should do on health grounds, instead of banning cannabis. If such a ban were attempted, the criminality of today's Glasgow would seem like a vicarage tea party, compared with what would happen once the international mafia moved in with supplies.

Next comes the question of the extent to which people should be able to exercise personal choice when it comes to the recreational use of drugs. Legalisation would mean that we could start to do something about quality. One reason why kids take Temazepam and other substances is that they fall into the hands of drug pushers and dealers. There is no quality control or regulation, and neither drug enforcement nor drug education is working. The problem now is that kids have to admit that they are doing something illegal in the first place, which constitutes a disincentive to seek help. With legalisation would come control and regulation and licensing, and much more effective drug education.

I never usually intervene in Scottish debates because I am not someone who wants to end his life rather abruptly, but the fact is that this is a subject that embraces not just Scotland but the whole country. Of course the criminal activity in Glasgow is vicious and nasty, but I can tell my Scottish hon. Friends that similar things go on in the streets of London—in Hackney, Lewisham and my part of the east end murders take place all the time, as do burglaries and street crimes. Most, if not all, of these offences are drug related.

Legalisation could eliminate this criminal activity as well as bringing about some of the other benefits that I have listed. I am in favour of legalisation, or at least decriminalisation. A range of countries in the European Union are liberalising their regimes in respect of drugs, so policy across the Community is inconsistent, and that leads to drug tourism.

I echo what my Scottish hon. Friends have said; I know that they face vicious problems in Scotland and that some awful people are involved, but if we took a cool look at decriminalisation or legalisation and set up a royal commission, there would at least be an end to the knee-jerk responses of which the Government, and some Opposition Members, are guilty. We could then move forward on the basis of knowledge, not prejudice.

12.4 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I want to focus on the problems of Temazepam, but I certainly endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has said. This is not a peculiarly Scottish problem; drug abuse is to be found in every major city.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on securing this debate, which shows his typical determination to represent his constituents. I want to concentrate on the problem as it affects Paisley and the west of Scotland. We have heard this morning from my hon. Friends about the problems associated with Temazepam—or jellies, as they are more commonly known on the street. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), who has been at the forefront of the battle against Temazepam, mentioned that it is used as a downer. A common problem in many of the cities and towns of the United Kingdom is that it is also sometimes mixed with other drugs such as heroin, or with alcohol to form a cocktail for some other effect.

We have also heard of the worrying trend among drug users—either because they cannot get the quantity of Temazepam that they require or because they no longer get a buzz from it—to give up swallowing the jelly

[Mr. Gordon McMaster]

capsules and instead to bust them open, heat them up, liquidise them and then inject them into the bloodstream. That is just like injecting a thrombosis—once the stuff gets into the bloodstream it has the effect of clotting the blood, and people have to have limbs amputated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North mentioned the problems experienced in Paisley, Glasgow and elsewhere with territorial battles between drug barons trying to carve out their share of the market. As she said, it is a lucrative market, since the drugs can be manufactured for as little as 3p with a street value of as much as £4—certainly never less than £1. The drug barons know exactly what they are doing. They know that they are trading in human misery and they know the anguish that they are causing to families.

Sometimes hon. Members speak out and tackle these problems head on. When my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North and I did so, she and her family were subjected to death threats and went through very difficult times. Although stands have to be taken, and it is all very well saying that we will not be intimidated and will fight on, it is very worrying when families become involved. Like my hon. Friend, I pay tribute to Strathclyde police, who have been at the forefront of the battle against drugs and have done a first-class job. They were very supportive of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North and me in difficult circumstances.

The problem of Temazepam is not new. It was raised some years ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). Likewise, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North and I took it up with the Scottish Office some years ago. Although the Secretary of State's action this summer was welcome, it was recommended as long ago as 1993 by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, a Government-appointed body. Taking so long to act does the Government no credit; but it would be churlish not to welcome this summer's initiative, which many of us had campaigned for. It is helpful in that it has become a custodial offence to be found in possession of Temazepam without a prescription, and it introduces import and export controls.

It may seem a trifling point, but as my hon. Friends the Members for Rutherglen and for Paisley, North have said, this should not be a matter of party politics: we must all stand together on it. It was therefore disappointing, when the Secretary of State for Scotland came to Paisley to make his announcement, that he did not have the courtesy to inform the local Members of Parliament who had campaigned for these changes. We would certainly have supported his initiative. There was no need to behave in that fashion. It would have been appropriate to involve the newspapers that have campaigned so hard alongside Members of Parliament to have these changes made, particularly the Glasgow *Evening Times*, the *Daily Record* and, in my area, the *Paisley Daily Express* and the *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, all of which have made a contribution.

As my hon. Friends have said, the ban on prescribing Temazepam is a very small step forward and is little more than gesture politics, because the basic arithmetic of the situation shows that the amount of Temazepam on our streets cannot possibly come from doctors prescribing it in surgeries. When a doctor prescribes it to a legitimate user, it will be on the basis of one capsule, or jelly, per day. A month's supply is 30 capsules. That is what an abuser uses in one day. No one will convince us that there are 30 old-age pensioners for every drug abuser in Scotland being prescribed Temazepam legitimately. The arithmetic does not add up. When we tabled questions on this subject, we found out that, curiously, Britain exports more Temazepam than it manufactures, because phantom pharmacists, the people who set themselves up as wholesalers of Temazepam, are buying it for export and circulating it on our streets.

I shall make a few points about what more can be done, because we do not want to level criticism at the Government. Like my hon. Friends who have spoken, I favour the total ban of Temazepam, on the grounds that there are alternatives. A total ban would be clear-cut and final. One of the advantages of that would be that one should not be carrying Temazepam. Failing that, let us at least have a total ban on the jelly formulation immediately.

I would like to see the tablets go, too. I believe that if Temazepam must be prescribed—I am not convinced that it needs to be—prescribe it as a solution. The equivalent of one measure of Temazepam could be put into a quarter pint of solution. It would be no hardship for anyone using it legitimately, before they go to bed at night, to drink a quarter pint of liquid, but the drug abuser is not going to drink 10 pints of the stuff to get his buzz. The advantage of prescribing it in a solution would be to make it very difficult to distribute. The drug dealers would have to go around in milk floats. We would know who they were.

I have written to the Secretary of State for Scotland and, indeed, the President of the Board of Trade, about a limit on the amount of Temazepam that is manufactured, and my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North referred to this. Why does Britain manufacture so much more Temazepam than we need? Why do we not immediately put some limit on it? If the Government insist that there has to be a supply of Temazepam, limit it to what is required legitimately.

Another area that has not been addressed is the gun laws. The amount of crime that is associated with Temazepam has shown that it is far too easy to get hold of firearms. That has to be looked at, too.

As we have discovered in Paisley, another area that needs to be addressed is adequate witness protection, because if one is going to ask people to come forward, one must remember that the people against whom they will have to give evidence are evil. They are evil drug barons making mega profits and will take action against witnesses unless they are properly protected. We know of cases that have been dropped because witnesses have pulled out at the last minute.

We must also address confiscation. If someone is convicted of dealing in drugs, the courts must act and must have the power to ensure that those people cannot come out of gaol to their ill-gotten gains.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. May I also point out that there are others who need protection, in addition to witnesses? I am referring to those people who have the courage to come forward to the police, to inform them of the activities of drug

pushers. Sandra and James Coyle in Port Glasgow have been threatened with death because they had the courage, the guts, to come forward in such a way.

Mr. McMaster: I endorse what my hon. Friend has said. Indeed, before I came out this morning, I saw a news bulletin on ITN about a case in London, in which someone had to give up his home and is now living in bed and breakfast accommodation because he gave evidence against someone—not a drug baron—who was prepared to threaten him with murder, and that is in an area where there is a witness protection scheme, so what hope is there in places like Strathclyde, where there is no such scheme?

We must look at the positive side, because Paisley, in particular, but also Glasgow and other areas, have had a lot of bad publicity because of this problem. I am fed up with people approaching me, often in the Lobbies, and telling me what a terrible place Paisley must be. It is still a good town and it still has an awful lot going for it. We must have the support not only to deal with the problems but to get back a positive image, and the best way in which the Government can help to do that is to give our young people hope, so they do not feel the hopelessness that encourages them to get into drugs.

We need action soon, because the longer we take, the more we talk about it in the Chamber and in the newspapers, the more warning the drug barons and the drug industry will have that they need to find alternatives. If we are to stop Temazepam and ensure that there is not an alternative ready to take its place, we need action now.

12.16 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House and, in particular, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) for not being here at the beginning of the debate. I have come hot foot from the Ukraine and I just could not get back earlier than I did.

I welcome this debate on drugs. We have too few debates in the House on this horrible problem. I do not apologise for intervening in what hitherto has been—from the tenor of conversations that I have heard—largely a Scottish debate, because this is not a problem confined to Scotland; it is a United Kingdom problem, and, indeed, as I found in Kiev, it is also a pan-European problem.

There are special problems in Scotland and there are horrible problems in Edinburgh, which in particular has built up a reputation for having a problem with drugs. I was glad therefore that there was a special Government White Paper on drugs in Scotland, issued broadly at the same time as the Government White Paper on tackling drugs together in the United Kingdom. At the end of the day, I am absolutely convinced that we will not solve the problems of drugs until we have vastly more health education in schools and better education of all of the people who come into contact with young people, not only teachers but parents as well. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) was correct to mention the positive part that the media can play in this.

I shall make three comments. First, on Temazepam, I share the concerns of Opposition members. I believe that there is a very strong argument for banning it, if not completely at least in its jellied form, which makes it the easiest form of drugs to take, particularly when mixed with other drugs. I ask my hon. Friend on the Front Bench for his support on pushing that forward in Scotland and persuading English Ministers to take the same step.

Secondly, Scottish prisons. I am concerned about the introduction of compulsory drugs testing in Scottish prisons unless it is supported by necessary treatment and counselling. This should also be made available to prisoners once they are released. So often, one can encourage young prisoners to come off drugs while in prison serving their sentence, yet as soon as they return to the outside world, they are lured back into the drugs culture, because there just is not the same form and type of advice available to them outside. I have written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland about the matter, especially with regard to Scotland. I have not had a response as yet; I am not criticising my right hon. Friend because I wrote very recently. I believe, however, that this is a terribly important point.

I must react to the speech by my personal friend, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who could not resist the temptation to raise the question of legalisation in this drugs debate, as he has done in every previous drugs debate. It is just not correct to say that legalisation is being adopted in other states in Europe. In some countries, there is a lack of inclination or ability to apply the law, but the law has not been changed and the official attitude towards the law has not been changed.

It is a superficially attractive argument that one can reduce the criminality associated with drugs. I fear, however, that although legalisation might reduce criminality in the short term, it would increase health problems and health costs in the short and the long term, and it is not a route that I believe we should take. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West knows, the Council of Europe is at this moment studying the matter. I hope that the Council will conclude, in conjunction with pressures from those, like myself, who take this view, that we should not consider legalisation in this country or in Europe generally.

12.20 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I will try to keep my comments as short as possible because this is a debate of such importance and we really need far more time than we have at our disposal today. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) has done us a service in securing this debate and I hope that he will go on to secure further debates because the problem will not evaporate overnight and will be with us for a long time to come.

I congratulate the heroic stand that was taken by the Paisley Members, and I especially congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) who underwent a traumatic experience when those who were making such high profits attempted to bully her. That was understandable but unforgivable. The way in which my hon. Friend stood up to that was a credit to us all.

I admire the courage of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). It takes courage to stand up in today's climate and to say that we ought to look at a problem to which the solution is not simply to weigh in with more police raids, impose stiffer sentences and clap more people in gaol. That does not cure the drugs problem.

[Mr. William McKelvey]

The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs carried out an investigation into drugs and we visited America. Our eyes were really opened to the possible extent of the problem in this country. According to *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Glasgow is known as the junkie capital of Europe. The Americans know about the difficulties we have in Glasgow, in Strathclyde and throughout Scotland.

I must tell the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) that Edinburgh does not have a very bad reputation for drugs—quite the reverse. The needle exchanges were started in Edinburgh, despite opposition from the Scottish Office. It has been shown clearly that an AIDS epidemic has been prevented. The people of Edinburgh and the Lothians are to be congratulated on being the initial group on this side in the fight against drugs.

When we were in America, we were able to get figures from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, the Americans at least keep the figures and we were allowed to see them. In 1992, the FBI figures showed that 535,000 people were arrested for the possession, sale or manufacture of marijuana. In six cases, life sentences were imposed; I am talking about the States where life means life. That seems outrageous when one considers that there is no real evidence that marijuana is any more dangerous a substance than tobacco or alcohol.

Among those who enjoyed the whisky tasting last night in the House, there were no signs of great concern about how much whisky was being tasted and whether it would do any harm. Moderation was shown, as always, and an enjoyable evening was had. One can imagine that there would be a revolution in Scotland if we attempted to ban alcohol.

The States gives the prime example of what happens when alcohol is banned. Billions of dollars were made in a short period and the money that was stashed away is the money that backs the drug barons of today. Fortunes were made illegally during Prohibition and the money was then used to finance prostitution in Cuba and drugs throughout the world.

The figures are available in America and I will give some of them because they provide an insight into what happens if all that one does in the drugs war is to argue the case for getting the people involved off the streets and into prison. I understand why the police are, quite rightly, moving in Paisley. They had to attempt to remove the threat in an area that had begun to be run by the drug barons. They were determining who could live in peace and who could not and, in many cases, who would live and who would not. There was a spate of shootings and the position was unacceptable and intolerable.

For those who argue that the way to stop drugs is to spend more time on interdiction—prohibition—and more severe punishment, it is worth while looking at the results in the United States. There are 440,000 prisoners in local gaols and 87,000 in federal prisons. We can add to that 2.7 million people who are on probation and more than half a million on parole. The figures represent the highest proportion of the American population incarcerated in the country's entire history as well as the highest proportion incarcerated in any country in the world. There are many people in gaols in America, which are bursting at the seams. The Americans are building more gaols, yet at the same time, the FBI admits that there is more heroin on the streets of New York now than there was a decade ago. The approach has totally failed.

Even the hard men of the drugs enforcement agency, who apply the law, said to us that much of the money spent on law enforcement last year—$24 million—was wasted and would have been better spent on education of the younger generation to save that generation. I doubt that we can save the present generation and solve their drug problems. At least, however, we must start pouring money into an education system that is understood by everyone to stop the next generation. History has shown that people look for intoxicants and that we cannot simply keep on banning them or clapping people in gaol for using them. We must educate people about the use of drugs. If people then want to pursue that path, that is up to them, but we must try to educate people out of such a path.

I agree with those who say that we should have the courage to have a royal commission. We should say that whatever the findings of that commission—I have a pretty good idea, if a logical group were to look at the case logically, what would emerge—we should take progressive steps. We should take progressive steps irrespective of how much unpopularity is shown towards us as politicians, especially when an election is pending.

12.27 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Like my hon. Friends, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on initiating this much-needed debate on the misuse of drugs. As he said, many hon. Members have campaigned on the problem over a number of years. I recall that in 1981 or 1982, I accused the then Scottish Office Health Minister, Russell Fairgrieve, and the Government of being far too complacent in their attitude to the growing problem of drug misuse in Scotland.

Along with others, in 1988, I campaigned to have Buprenorphine and Temgesic brought within the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to make the supply of or the unauthorised possession of such drugs a criminal offence. The then Home Office Minister, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), seemed to agree with me in a letter he sent to me in September 1988. Sad to say, however, the measure has just not worked in the way that we hoped it might. We have now reached the stage at which there is no alternative. We must ban the manufacture of these drugs now. As my hon. Friends have said, they are not necessary. They serve no useful purpose and there are more beneficial alternatives.

As well as banning those drugs we must impose the severest penalties on anyone who attempts to manufacture them after they are banned. Nothing less will suffice. Either we are serious about the problem or we are not, and if we are not we might as well give up. If we are serious let us take much more positive action than has been taken so far.

In connection with another aspect of the drug issue, I congratulate Councillor Bill Perry, convenor of Strathclyde regional council, on his excellent "Cut the Grass" campaign, which is an attempt to reduce the sale of drugs paraphernalia. It is an affront for shopkeepers and other traders openly to promote the sale of items used to encourage drug use in our communities.

I have here a reply to me from the Minister dated only five days ago. Although it is encouraging and may be a step in the right direction, it is neither clear nor positive enough, and to some extent it passes the buck to chief constables and procurators fiscal.

I suggest to the Minister that there are similarities with the situation involving solvent abuse, which was at its height in the early 1980s—although, sad to say, it is still a problem. At that time many hundreds of shopkeepers, especially small shopkeepers, were making substantial profits by selling glue to children. That problem was tackled with any degree of success only when two or three shopkeepers were successfully prosecuted and put in prison. The rest quickly got the message and either stopped selling glue altogether or made suitable arrangements to sell it in a responsible manner, only to adults who had a legitimate use for it.

If that is what it takes, I suggest that people who persist in selling paraphernalia for using, or rather abusing, drugs should be prosecuted and gaoled. It seems the only way to make them desist from those obnoxious methods. I do not believe that any trader needs to sell such items to earn a living. If that is the only way in which someone is willing to operate he should not be in business, he should be behind bars.

Like those who have spoken before me, I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Rutherglen, for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), all of whom have long-standing commitments, which have sometimes meant personal risk to themselves, to attempt to do something to tackle what is arguably the most serious problem in our communities today.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun about the need for education. In Scotland there is a great need for rehabilitation for the victims of drug abuse. My comments have been largely directed at the need to tackle those who supply or manufacture drugs, or who encourage that evil trade, not at its victims, who have my greatest sympathy. We could do a lot more in the social sense to help those people, but I have no sympathy for those who encourage, promote and profit from dealing in drugs or drug-related materials. They deserve all that is coming to them.

Either the Government are hard on crime or they are soft on it. Today they have shown neither the will nor the capacity to tackle the problem as it should be tackled. We must do our utmost to eliminate the problem of drugs as far as possible from our streets and cities throughout Scotland and the United Kingdom.

12.33 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friends on their campaigning on the drugs issue over the years, especially the summer campaign that they have undertaken. I feel that the Government's ban on Temazepam is not unrelated to the political pressure that has been exerted on the subject for months and even years. Many people in Scotland share that view.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, we are focusing on the problem in Scotland today, simply because we feel that it is especially pressing there. A study undertaken in Glasgow by the World Health Organisation in 1993 showed that there were 8,800 drug injectors there, 70 per cent. of whom were males under 25 who had been injecting for seven years. The vast majority of the injectors were unemployed, and 90 per cent. had had nothing more than temporary jobs. Most lived in deprived areas.

There is no doubt about the remarkably strong relationship between drug misuse and neighbourhoods characterised by high unemployment, low income, overcrowding and other problems. Yet there is no Government policy on how to tackle deprivation, and apparently no interest in developing one.

Operation Eagle has been mentioned. My hon. Friends and I laud and congratulate Chief Constable Leslie Sharp and others on that initiative. But we must remember that it is a 90-day campaign run by Strathclyde police. There is no money from the Scottish Office, and because there are not the resources to take it further it will terminate at the end of the 90 days.

One positive measure that the Government could announce this morning would be to pledge assistance to Strathclyde police and other police forces in Scotland with the courage and vision to undertake such initiatives in their local communities. The Minister would certainly receive hearty congratulations from the Opposition if he gave a positive commitment this morning.

The Government's approach to drugs to date has been disparate. They need a total policy. Figures from the Library show that in 1992-93 they spent £42 million trying to tackle drug misuse, but we must ask what impact that money had. The problem is ever increasing and becoming more widespread, so the Government's action can have had little impact. It is incumbent on them to rethink their policies.

A ministerial task force bulletin considered the issue of drugs, making many positive recommendations, but to date the Government have acted on few or none of them. For example, why are crisis intervention centres in Aberdeen and Dundee not established as soon as possible? Residential sites to deal with drug misuse are necessary, yet we have only 60 beds in Scotland for that purpose, while the problem increases day by day. That is inadequate. When will the Government assist local authorities to ensure that there are more residential beds?

We also need drug action teams in every area. The reform of local government provides a good opportunity for the Government to ensure that when the new authorities take over on 1 April, drug action teams are co-ordinated for every area to provide the community-based services required.

The Secretary of State has made many noises about law and order and drugs over the past few months, and he has mentioned mandatory drug testing. I have in my possession a letter from the Medical Research Council bearing out some of what the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) said, and 37 consultants have written to the Secretary of State expressing concern about the consequences of the announcement on 1 September that there will be mandatory drug testing in Scottish prisons.

The consultants are worried because that would compromise the future of the innovative, widely disseminated, successful public health initiatives pioneered to date in the Scottish Prison Service, and

[Mr. John McFall]

would divert scarce resources away from the expansion and evaluation of drugs education and rehabilitation initiatives that are so critical in preventing future outbreaks of blood-borne virus infections in prisons, the effect of which on recidivism should be thoroughly assessed.

The Secretary of State made a glib statement on 1 September. He has not consulted anyone and has failed to understand the problem. As a result, the problem could become worse.

The Minister should take the information from the Medical Research Council and those working in the Prison Service back to the Secretary of State. We have a common goal of ensuring that our prisons are drug free, but the Secretary of State's proposal may not the best way of achieving that.

We cannot forget that the Secretary of State for Scotland was a Home Office Minister when the Whitemoor and Parkhurst escapes took place. I wrote to the Library to ask how many prison escapes took place when the present Secretary of State for Scotland was a Minister at the Home Office. I received a faxed reply this morning, saying

"The Prison Service seems a little sensitive at the moment and I have been passed round several officials so far. The sixth of these has promised to get back to me but I cannot, I am afraid, guarantee when this will be."

Six officials at the Home Office were contacted, yet none has got back with the information.

The Learmont report was published on Monday, and paragraph 3.85 on page 93 states:

"As an example of the Director General's over-commitment to these matters, a full day's interview with the Inquiry was disturbed on a number of occasions because Ministers required his advice. At a lower level, one of the Operational Directors said that the size of the daily press cuttings on the Prison Service was an informal 'performance indicator' for the Service, not least because defensive briefings had to be provided for Ministers on every press story."

It is my information that Mr. Lewis was called away three times from the Learmont inquiry on the instructions of the present Secretary of State for Scotland. Can we trust the man who has the law and order and home affairs brief in Scotland when it appears that, for his own naked political purposes, he has been interfering with the work of the Director General of the Prison Service?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am having a little difficulty in relating this matter to the misuse of drugs.

Mr. McFall: I shall try to help you on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The present Secretary of State for Scotland was previously a Minister at the Home Office, and he says that law and order is his number one issue. My colleagues' message this morning is that drug misuse in Scotland is an issue for the entire community. I want the present Secretary of State to use the law and order and home affairs brief in Scotland not for his own narrow political purposes but for the entire community. My colleagues have echoed that point this morning.

Drug misuse must be tackled, but the Government do not have a policy on deprivation to assist in that process. I suggest to the Minister that if this issue is left unchallenged there will be widespread and unacceptable consequences. Young people will be corrupted and families alienated—that is happening now—but further fear and disruption will be brought to our communities. Our public health service will be undermined and services will be over-burdened.

If we do not tackle drug misuse coherently in our communities, the consequences will be regrettable to say the least. The Government must recognise that it is a social problem and that it must be addressed at national and local levels. Nothing less than personal, communal and cultural change is required, and we want the Government to play their part in this very important exercise.

12.43 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) is to be strongly congratulated on her courage, and it is outrageous that she should have received threats from any source. I endorse the support of the whole House for her principled and courageous stand in warning young people of the dangers of drugs, and she is supported by us all.

A lot of important points have been made in the debate, but I must say to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that we do not see the legalisation of cannabis as a way forward, as we believe that that would be a fundamentally flawed approach. Such legislation would lead to greater misuse and would harm individuals and society. We take this view because cannabis is not a harmless substance. It distorts perceptions and can affect driving, and legislation would send out the wrong signals. The Government have emphatically ruled it out, as did the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

Mr. McKelvey: I should point out to the Minister that the Select Committee ruled it out by one vote.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One vote is all that is required in the House of Commons—especially in the present climate—but I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. The majority on the Select Committee opposed it. The Government are emphatically against legalisation that would lead to the thin end of the wedge and get more youngsters hooked on drugs. We are opposed to that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) and the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) raised the subject of mandatory drug testing. The Secretary of State announced on 31 August that a programme of mandatory drug tests would be introduced in Scottish prisons under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. This is intended to complement the constructive work being done in drug treatment reduction programmes and drug prevention and education work in prisons. Edinburgh and Corton Vale prisons will be the pilot prisons, and the first phase of testing will begin early in 1996. I am glad to confirm that both prisons have in place strong drug treatment and support programmes. Following the pilot phase, random drug testing will be phased in across the prison estate.

The hon. Members for Paisley, North and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) were right to compliment the police on Operation Eagle, and I shall return to the issue of resources. One important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes was that the media have a part to play. At Edinburgh castle the other evening, editors

from various Scottish newspapers were addressed by the Secretary of State. He said that whether or not editors disagreed with Government policy, there was one way in which they could be of substantial assistance—by warning young people of the dangers of taking drugs. My right hon. Friend went out of his way to congratulate the Glasgow *Evening Times* which, he said, had not always been known for its support for the Government. That is very important, and the media have an invaluable role to play in that connection.

Drug misuse is one of the greatest challenges that we face in Scotland today. It blights young lives, worries parents, takes the lives of young people who should be in their prime and leads to drug-related violence and other crime in our cities and towns. It provides the basis for huge profits made by unscrupulous drug dealers whose sole aim is to profit from the misery and despair of others.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) was right to focus on Strathclyde and he reflected the concerns of other hon. Members. I should like to mention briefly some of the actions that the Government are taking. New guidelines have been drawn up on good practice on substitute prescribing. The community drug problem service approach holds out the best prospect of reducing drug deaths by drawing misusers into treatment services. The drug crisis centre in Glasgow, which I visited recently, has performed a valuable and effective role since it was set up, and I wholeheartedly welcome that.

The hon. Member for Paisley, North rightly raised the question of tightening import and export controls. Rescheduling Temazepam tightens security requirements at pharmacies, and also tightens import and export controls by requiring licences. It is now unlawful to possess Temazepam without prescription. We believe that the police can more effectively tackle dealers, and the ban on gel-filled capsules announced yesterday will also help.

Guidelines on good practice at raves and other dance events are nearing completion and will be issued shortly, and two new packages have been issued recently to schools on drug education. Drug prevention education is now incorporated in the health education curriculum. It is vital to get the message across to youngsters at the earliest age.

I must deal with Temazepam and some of the points made in the debate.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister mentioned the need to educate school children. What new proposals has he for giving support and assistance to the families of young drug abusers and misusers? Those families undergo considerable distress because of their youngsters' habits and badly need support.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman asks what role the social work department can perform. He is married to a social worker, whom I have met on numerous occasions. Resources of £40 million are being made available throughout the range of programmes. We want a strongly co-ordinated approach, which will deal with the matter. If the hon. Gentleman has any constructive suggestions on the subject, I will be glad to receive them.

May I take an extreme example of drug-related deaths, and I have met parents who have been through these extremely unfortunate circumstances? The procurators fiscal in Glasgow have introduced a procedure of discussing the circumstances surrounding such deaths with close relatives. Common-sense advice is issued directly to injecting drug misusers on how to avoid dangerous situations and practices associated with injecting drug misuse. We believe that the new and improved system of recording drug deaths introduced in June will help but, of course, we are aiming for prevention.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen asked why 1 January had been chosen. I can explain that simply. There is a need for existing prescriptions to be dispensed. The 1 January date also gives general practitioners time to review and to prescribe alternative forms of Temazepam or other drugs.

Let me make clear to the House the extent of the problem with legal prescriptions. The information is available only for England and we must make it available for Scotland as well. Temazepam prescriptions in England decreased from 6.9 million in 1992 to 6.3 million in 1994 and continued to decrease in the first two quarters of 1995. The voluntary bans in Scotland have significantly reduced the level of prescribing and medical prescribing committees on health boards are carrying out a further review. The results will be made public in due course. That gives us an idea of the scale of the problem.

The hon. Members for Paisley, North and for Paisley, South mentioned drugs finding their way on to the streets of Scotland. Import and export licensing, in rescheduling measures, will tighten security and reduce leakage into the criminal fraternity, as will tighter new security measures. I am happy to have a dialogue with the hon. Members. It is my aim as well as theirs to ensure that Paisley, which has a fine history and which I have often visited, can be looked on with confidence for the future for inward investment and other possibilities that may arise.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South asked about illegal supplies. I said that we must deal with bogus exporters, who divert the drug to illicit home markets. The new licensing procedure will deal with that. The hon. Member has written to the President of the Board of Trade about the new controls and I have no doubt that he will receive a comprehensive reply.

I was asked about a total ban on Temazepam. As I said, it is widely prescribed legitimately and has been licensed for many years. There is not the same serious danger with merely taking the tablets as with injecting the drug. I am glad that, since the first note was drafted, the correct information has come in and I can inform hon. Members that in Scotland there are 880,000 prescriptions for Temazepam in all its forms. We believe that banning the drug in gel form will assist.

I was asked about drugs equipment paraphernalia. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) introduced an extremely important Bill on glue sniffing—a related subject. I agree that we must consider that matter closely. Legislation is available to enable us to prosecute traders, but it is sometimes difficult to do so as the articles concerned can ostensibly be valid and legal for other purposes. For example, pipes can be used as an ornament or for smoking non-prohibited substances.

Strathclyde police are being consulted to find out whether they believe that any aspects of existing law should be strengthened. It is for each drug action team to consider whether any further action could be taken to influence traders.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I mentioned resources of £40 million and, of that sum, £10 million was for drug-related activities alone and a further £8 million was for Strathclyde.

Strong sanctions are available against those who misuse drugs. The Criminal Justice Act 1987 empowers the courts to confiscate the funds or property of those convicted of dealing in drugs. The rescheduling of Temazepam will make possession an offence, with a penalty that includes a maximum of two years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both. The penalty for supplying is a maximum of five years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

We have to go flat out against the drug dealers, but at the same time must have a strong educational, health and social work programme in place to deal with the youngsters who are most unfortunately affected and afflicted by this scourge.

The report of the drug task force provided an excellent framework for positive action to tackle drug misuse in Scotland and priority is being given to implementing its recommendations as quickly as possible. Drug action teams have been established and will have a major role in combating drug misuse at local level. The task force drew on many expert talents from the fields of health, education, police, social work, the voluntary sector and other areas, in producing its report last October.

More than 60 recommendations were made and the report was widely recognised as providing a thorough and informed picture of drug misuse in Scotland. We are well ahead in implementing the valuable recommendations, many of which have had a bearing on the points mentioned this morning.

Mr. McAvoy: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way: as ever, he is generous in these matters. He mentioned the drug task force report. How much are the Government allocating in extra resources to those initiatives?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Resources this year amount to about £40 million. When the annual expenditure round takes place, we shall give top priority to issues affecting law and order, which this one undoubtedly does. We will be looking particularly closely at that problem. As the hon. Member will appreciate, the Secretary of State will make a full statement on the public expenditure survey to Parliament before Christmas.

I was asked whether there should be a royal commission. The difficulty is that such commissions take a very long time and the task force has already dealt comprehensively with the issues. Its recommendations are being implemented fully and quickly.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton asked what we were doing in areas of deprivation. Some £86 million is being made available in urban aid alone to such areas, which are being assisted in a variety of different ways. Drug taking is not restricted to areas of deprivation, although it can and does occur there. We have to take the necessary action.

The task force report recognised that there was no simple answer and that the issue had to be tackled on a number of fronts. The report emphasised the absolute importance of fully co-ordinated action against drug misuse.

The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) will confirm that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs came to exactly the same conclusion and we intend to act strongly upon it.

Mr. McKelvey: I am proud of it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman says that he is proud. The two studies were simultaneous but they came to the same conclusion and that is why we are right to do everything in our power to implement that conclusion.

This year we made the record sum of nearly £24 million available to health boards to tackle drug misuse and HIV-AIDS. Initial allocations total some £22.5 million, of which almost £10 million is committed to drug-related activities. Our whole aim is to concentrate on prevention and we see education as playing an absolutely key role in that connection, supported, for those unfortunate people who have become addicted, with effective services. We need to target the services and respond to the individual needs of each user.

I recently had the privilege to see the Glasgow drug problem service and I believe that it offers a good and effective combination—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must move to the next debate.

Ramsgate Harbour Access Road

1 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to initiate this Adjournment debate on a subject which is of enormous importance to my constituents, the economy of east Kent, and the transport system of Britain and Europe—the Ramsgate harbour access road. Ramsgate has an agreeable historical reputation of being a cheerful, regency seaside town whose picturesque royal harbour has long been a focal point for mariners, yachtsmen, holidaymakers, fishermen, artists, hoteliers and seaside landladies.

Those benign images are still valid to some extent, but over the past 15 years, the outer harbour of Ramsgate has been transformed by the creation of a major shipping port. Today, port Ramsgate is the third busiest port in Britain after Dover and London and the nation's second largest sea gateway to Europe. Some 6,500 ship and jetfoil berthings take place in Ramsgate annually. Over the past decade, the number of passengers using port Ramsgate each year has increased by almost 200 per cent. to 3.5 million. The number of cars has increased by more than 250 per cent. to 473,000. The number of freight lorries has increased by nearly 240 per cent. to 261,000. The number of coaches has increased by nearly 100 per cent. to 21,000.

To put it more simply, on average over 9,000 passengers and more than 2,000 vehicles, of which over 700 are heavy goods vehicles, pass on average through port Ramsgate every day. In the peak month of August, passenger numbers reached 15,000 per day while motor vehicles averaged 3,200 per day.

This spectacular growth in traffic, which has not been seriously dented by competition from the channel tunnel, is a success story of great magnitude for the port, but it has created a nightmare of great magnitude for the road users and residents of our town. The environmental pressures have become horrendous in terms of noise, congestion and exhaust fumes. I will return later in my speech to the arguments in favour of an access road based on the need to give large numbers of Ramsgate residents a safer and better quality of life, but first I would like to say something about the transportation needs of the port users themselves.

A great seaport such as Ramsgate must give its customers—the exporters, the importers and the travellers who are its economic lifeblood—swift and speedy access to Britain's motorway network. I am pleased, in this context, to pay a genuine tribute to the Department of Transport for having recognised the strategic and economic importance of port Ramsgate and for providing finance for Kent county council to build new roads to accommodate the huge increases in traffic that I have described.

Ten years ago, when the port was just beginning its great surge of growth, the approach roads to Ramsgate from the end of the M2 motorway onwards were so woefully inadequate that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who is going to contribute to this debate, and I regularly used adjectives in the House such as "disgraceful " and "appalling" to describe them.

As a result of such representations from the Members of Parliament for Thanet, the Department of Transport supported a proposal from Kent county council for a road building programme to connect port Ramsgate to the M2 and that programme has been steadily implemented. The Department of Transport has also agreed the designation of this route as part of the trans-European road network.

The first part of the programme was the dualling of the A299 Thanet way from the end of the M2 to Monkton roundabout. This £140 million project has had several of its sections satisfactorily completed and the road is now fast and safe for 10.5 of its 18 miles and the remainder is currently being built.

The second part of the programme is the 4.5 mile stretch of the A253 from Monkton roundabout to the Lord of the Manor roundabout on the outskirts of Ramsgate. This £18 million dualling project is now under construction and will be opened next year. So it can be said that two parts of the three-part programme for proper access roads to port Ramsgate are well under way, mostly either built or under construction and with funding support from the Department of Transport.

However, just as it would make no sense to build a tripod with only two legs, so it would be absurd to build only two of the three vital road links necessary to provide safe and swift access to the port. That is why I am concentrating in this debate on the missing link, the 1.5 mile final stretch of road from the Lord of the Manor roundabout down to the port itself. That is what is known as the Ramsgate harbour access road.

The Ramsgate harbour access road is now at a crucial stage of its progress. Unlike many road building projects, it enjoys a remarkable degree of support from the overwhelming majority of the people of Ramsgate. It is strongly supported by all political parties on Thanet district council. All the leading environmental lobbies accept that it is necessary. After long consultations and much popular pressure led by an energetic organisation known as the Ramsgate action road committee, chaired with great vigour by Mr. Peter Landi, over 3,300 local people wrote in support of the planning application and, earlier, over 12,000 people had signed a petition in favour of the project. Against that background of unusually strong populist and environmentalist backing, all the planning permissions for the road have now been obtained.

The Ramsgate harbour access road has reached a crucial stage. The county council now needs to secure finance for the road and has submitted its transport policy and programme, or TPP, bid to the Department of Transport with the Ramsgate harbour access road as its No. 1 priority for new funding starting in 1996-97.

There is one final administrative hurdle to be cleared which is that there is likely to be a short public inquiry, not into the planning matters—which have been resolved—but into the compulsory purchase orders for the scheme in January. This inquiry is to be held under the auspices of the Department of Transport and I would be grateful for my hon. Friend the Minister's confirmation of the likely date and the anticipated length of the inquiry. I should also be grateful for his help in making sure that the inspector's recommendations, whatever they may be, are delivered as soon as possible.

I especially wish to say how profoundly I sympathise with the residents of 10 homes in Pegwell village, on the outskirts of Ramsgate, whose houses are likely to be the subject of compulsory purchase orders and to express the hope that they will be fairly treated and receive generous compensation.

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

However, assuming that the public inquiry results in decisions that allow the access road to go ahead, the vital question will then be one of funding. No one knows better than a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury that the pressures on all departmental budgets at this stage of the public spending round are intense, particularly so in what in the PES jargon is known as year 1 of the survey cycle, that is to say 1996-97. However, there are three compelling reasons why my hon. Friend's Department should find space in its annual budget of some £3 billion for the Ramsgate harbour access road, which has an estimated total cost of about £23 million spread over three years.

The first reason is that the European Union has confirmed that money will be available for the road from its European regional development fund under the objective 2 programme. This funding, which is expected to be some £3 million, is in recognition of port Ramsgate's importance as part of the trans-European network and the need to sustain and increase employment in the Thanet area. For the road to receive that money, construction must start before the end of 1996 so that it meets the timescale of the current objective 2 programme. Not to accept the offer would be the financial equivalent of looking a gift horse in the mouth and saying no.

Secondly, for those who operate in the arcane world of profiling departmental annual budgets, I should point out that the year 1 cost to the Department of Transport's budget would be small. All that is needed is to make a symbolic start on the road in 1996 to qualify for the EU funding that I have just mentioned.

Thirdly, I reiterate the point about the financial absurdity of creating a tripartite road scheme and then not building the third and last leg. It makes no sense to have spent the best part of £160 million on the A299 and the A253 to provide better access roads to port Ramsgate, and then to leave the final stretch of the most vital access road of all unbuilt. "Spoiling the ship for a ha'penny worth of tar" is almost the right metaphor here, although I concede that there is a gap between the notional ha'penny and the actual £23 million.

I have concentrated on the issues of transportation and funding because those are national matters that deserve the urgent attention of Ministers and this House. Nevertheless, I conclude with a few words about the local environmental and economic issues because they are of such pivotal importance to my constituents.

Environmentally speaking, the residents who live on or near the juggernaut route to Ramsgate have, in recent years, been dwelling in a veritable Dante's inferno of noise, pollution, disruption and danger. I feel particularly for those who live in the 250 homes along the route, 107 of which are listed buildings. I also feel concern for the pupils in the two schools on the route. They and many others are crying out for the relief which they deserve and which they will get if the Ramsgate harbour access road gets the go-ahead.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister will reply to this debate because he was, with his characteristic courtesy and energy, good enough to come down to Ramsgate in August and to see for himself the problems and potential of the present situation. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North and I were immensely grateful to him for taking so much trouble on his ministerial visit. With his expertise, and by being such a good listener, he could see only too clearly that the present road to the port has been virtually unchanged for half a century, dating back to the time when cars were few, juggernauts were unknown and the big ship seaport was non-existent.

My hon. Friend the Minister was also well briefed on the economic difficulties of the Thanet area, where unemployment clings stubbornly at around 14 per cent.—the highest in south-east England and the third highest in England and Wales. The port, which already creates 300 direct jobs and probably at least four times that figure in indirect jobs among port-linked enterprises such as hotels, transport companies and exporting or importing businesses, desperately needs the boost that the access road will provide. One influential organisation that recognises those economic imperatives is the East Kent Initiative, which has made the Ramsgate harbour access road its first priority on the grounds of the economic regeneration benefits that it will bring both to Thanet and east Kent as a whole.

For all those reasons, the harbour access road is the most important and positively beneficial project for Ramsgate's future that our town has seen for many years. An early decision to give the green light to a Ramsgate harbour access road for the 21st century will strengthen the port's economic success, increase employment, inspire confidence and alleviate the physical and human problems that so adversely affect the lives of many Ramsgate residents today. I therefore hope that my honourable Friend the Minister and his Secretary of State will do their utmost to give the Ramsgate harbour access road the go-ahead and the funding to go with it as soon as possible. This is a road project which the Government should want to back and should back, because it assists employment, strengthens a major communications link with Europe, takes exemplary care to protect the environment along its route, and has remarkably strong popular support among the people of Ramsgate. I commend it to the Government and to the House.

1.13 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) on securing a debate on a subject of such vital local importance. I thank him and the Minister for allowing me briefly to participate.

The Ramsgate harbour approach road is central to the development of the economy of Thanet and will have a direct effect on the standard and quality of life, not only of my right hon. Friend's constituents but of my constituents in North Thanet. I share entirely my right hon. Friend's view of the awfulness of the present road to the highly successful and developing port of Ramsgate and its marinas. Anyone who has witnessed the battle of titans, as juggernaut lorries compete for the right of way on the hairpin bend, can only marvel that traffic is able to reach or leave the harbour at all. The environmental cost in damage to fine old buildings is, as my right hon. Friend said, horrific.

It may not be fashionable or politically correct to support new roads at present, but this is one scheme that will make a significant contribution to improving the environment. It has the support of all parties on the local authority and the county council, and of both Members of

Parliament who represent the area. I endorse wholeheartedly the case that my right hon. Friend has so ably made.

On 17 December 1986, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), then Minister for Public Transport, following a visit to Thanet, wrote to say that in response to our representations, the Thanet way—the main arterial road to the area—was to be dualled. Shortly afterwards, Christopher Chope, who then had ministerial responsibility, also visited Thanet and announced that the next section of the road—from the A299 to the Lord of the Manor—would be included in the dualling programme. My hon. Friend the Minister, who kindly visited Thanet in the summer, now has an opportunity to add what my right hon. Friend so graphically described as the "third leg of the tripod" and to complete that task.

In recognition of our need to be able to compete with our continental neighbours on equal terms, we have won for Thanet development status and European objective 2 status. The new Ramsgate harbour approach road is one of the keys that will help us to realise the advantages that those sources of European and Government support can bring. It will send a clear and unequivocal message to potential investors that we have faith in our development plans for the area.

So I, too, urge my hon. Friend the Minister and his Secretary of State to do their utmost to give the Ramsgate harbour approach road the go-ahead and the funding to go with it in the immediate future.

1.16 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) on securing this debate on a subject to which he attaches considerable importance. With his usual assiduity, he has badgered me and my predecessors often and long on the issue of the Ramsgate harbour access road, as has his parliamentary neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who was kind enough to join me on part of my visit to Thanet in August. It was an enjoyable day and I am grateful to them both for making me feel so welcome. It was extremely useful to me because, while we hear a lot about the economic difficulties of that area, it is also important not to lose sight of its potential. On that hot and sunny August day the Ramsgate seafront was extremely attractive. I was left with the strong impression that, if the regeneration initiatives being pursued in Thanet can take root, Ramsgate's future can be bright. I want to assist in that as far as possible.

I said in August what I have to say now. Both my hon. Friends are experienced parliamentarians and will appreciate that I cannot now answer the burning question of whether the Department will accept a scheme for funding in this year's local transport settlement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to announce details of that settlement in the usual way in December this year. My right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South admitted that he had been Chief Secretary to the Treasury. While one might claim a reputation in other great offices of state before any Minister, especially one in a spending Department, it is appropriate to admit that one has been Chief Secretary to the Treasury—in the case of my right hon. Friend, an extraordinarily distinguished one. At this stage I cannot answer my hon. Friends' questions directly.

I stress that I have listened with interest to what they have said today and, on that basis, I fully understand why there has been strong local support for the new access road. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North said, Thanet plays an important role in the economy of north-east Kent. I am advised that it is responsible for 4.5 per cent. of local employment and it generates £15 million a year for the local economy. The difficulties of access are obvious. They pose problems for the future of the port's business because the current access arrangements are restrictive. Unless we find a way to improve access problems will also be caused for the local environment.

Before I talk in detail about the new approach road I should mention the action that we are already taking to help the local partnerships to regenerate the Thanet economy.

My right hon. Friend was right to point out that Thanet suffers from the highest unemployment rate—14 per cent.—of any travel-to-work area in the south-east. Sadly, my right hon. Friend knows better than I that that has remained the case for a number of years. The way to tackle that unemployment rate is to create more jobs in the area. We are continuing to work with the district and county councils, Kent training and enterprise council, the East Kent Initiative and other local partners to achieve that.

In July 1993, the Government approved development area status for Thanet. That means that grants are available to companies that initiate projects to create or safeguard jobs. In December 1994 agreement was reached with the European Commission on the objective 2 programme for use of European structural funds in Thanet. That agreement is part of a comprehensive programme that aims to develop the area as a prosperous part of the United Kingdom and Europe with a diverse economic base that provides access to employment for all sections of the community.

That programme's priorities are, first, to support industry, encourage inward investment, help local companies to expand, provide suitable sites, support small businesses with advice and training, and encourage the transfer of new technology to Thanet companies. Secondly, the programme is designed to strengthen the international links between Thanet and the rest of Europe, and develop the local tourist industry. Thirdly, it aims to ensure that the right training and guidance is available to provide skilled staff to meet employer needs.

The programme is being administered through a monitoring committee of local partners led by the Government office for the south-east. The committee has already approved grants under the programme totalling £1.5 million. The projects being supported include ones devoted to training, improving tourist attractions and supporting small start-up businesses. I understand that the monitoring committee will meet again next week to review progress over the first year of the programme and the priorities for next year.

To help meet the programme's objective of ensuring suitable sites for business development we have already accepted, as my right hon. and hon. Friend have pointed out, improved dual carriageway access to the Kent international business park. We have accepted that project as being eligible for grant under section 13 of the

[Mr. Steve Norris]

Industrial Development Act 1982. That grant will complement the proposed investment by the private sector and European funding.

The reasons why areas under-perform economically are complex. In the case of Thanet, however, there is little doubt that a significant factor is poor transport links, which have been a deterrent to investment over the years. We are now working hard to put an end to what has been, in practice, the relative isolation of Thanet in the recent past. As my right hon. Friend has said, we have therefore been the paymasters for Kent's programme of major investment on improvements to the Thanet way between the end of the M2 and the Ramsgate urban area.

The old A299 was a three-lane highway dating from the 1930s and clearly not suitable for modern levels of traffic. We have so far paid £100 million in transport supplementary grant and credit approvals towards the dualling programme. When it is complete Thanet will at last have a high quality connection to the motorway network. It is a necessarily expensive project as my right hon. and hon. Friend have suggested—the total cost is around £130 million. That makes Thanet way one of the biggest local authority road projects that we have supported in the past 10 years—a considerable demonstration of our commitment to Thanet.

As my right hon. Friend said, were the harbour approach road built it would provide a new route for vehicles travelling to port Ramsgate through the Ramsgate urban area. In that way it will provide the eastern section of a strategic route, which stretches from the M2 at Brenley corner to Ramsgate harbour. I recognise that the provision of a new access road to port Ramsgate is an important part of the objective 2 programme. A new road would enable the port to continue to grow and would underpin local economic development. It would also be vital to the improvement of the area.

I understand that the local partners will be discussing a formal application for funding from the European regional development fund under the objective 2 programme when the monitoring committee meets next week.

There is certainly a strong case in transport terms for a new road. Traffic flows to the port have increased significantly since 1983, when the port was expanded and the western ferry terminal became operational. Actual growth rates have outstripped our national road traffic forecast high growth projections over the past 10 years, and have increased the pressure on the existing road network.

The present route into the port is about 3.8 km long and, to say the least, is of varying standard. It has some tortuous sections that my right hon. Friend showed me and some significant gradients that have to be negotiated. I was driven along that road by my right hon. Friend and I must say that the final bend into the docks is particularly difficult. I am not surprised to learn that heavy vehicles in particular are constantly getting into trouble on that bend and disrupting traffic hugely and disproportionately. It was perfectly obvious to me that that would happen, and is probably happening as we speak.

I also know that the route goes through the town's conservation area and runs adjacent to a large number of listed buildings and structures that are of genuine historic importance. Many people suffer from the pollution effects of traffic, in terms of noise and emissions. Sadly, that problem is exacerbated by the fact that the traffic includes an unusually high proportion of heavy goods vehicles, as much as 20 per cent. of the daily flow, which is well above the average that one would normally expect on a major road.

In recent years minor improvements have been carried out on the route to try to improve road maintenance conditions. Pedestrian facilities and turning facilities for local road users have also been improved. While those have been successful in reducing some of the hazards, the basic conflict caused by substantial numbers of HGVs passing through residential areas still remains.

I know that a lot of thought has been given to the design of the new road. Planning permission for an earlier version was turned down because of the unacceptable impact on sensitive environmental sites on the foreshore at Ramsgate. The new scheme has sought to circumvent those difficulties by tunnelling under the Pegwell village conservation area to avoid encroachment on a Ramsar site and site of special scientific interest.

In the coming months the Department of Transport will be involved in the scheme in two ways. First, as my right hon. Friend said, a public inquiry will be held into the statutory orders that are necessary for construction to take place. My right hon. Friend said that that inquiry is planned to start in January, but my current information is that it will begin in February. Given the date that my right hon. Friend suggested, we are certainly on the right course. The Secretary of State will obviously await the report of the inspector and I do not need to remind my right hon. and hon. Friend that the inspector must take his own time. Within the Department we will certainly endeavour not to delay in terms of the decision reached by the Secretary of State about whether to confirm those draft orders.

There will be a bid for financial support. The road would be built by Kent and would require TSG support from the Department. It is the first priority in Kent's submission for new starts in 1996-97 and a bid for funding for the scheme has been included in this year's transport policies programme. Kent is hoping to secure the necessary statutory approvals in time for construction work to start in 1996-97.

The Department has been asked to provide £21.3 million in grant and credit approvals over three years. To put that sum in context, the scheme is more expensive than any of the new schemes that we supported for the first time in last year's settlement. One cannot deny that it is a large scheme. Those costs are to a large extent the result of the environmental constraints which have made tunnelling a necessary part of the project.

I return to where I began. My right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North will understand that I cannot say now whether funds will be allocated for the scheme in 1996-97. My right hon. Friend will understand that there are always insufficient funds to support the many worthwhile schemes that are proposed, so it will not be easy for us to find resources for the approach road this year.

However, I hope that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend are at least satisfied that we shall certainly take into account the relevant considerations that they have placed before the House today when we make decisions about this year's local transport settlement.

I noted my right hon. Friend's comment that the cost in the first year would be remarkably little. It strikes me, causing me some amusement, that that is precisely the argument that I frequently adduced in arguments with his former Department—and, I may say, on those occasions when he was a Minister there, to no avail. However, he can have confidence that I am an infinitely more sympathetic Minister in those matters than perhaps he was obliged to be in his former role.

Jamaica

1.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I am grateful that this subject was chosen for debate because it concerns a matter that I have pursued for a considerable time.

Although I say some harsh things, that does not arise out of any hostile feelings that I feel towards Jamaica—far from it. I have the highest regard for the people of Jamaica and for the island. When, in July, I had the privilege of leading the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation to Jamaica, I was met with nothing but hospitality and good will.

However, the subject that I shall discuss strikes at the heart of human rights. It deals with a matter that is a locus of this country because the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the final court of appeal for Jamaica. Indeed, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has taken action that has ameliorated a position which it is no exaggeration to describe as ghastly.

The present debate is not about the merits or otherwise of capital punishment. I totally and unalterably oppose capital punishment, but although, among other things, I speak about conditions on death row in Jamaica, I do not seek to argue in this place for the repeal of capital punishment legislation in Jamaica, although I would wish that to be repealed.

I was told by a correspondent that, although the most recent execution in Jamaica took place in February 1988, a hangman was advertised for and I am told that a hangman has been appointed. There can be no doubt that the possibility of execution creates feelings of great anxiety among the men on death row. Indeed, one of the reasons why the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council made its historic ruling that men should not be held on death row for more than five years was that it said that it was inhuman for men to be kept on death row for so many years—in the case of the two men with whom I have been in correspondence, more than 13 years before they were removed from it, following the Judicial Committee's ruling.

My direct interest in the subject arose from the fact that, some years ago, a man on death row called Lynden Champagnie began to write to me about his plight and that of nearly 300 people on death row. As a result, a further two men wrote to me. I have therefore received correspondence from, and have extremely fat files on, the three men: Lynden Champagnie, Recordo Welsh and Everton Bailey.

When I had the opportunity of visiting Jamaica with the CPA in July, I asked whether I might visit those three men and whether I might visit death row. I made it clear that the CPA was not involved in any way in those visits. Moreover, I arranged the visits after the end of the CPA delegation because I did not think it right that it might be thought that the CPA was being represented by what I did concerning those matters.

I wish to thank our high commissioner, Mr. Derek Milton, who has just left Kingston, for his aid and I congratulate him on the splendid service that he has done for this country in Jamaica over very many years. He was the doyen of the diplomatic corps until he left, earlier this month.

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

What I have to say is not about the merits or otherwise of capital punishment, and it is not about the protestations of innocence that some of the men with whom I am dealing have made.

We have enough experience in Britain of men convicted of murder who have turned out not to be guilty of murder, and Superintendent Knight, the director of security at the prisons, admitted to me that a wrongful hanging was

"a possibility here in Jamaica."

I shall not argue today about whether those men are guilty. I am speaking about human rights in a democracy, human rights in a parliamentary democracy, human rights in a democracy with an elected Government of a sister party of my own Labour party in the socialist international. If the conditions that I saw in Jamaica existed in a brutal dictatorship such as Iraq or an authoritarian country such as Turkey, I would be horrified, but I would not be surprised. I feel especially strongly about those conditions because they are so incongruous with a democracy ruled by a socialist party.

I therefore made it my business, when in Jamaica at the end of July, to visit three prisons. I visited St. Catherine's—where death row exists and where, as I understand it, the gallows is still present—Tower Street prison and South Camp prison. I visited death row and visited cells in the prisons. I spoke to the men whom I had especially wished to meet, but I also spoke to a great many other men.

I repeat that one of the men, Recordo Welsh, who was detained at the Governor-General's pleasure at the age of 17, has been in prison for more than 19 years. Everton Bailey, who turned 35 this month, has spent more than 13 years in death row and has been in prison for 16 years. Lynden Champagnie has just turned 37 and he was on death row for slightly less than 14 years.

Although those men have served those enormously long periods, Lynden Champagnie will have to serve another 10 years before he can even be considered for parole and Everton Bailey may have to serve another 20 years before he can be considered for parole.

I was accompanied, throughout my visits, by Superintendent Knight, who is the director of security at the prisons. Although he treated me with the utmost courtesy and consideration, his treatment of other people left a great deal to be desired. He humiliated Superintendent Aris, who is in charge of Tower Street prison, by yelling at him in my presence because he was dissatisfied with the way in which we had been received and the absence of an electric fan in his office. He shouted at several men on death row and he tried to browbeat one of the men whom I had come to visit, in my presence.

It seemed to me that, if Superintendent Knight was able to behave in such a manner in my presence, his behaviour when I was not there could not have been better and might have been worse. Indeed, although the conditions that I saw in death row were abominable, I am told by a lady called Rebekah Maxine Wilson, who has been involved with the Jamaican Bar Association and the Jamaica Council for Human Rights, that the conditions were actually improved in preparation for my visit.

I met and spoke to a man called Kevin Williams, who is on death row. He wrote to Rebekah Maxine Wilson to say that the men on death row were made to scrub down the block before I came and that the authorities ensured that certain men would not be seen or heard by me. Kevin Williams has said that he has since been threatened by the wardens, who have informed him that, whatever the outcome of his appeal to the Privy Council, he will not leave the prison alive. One of the reasons I am naming names is that I wish the plight of the individuals to be placed on record so that the authorities in Jamaica are aware that the men are neither neglected nor forgotten and that the House of Commons is concerned about those individuals.

Death row is one of the most abominable places that I have visited in my life. It is surrounded by cages which are newly built and clearly expensive. That money could have been spent on improving conditions on death row and in the prisons rather than hemming in the inmates still further. Death row is surrounded by two high metal fences that are both topped by rolls of concertina wire. Blue-uniformed warders wielding huge clubs guard the area. Conditions are dreadful by any standards.

The men have almost no sanitary facilities inside death row. Their sole sanitary facility is a rectangular well to which they are allowed out for short periods, into which they can empty their night soil pails and in which they can wash their food, laundry and themselves.

Death row is like a huge cage with cages within it. There is hardly any natural light and, when I was there, there was no artificial light. There is a central space on either side of which are cage-like bars, from which the men reached out to me in an effort to attract my attention. The circumstances were like something out of a nightmare.

Each man has one tiny narrow cell. Some of the men have managed to get hold of grubby strips of foam rubber on which they sleep. Other men simply sleep on bits of cardboard on the floors of their cells. The authorities admitted to me that the men are kept in those conditions for 22 out of 24 hours. Theoretically, they have a maximum period of two hours for exercise, but Kevin Williams said that he was not even given 10 minutes for exercise. A man called Milton Montique told me that he had no exercise period, had to wash in a bucket inside his cell and had no eating utensils so that he had to use his fingers to eat whatever food was provided.

Complaints were made to me of attacks by wardens. I was told by several people, both when I was there and in correspondence, about a group of wardens known as the acid squad who carry out attacks on the men. Among the men whom I saw complaints were rife about lack of access to doctors. A man called Gladstone Hall told me that, during his brief ventures into the sunlight, the contrast between the darkness in which he had to spend most of his life and the little bit of light that he was allowed, hurt his eyes. His request to see a doctor had been disregarded. Other prisoners made similar complaints to me about lack of access to doctors. One of them, Everton Morrison, told me that he was in "terrible pain" and had been refused access to a doctor. A man called Kwame Codrington told me that he had not been told what his rights were, if he had any, and that he was denied blankets although it was chilly at night.

The other prisons that I visited would have been dreadful by any standards had I not visited St. Catherine's first, but my experience in St. Catherine's made them seem not quite so bad. Recordo Welsh, who has been in prison since he was 17, lives in unhygienic conditions and

has an inadequate diet. He told me that his visitors were sometimes turned away. Although he is not on death row, he is confined to his cell from 4 pm until 8.30 am the next day. His cell contains a stool which is about the right size for a kindergarten infant, bits of foam rubber and a tattered floor blanket. Of course, his cell, like all the others, has no doors, but bars.

South Camp prison, where the other two men whom I have visited are now held, was described by Superintendent Knight as

"the most modern in the Caribbean."

If that is so, I am sorry for the Caribbean. The cells are roughly 2 yd by 3 yd. Four men are kept in each cell, which contains battered and stained wooden bunks. In Lynden Champagnie's cell there was a tattered blanket on the floor. There are no lights in the cell and any reading has to be done by outside light.

I am horrified to have to speak like this about prison conditions in a friendly country which one has held in great regard and which one wishes to continue to hold in great regard. But I do not regard it as a service to our relations with Jamaica to do other than make it clear what the conditions are in the prisons. These are not only my subjective views. In a report in 1992, Christopher Gibbard, who was governor of Shepton Mallet prison and is now, pro tem, prison reform co-ordinator in this country's Caribbean dependent territories, described St. Catherine's, where men are held on death row, as

"the worst prison I have ever seen."

He compiled an update to his report last November and stated in that official report that the prison estate in Jamaica was "clearly appalling".

I have been in touch with the United Nations Human Rights Committee. I have been exploring every avenue, both to alleviate the situation and to try to gain the release of the men who have spent more than half their lives in prison. In July 1994, the United Nations Human Rights Committee said that the treatment of Lynden Champagnie and others was a

"violation . . . of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

During the past few days, I have received further letters from the United Nations in Geneva, which maintains its views about the situation in Jamaica but is unfortunately unable to enforce them. Unfortunately, the Jamaican authorities are not responding to what the United Nations says.

It gives me no pleasure to say this and I am sorry to have to do so, but the Jamaican authorities are clearly not open to being shamed on this issue. If they were, they would not have allowed me into the prisons. On the wall of the superintendent's office in South Camp hangs a notice which states that the prison's mission is to ensure security, foster rehabilitation and serve all who are in its care while maintaining a united and highly motivated staff, characterised by integrity, commitment and professionalism. Every world of that is false. The men are not being rehabilitated but brutalised. The staff, who are kept in poor conditions and appallingly badly paid, are brutalised. There are too many reports of staff inflicting brutality on the inmates for those reports to be ignored.

I am aware of poverty in Jamaica and the other countries in the Caribbean and I want that poverty to be alleviated, but it seems that the Jamaican Government will respond only to economic pressure. That is why I recommend that, while the Government are staunch in their support for the West Indian banana regime which is under threat within the European Union, they should use their support of that regime to put pressure on Jamaica to improve conditions, release those men and to abolish death row once and for all.

1.49 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): First, I congratulate the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on his success in being called to speak in an Adjournment debate so soon after the recess.

United Kingdom-Jamaican relations are excellent and there are frequent exchanges at all levels. Her Majesty the Queen visited Jamaica in 1994 as part of her Caribbean tour. The Jamaican Prime Minister, the right hon. P. J. Patterson, visited the United Kingdom in 1993 and my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology has made two export-related visits to Jamaica, most recently last September.

Other visits this year have included those by members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in June and members of the United Kingdom branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association who went there in July, ably led by the right hon. Member for Gorton. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer attended the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting in Kingston earlier this month, and throughout the summer there have been a number of official and private visits to the United Kingdom by senior Jamaican figures, including the Minister of National Security and Justice and the Commissioner of Police. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the former high commissioner, Derek Milton, who has done some excellent work, and also the Jamaican high commissioner to Britain, Derick Heaven. They have furthered the existing excellent relationship between the two countries.

The right hon. Gentleman was very specific about prisons in Jamaica. I would like to respond equally specifically by emphasising the commitment of Her Majesty's Government to the improvement of human rights throughout the world, especially in the Commonwealth. Jamaica is an independent and important member of the Commonwealth and next month my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Auckland, New Zealand. One of the specific purposes of that meeting will be to carry forward the work on good government and human rights in the Commonwealth. Her Majesty's Government have been one of the prime movers in that field.

Although non-intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of other states is a recognised principle of international law, articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations charter set out the obligation for all members of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights. That obligation, reinforced over the years by the creation of a framework for international promotion and discussion of human rights law, means that human rights violations are no longer insulated from external criticism or expressions of concern on the ground that the matter is exclusively a domestic one.

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

As to Jamaica, the House may like to know that our high commission in Kingston has long been monitoring the situation regarding human rights in that country, including the specific issues raised by the right hon. Gentleman. On many occasions, our high commissioner has discussed the matters with members of the Jamaican Government and other persons responsible for the situation on the ground.

At his suggestion, we recently invited the Jamaican Minister responsible, the hon. K. D. Knight, to visit the United Kingdom. He was here for four days at the end of last month, during which time he had wide-ranging discussions about how the United Kingdom could assist. Mr. Knight's programme included a visit to Her Majesty's prison, Downview and several of its unique aspects were of great interest to him. The British Government have donated tools and materials for a vocational training unit to assist with a prisoner rehabilitation project, and they have helped with the running costs of the Jamaica Human Rights Council.

Moreover, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General visited Jamaica in April and met with the Minister of National Security and Justice, the Attorney-General, judges, police and prison officials. Like the right hon. Gentleman, he also visited the Tower Street correctional centre. My right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, who recently conducted a wide-ranging tour of the Commonwealth Caribbean, had in-depth talks about good government issues when he visited Jamaica in August.

The purpose of his tour was to encourage Governments, both in the independent Caribbean and in the remaining British dependent territories, to consider ways of improving the administration of justice and generally to promote good government—the rule of law, honest and efficient public administration, accountability and respect for human rights.

Most countries in the Caribbean are proud of their British heritage in those fields and, in that connection, we have been giving more attention recently to ways in which we can help. It must be remembered that a relatively large proportion of law-abiding citizens in Jamaica has to put up with very poor conditions, such as the lack of running water, the lack of electricity, an inadequate urban infrastructure and squalid overcrowded accommodation which is often flooded in heavy rain. One can understand that the Jamaican Government might wish to give those areas a higher priority than improvements in prison conditions for convicted criminals.

One of the Caribbean's major problems is drug trafficking and money laundering. In this country we are well aware of the dangers of drug abuse and the threat to security posed by drug trafficking. Right hon. and hon. Members may have seen the television programme "The Yardies", which was broadcast last year. It gave a very disturbing picture of the situation in Kingston and the international ramifications of the drug trade involving people from Kingston. That visual picture put the question into context rather convincingly.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be discussing the problem of drugs in the Caribbean, both generally and specifically, with his colleagues at CHOGM. We believe that more must be done to tackle the problem of the Caribbean as a major transhipment point for drugs not only to America but to Europe. That must be done through international co-operation, and we are raising the matter with our European, American and Canadian partners at this very moment with a view to holding a workshop that would provide a framework for further action.

I mention that point because another extremely important matter is the need to provide a way of life that would make it not so tempting to traffic in drugs. That means assisting economic and social development. One of the issues that affects Jamaica, which is a major producer of bananas and other agricultural exports, as the right hon. Gentleman said, is the maintenance of the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific banana regime. That regime is governed by the fourth Lomé convention. No Government have been more supportive of the regime than the United Kingdom, as the right hon. Gentleman readily accepted. We have also provided technical co-operation for the Jamaican banana industry to enable it to improve quality standards.

The right hon. Gentleman has proposed that we should withdraw our support for Jamaica under Lomé. However, apart from the fact that we cannot simply isolate one country in that way without affecting the entire structure, we believe that such action would ultimately exacerbate the very problem that it was designed to resolve. It would lead to the collapse of the banana industry, depriving small farmers of their livelihood and the ensuing economic collapse in those regions could thus render them more prone to crime, create more criminals and place yet more strain on the prison system.

I understand that the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), a close neighbour of the right hon. Member for Gorton, referred to the banana regime in this morning's debate about Latin America. He took the diametrically opposing view and said that the removal of the regime from the Caribbean states would have disastrous implications for the area. I refer right hon. and hon. Members to the debate this morning.

I am not saying that the right hon. Gentleman would like to see the bad side of everything—I know him far too well to claim that. However, perhaps he does not give enough credit to what the Jamaicans and this Government are doing to encourage the good side.

The judicial system in Jamaica is based on our own. Jamaica remains part of the Queen's realm and it has maintained the right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Jamaicans are now considering whether to continue with that system. That is a matter for Jamaica, as an independent country, to decide. It is not our place to dictate to it what it should do, as I suspect some hon. Members might like us to do.

We are investigating, with the Commonwealth Secretariat and others, what initiatives we could join to help to modernise the administration of justice in Jamaica and in the Caribbean generally. We are actively pursuing a proposal that a member of the Judicial Committee should visit the Caribbean in the near future. We have now posted a legal adviser from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Caribbean to assist in the reform and improvement process, to which we are committed.

I have noted carefully everything that the right hon. Gentleman said, but I can assure him that Her Majesty's Government will continue to pursue in future, as we have

in the past, a policy of encouraging respect for human rights in the Commonwealth and specifically in the Caribbean.

We shall continue to monitor the conditions in Jamaican prisons, especially the problems of death row, as seen against the judicial procedures which apply and the social economic conditions which prevail. Our high commission in Kingston has done good work and one of its major objectives will remain to support and encourage the Jamaican authorities to address exactly the problems which the right hon. Gentleman raised.

Schools (Buckinghamshire)

2 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise an issue of great concern to parents, head teachers and governors in my constituency and throughout the county. I am pleased to see my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) in their places today. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment, the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), who has been following the issues very closely, has expressed great regret that she is unable to be in her place because of a prior engagement to which she had been committed for some time.

I should like to outline the nature of the concerns and to seek a thorough and detailed response from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools.

It is perhaps necessary to say a few words about how the present system operates within the county of Buckinghamshire. For primary school pupils other than those who attend combined schools, the age of transfer from first to middle schools takes place at 8-plus. The transfer from middle or combined schools to secondary schools takes place at 12-plus. In the county outside Milton Keynes, a selective system of secondary education system is still in operation. Children attend either a grammar school or upper school depending upon the results of a 12-plus test. That in turn means that the reserved areas for individual secondary schools overlap. The reserved areas for individual upper schools tend to be discrete, but in some cases the reserved areas for grammar schools overlap and some upper school reserved areas are divided between reserved areas for different grammar schools.

I should briefly mention two other points. First, as my hon. Friend the Minister will know, Buckinghamshire schools produce good results, comparable with the best anywhere else in England. I pay tribute to the LEA and particularly to head teachers, their staff and governing bodies for that tradition of success in Buckinghamshire.

Secondly, Buckinghamshire LEA is a prudent spender. Every organisation is imperfect, but there is precious little fat to be cut in Buckinghamshire compared with less well-managed education authorities. I know that heads of governors have had at times some difficulties in the current year dealing with what was admittedly a tight spending round and welcomed assurances from my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment that education will be at the top of the Government's priorities for the 1996-97 financial year. In that context, it is important to stress that the fears about the possibility of a wholesale change to the age of transfer within the county derive in large part from apprehension about the financial implications of such a step.

The issue dates from 9 June 1995, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved proposals that Buckinghamshire LEA firmly believes have serious implications for all schools in the county. My right hon. Friend approved two changes. First, she approved a change in the ages of transfer in Slough schools which form part of Berkshire local education authority. Those changes had been sought by Berkshire and included a change from 8-plus to 7-plus in the age of transfer from

[Mr. David Lidington]

first to middle schools and from 12-plus to 11-plus in the age of transfer from primary to secondary schools. Those changes are due to take effect from December 1996.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend announced that she was planning to agree to a change sought by the governors of Beaconsfield high school, a grant-maintained girls' grammar school in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield. In that case the governors were seeking a change from 12-plus to 11-plus in the age of admission and the Secretary of State decided that that change should come into effect from December 1997.

The Department for Education and Employment wrote that same day—9 June—to the chairman of governors of Beaconsfield high school. The content of that letter demonstrates the Department's awareness of the potentially grave difficulties that the decision might cause to schools elsewhere in the county. The letter said that the Secretary of State had reached her decision

"after careful consideration of the arguments put forward by Buckinghamshire LEA and by other objectors to the governors' proposal. It is the view of Bucks LEA that approval of the proposal to change the age range at Beaconsfield High School would make it inevitable that they would have to change the age range of their own schools. Such a move would have capital implications requiring careful examination. In addition, the approval of the governors' proposal may affect the LEA's ability to meet its responsibilities under the Sex Discrimination Act 1976. The proposed modification to the implementation date of the governors' proposal thus aims to provide Buckinghamshire LEA with sufficient time to give proper consideration to the issues arising from the proposal's approval."

That letter reveals an awareness that the decision would cause difficulties elsewhere in Buckinghamshire and that the Department expected that Buckinghamshire LEA would have to consider seriously changes to the age of transfer in county schools.

The effect of the Secretary of State's decision can be described in three ways. First, from 1997, year 7 in primary schools in the reserved areas of Beaconsfield high school will consist of boys of all abilities together with less able girls who have not been able to obtain a grammar school place. The more able girls would have gone on to Beaconsfield high school.

Secondly, according to counsel's opinion obtained by Buckinghamshire county council, the LEA and the Funding Agency for Schools would be in breach of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 for failing to make the same opportunities available for 11-plus boys as for 11-plus girls in south Buckinghamshire. Clearly, that principle would apply elsewhere in the country if further changes were approved to the age of transfer in respect of other individual schools.

Thirdly, the county fears there will be a domino effect and that parents and governors will add to the pressure for other secondary schools to follow the example of Beaconsfield high school. There have already been indications from grant-maintained schools in Marlow in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe and in Chalfont that schools are intending to follow the example set in Beaconsfield.

The overlapping nature of school reserved areas means that it is difficult for the LEA to isolate change in south Buckinghamshire from change in the rest of the county. The reserved area for Wycombe boys' grammar schools stretches across large parts of south Buckinghamshire. Pupils from the town of Princes Risborough in my constituency have reserved places in the Aylesbury grammar schools and Princes Risborough's own upper school, but some pupils from villages just outside Princes Risborough who are in the Princes Risborough upper school area come into the reserved area in respect of grammar schools located in High Wycombe. Pupils from the Great Missenden area in my constituency have reserved places at the Aylesbury grammar schools and also at some grammar schools in the Chiltern and south Buckinghamshire educational division of the county. I should have said earlier that I am the only Buckinghamshire Member whose constituency includes parts of three areas within Buckinghamshire's local education authority. I have followed the arguments closely.

Strong pressure is being exerted from many quarters for the whole county to seek a planned switch in the ages of transfer from 12-plus to 11-plus, and correspondingly from 8-plus to 7-plus. It must be said that there are educational arguments for such an approach: it would, after all, align the ages of transfer between schools with the key stages of the national curriculum. Pupils at key stage 1 would go to first school, and would then transfer to a middle school at the beginning of key stage 2 and to a secondary school at the start of key stage 3.

However, any such move—whether brought into effect at once, or phased over a number of years—would have considerable financial implications. First, there would be capital expenditure implications. School rolls in Buckinghamshire are already rising, and taking year 7 pupils—about 8,000 in the county as a whole—would require new buildings and other facilities in many secondary schools. The LEA has estimated, for example, that it would be necessary to provide additional buildings to cope with 100 places at Misbourne Upper school in Great Missenden and 135 at Sir Henry Floyd grammar school in Aylesbury.

According to Buckinghamshire's current estimate, about £25 million in capital expenditure would be required to provide additional school accommodation in a way that would follow existing patterns of parental preference between schools. It is difficult to see how that could be achieved within the confines of the normal formulae relating to the allocation of borrowing approvals and capital spending permissions between different local education authorities.

Primary schools are understandably worried about the impact of such a change on their revenues. For middle schools, the loss of year 7, with its additional weighting—because those pupils are sitting key stage 3—would be only partly compensated for by a change in the age of transfer from first schools from 8-plus to 7-plus. Small village first schools are now becoming extremely worried about the consequences of a lowering of the age of transfer between themselves and middle schools.

I have sketched the outlines of what is, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows from earlier discussions, a very complicated issue. My hon. Friend will be aware that the LEA and the full county council are still debating the best course to follow in the interests of parents and pupils. I am grateful for the understanding that my hon. Friend has shown in his conversations with me and with representatives of the county; let me now ask him a number of questions.

First, like my constituents, I should like to know why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the decision that she made. What arguments and evidence overrode the

considerable objections voiced by the local education authority? Secondly, what is the Department's assessment of the legal position concerning the Sex Discrimination Act? According to counsel's opinion, taken by Buckinghamshire, both the LEA and the Funding Agency for Schools would be liable, because they share the responsibility for planning for school places in the county.

Thirdly, are there examples of good practice in other LEAs that have had to deal with the problem in the past, from which Buckinghamshire could usefully draw in deciding on the best course to follow in the future?

Fourthly, will Ministers and officials in the Department for Education and Employment make a commitment to work with Buckinghamshire LEA and individual local schools to find a solution to the financial problems that I have described, which are causing great alarm in the county?

I know that a body of opinion in Buckinghamshire would like my hon. Friend to announce that the Secretary of State was prepared to reconsider her original decision about Beaconsfield high school in particular, but the view of the chairman of the education committee, certainly, is that such a decision is not to be expected, and that we must cope with matters as we now find them.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend is not responsible for drafting the annual Budget statement, and that it is beyond his power to give me some of the details and assurances that I seek today. My constituents feel, however, that the problems that I have described stem from a ministerial decision, and they and I now look to Ministers to help us to deal with the consequences.

2.15 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on raising this important subject.

I do not think that anyone has seriously suggested that there are any educational arguments against making the change from 12-plus to 11-plus. It makes a great deal of educational sense to make that change, and to fit in with the national curriculum. The arguments against it are solely financial and practical; I believe that in Buckinghamshire it is inevitable. As my hon. Friend said, we shall soon have an application from Chalfonts community college to change its status, and I suspect that, if it is consistent with the previous decision, the Department will approve that application.

I supported Beaconsfield high school's application to change its age of admission, because I believe that eventually all pupils in Buckinghamshire will benefit from such a change. I understand the difficulties, especially for primary schools, and—like my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury—I hope that the Department will work very closely with the LEA to make it work.

2.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) for raising this important issue, and welcome the opportunity to discuss it. He was nobly buttressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), and, as he said, my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan)—my ministerial colleague—has taken a close interest in these matters for constituency reasons.

Buckinghamshire has an education system of which it can be proud, and its achievements speak for themselves; but I know that those involved in education in the county are not complacent. They want not to rest on their laurels but to extend and develop opportunities for Buckinghamshire's pupils.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury knows that it is for the local education authority in respect of its schools, and for the governing bodies of individual voluntary and grant-maintained schools, to publish proposals if they wish to change their age range. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider any such proposals on their merits. We certainly have no policy of favouring one age of transfer over another. Perhaps understandably, however, my hon. Friend dwelt for some time on my right hon. Friend's recent decision, and it seems only fair for me to respond as best I can.

My hon. Friend referred particularly to the impact of the approval of proposals to admit pupils to Beaconsfield high school at the age of 11. All statutory proposals are considered on their individual merits. The Beaconsfield proposals were considered alongside proposals published by Berkshire LEA and by grant-maintained grammar schools in Slough to change their age of transfer. Beaconsfield argued that a change in Slough would seriously undermine their viability. I assure my hon. Friend that we took great care in considering the Slough proposals and those from Beaconsfield. My ministerial colleagues and I saw representatives both of those speaking in support of, and those arguing against, the proposals, including Buckinghamshire county council. Indeed, a moment ago my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield highlighted clearly how there can be more than one viewpoint in this area.

Consideration of statutory proposals often requires the Secretary of State to balance conflicting arguments. That was so in this case and it was clearly impossible to satisfy all interests.

The decision on the Slough proposals to change the age of transfer and on those from Beaconsfield high school to admit at age 11 is now taken. The Slough changes are to take effect from next September; the Beaconsfield change from September 1997. The decision cannot now be reconsidered. Berkshire LEA and the governing bodies of the voluntary and GM schools involved are now under a statutory duty to implement their proposals.

It is for Buckinghamshire county council and for the individual governing bodies of voluntary aided and grant-maintained schools in Buckinghamshire to decide how they now wish to act.

My hon. Friend referred to the implications of the Beaconsfield approval for the duty placed on Buckinghamshire under the Sex Discrimination Act. To offer a similar number of single-sex selective places for girls and boys would not necessarily prevent unlawful sex discrimination from arising. If there is an unequal number of places but demand has been met, no discrimination would seem to arise.

Beaconsfield's proposal does not change the overall number of girls' places available, but it does change the number available in each year group and offers the opportunity for single-sex education at 11.

[Mr. Robin Squire]

It is for Buckinghamshire LEA to take its own legal advice on the implications of this decision for its responsibilities. It is by no means clear, however, that approval of Beaconsfield's proposals requires a change to the age of transfer throughout the county.

I understand that the education committee resolved last week to advise the county council that in the light of resource constraints it is not appropriate to conduct public consultation on changing the age of transfer. That is a matter for that body. But it might be helpful if I said a few words about the statutory proposal procedure and about capital funding.

Let us be clear about the procedure. The local education authority or governing body wishing to consider a change of age of transfer must first consult all who are likely to be affected. Buckinghamshire has already done that for schools in the Burnham area. Consultation is an essential part of the process. It provides an opportunity for those affected—including schools and parents—to express their concerns. I know that Buckinghamshire takes consultation very seriously and provides opportunities for all views to be heard.

Having consulted, the authority or governing body must then formally resolve to publish proposals, taking account of views expressed in consultation. Following publication there follows a two-month period in which formal objections to the proposals can be made. That provides a further opportunity for schools and parents to have their say. The proposals then come to my right hon. Friend to be determined.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury knows and has said, the authority has raised concerns about funding the change of age of transfer with me. I have endorsed on-going discussions between my officials and the authority on the technical aspects.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I described the arrangements. Local authorities are given permission to borrow up to a certain level to fund capital programmes for all their services, including education. Decisions on how to use the resources generated by borrowing are entirely for authorities. They must decide priorities between services and between projects within services. The borrowing limit is not the limit on authorities' capital spending. In practice authorities can and do invest capital receipts and they can use funds from their revenue budgets for capital purposes if they wish.

In determining each local education authority's share of the national total of annual capital guidelines, priority in the schools allocation has been given to: commitments arising from projects allowed for in previous credit approvals; providing new school places in areas of population growth; and implementing cost-effective schemes to remove surplus places.

After allowing for authorities' liabilities for work at voluntary aided schools and for approved capital work at special schools, all the remaining resources are then distributed by a formula to contribute towards the cost of all other capital-related work at schools. The formula is made up of elements to meet improvement work, work at special schools and other work. Those priority criteria were agreed 10 years or more ago between the local authority associations and my predecessors. They reflect authorities' statutory and contractual liabilities. Each year we undertake a review to determine whether the procedures should be amended, in the light of changes in the organisation of schools and of comments from local authorities and other interested bodies. Of course we would consider carefully any representations for a change in the criteria, particularly when they attract consensus support.

The capital funding of proposals is always dependent on the extent to which they can meet those agreed criteria. Discussions between my officials and Buckinghamshire LEA should ensure that the LEA has a realistic idea of the availability of funding. Where elements are unable to meet the national criteria it is open to the authority to bid for a supplementary credit approval, or SCA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury wisely spoke about the concern felt by his constituents that the education of their children would be disrupted by a change to the age of transfer. There is no reason why that should be so. I know that if they proceed with this option the local education authority and the schools concerned will be anxious to minimise the disruption to the education of pupils. The requirement to consult gives parents the opportunity to satisfy themselves that appropriate arrangements are being made. If they have concerns, they should raise them at that stage.

My hon. Friend also referred to school concerns that a change to the age of transfer will cause upheaval at a time when they had been hoping for a period of stability—a point he made strongly to me when he recently came to see me. I understand those concerns. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that there will be no further changes to the national curriculum for five years in order to provide some stability in that area.

My hon. Friend went on to mention primary schools. I can understand the particular concerns expressed by primary schools and that some would see a change to the age of transfer as a threat. Others may, dare I suggest it, see it as an opportunity: either to respond to demand for places that they are currently unable to meet, or to add pre-school provision. I have said that the Department has no policy of favouring one age of transfer over another. No doubt primary schools concerned about the impact of possible age-of-transfer changes will raise their concerns with the authority.

The Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food published the rural White Paper yesterday. That makes clear that we recognise the contribution that schools can make to village life, not only for the education that they provide but for the focus that they provide for the community—the sense of security that they bring to the children and the balance that they give to village life. Many village schools are of good quality, are popular with parents and are within easy reach of the communities they serve.

If Buckinghamshire decides to propose changes to the age of transfer, I have no doubt that it will have regard to the principles set out in the White Paper when considering the possible closure of village schools.

I know that the LEA is concerned that if there is to be a change it should be managed in a planned and orderly way. Again, that is a matter for it, but I understand that concern. It is for those responsible for publishing proposals to propose the timing of the implementation, and I hope that any disruption or uncertainty can be minimised. Buckinghamshire has argued that, in its particular circumstance, a single implementation date for the majority of the county would be most appropriate. The

authority has, of course, begun the process of change at an earlier date in the Burnham area. Buckinghamshire based its view on the pattern of provision in its secondary schools, and, as my hon. Friend said, the extent to which catchment areas overlap.

Most recent reorganisations have been in authorities that had operated a mixed economy of two and three-tier provision and which took the opportunity to standardise. It is for Buckinghamshire to decide how to go about any change in the light of its own circumstance, but in so far as it is possible or relevant to draw lessons from the experience of other LEAs, my officials will be happy to discuss that with the LEA, and, of course, I shall be happy to do so separately with my hon. Friend.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this issue, and I judge that it has been a helpful debate. I have already met my hon. Friend, as well as the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and members of Buckinghamshire county council. I am ready to have further meetings if that would be helpful.

I am confident that if Buckinghamshire embarks on the process that it is considering, the authority and schools will see it as an opportunity further to enhance the quality of education that is provided for Buckinghamshire pupils.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No.2) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Amendments agreed to.

To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Cumbernauld Development Corporation

1. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made to date on the winding up of Cumbernauld development corporation; and if he will make a statement. [36029]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Kynoch): Cumbernauld development corporation's report for the year ended 31 March 1995, which is available in the Library of the House, contains details of the good progress made.

Mr. Hogg: The Minister will be aware of the considerable achievements in the Scottish new towns with regard to inward investment to Scotland. What mechanisms will he put in place to maintain the momentum of that inward investment after the new towns are wound up? Will he give an assurance that he will not simply rely on the magical or mythical equalities of market forces?

Mr. Kynoch: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I have spent some time over recent months going around visiting the new town development corporations and have discussed the future of inward investment into each of them. I was relieved when I visited Cumbernauld development corporation and met the board on 24 April to hear the report from the chairman. He said that he was optimistic about the prospects of continued success in attracting inward investment, particularly with the partnership through Dumbarton Locations.

The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear what I can now say. I have an announcement that runs on from the significant inward investment successes that were announced during the summer recess, and which are expected to create more than 2,600 new jobs in Scotland. I am pleased to be able to tell the House and the hon. Gentleman that Bi-link, a Chicago-based metal stamper and product assembler, has this afternoon announced that it is setting up a European manufacturing plant in Cumbernauld—a project that is expected to bring a further 100 new jobs to Cumbernauld and to Scotland.

Mr. Donohoe: As the Minister has travelled to all the new towns during the recess, he may have been given information about the transfer of housing stock in East Kilbride, where more than 97 per cent. of the tenants voted for transfer to the local authority. The overwhelming majority of the population in Cumbernauld did the same, as did the population in Glenrothes. Why, then, does he allow the development corporations' super-quango, the housing association in Irvine, to continue to spend money when it is quite clear that the people in Irvine development corporation houses want to transfer over to the district council? Why does he continue to allow public money to be squandered in the way that it is? Why does he not just lift the telephone and tell the corporation to transfer the housing over to the district council now?

Mr. Kynoch: It is interesting to hear that the hon. Gentleman is now against housing associations. What else will he be against? We believe in giving people choice and in trying to ensure that they get the best possible opportunities for housing in their area.

Pre-school Provision

2. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which local authorities he has consulted about the voucher scheme for pre-school provision in Scotland. [36030]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): All of them.

Mrs. Michie: When the Secretary of State announced the voucher system, which, incidentally, he did in a press statement and not on the Floor of the House—I hope that that sort of thing will stop once we get a Scottish Parliament—he said that it would meet the distinctive needs and circumstances of the Scottish educational system. Can he explain how it will be distinctive and how it will avoid following slavishly what is being introduced south of the border?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady may not have yet had an opportunity to read the submission from her own local authority of Argyll, which has offered to help the Scottish Office with piloting this facility and which has made a number of constructive suggestions on how we can take it forward in a Scottish context. One of the representations that Argyll made was that we should not start the scheme in Scotland until August and I am happy to confirm to the House that I am prepared to take up that suggestion.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Labour-led East Renfrewshire shadow authority—[Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."]—has wisely applied for the pilot scheme for vouchers for nursery education. Does he agree that East Renfrewshire is particularly apt for inclusion in the pilot scheme because of the existing combination of public sector provision, private sector provision and voluntary provision within the boundaries of the local authority?

Mr. Forsyth: The House will have noted that Opposition Members cheered at the name "East Renfrewshire", but refused to cheer at the authority's wish to allow parents in East Renfrewshire the opportunity to get vouchers to the value of £1,100 to buy nursery education for their children. I am sure that the whole House has noticed that Opposition Members look pretty glum. They, of course, cannot stand the idea of parents having choice in the matter. I note that my hon. Friend would like East Renfrewshire to be one of the authorities that pilot the scheme and I am sure that his constituents would welcome that. Unfortunately, my constituents in Stirling have to cope with a Labour authority that takes a dogmatic view and would deny parents that choice in nursery education as a result of its opposition. I will certainly consider my hon. Friend's representations carefully before deciding which authorities should pilot the scheme as, of course, we have more councils in Scotland wishing to pilot this innovative idea than we have numbers of pilots to run.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Secretary of State ensure that an area such as Fife, which provides well above the Scottish

average level of nursery schools, for three-year-olds and for four-year-olds, will not suffer as a result of the introduction of any voucher scheme?

Mr. Forsyth: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a great deal of influence in Fife. Anything that he can do to get the local authority to take a positive view of the scheme will, of course, be helpful in ensuring that his constituents get the best possible service. I very much welcome the positive view that Fife has taken on another matter—its involvement in Rosyth 2000, which is so important for employment in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is humbug for people to go round Scotland saying that more money should be spent in education and then to take the first opportunity they can, as with this scheme where more public money is being used, to try either to boycott it or to encourage others to do so? It is especially noticeable that Scottish nationalists do that.

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree. Every one of the Opposition parties would much rather have local authorities deciding for parents what nursery education is made available. Only this party believes that parents should choose. Such is the Opposition's dogma and opposition to the scheme that they are actually prepared to turn away additional resources of £30 million and more simply to ensure that the local authorities tell the people what to do instead of allowing the people to choose.

Mr. Welsh: Surely nursery places should be a natural part of Scotland's national unified school system, serving 99 per cent. of Scotland's children. Why is the Secretary of State proposing changes that will fragment the unified system and divert funding from it in the long run? He proposes opted-out schools and opting-out vouchers when the only opt-out that the Scottish people want is from his socially divisive schemes.

Mr. Forsyth: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman realises how ridiculous he looks making the case for a self-governing Scotland, but being against self-governing schools. The hon. Gentleman should realise that power to the people means giving people choice and not making them fit into systems in the way in which he suggests.

Mrs. Fyfe: I begin by welcoming the Secretary of State to his new job, especially as he has been promising to listen. In that case, has he listened to the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, which found that 88 per cent. of parents surveyed said that their first preference was a local authority nursery school place, because of the high quality guaranteed in local authority provision? If he is listening to those parents, why does he not hand over the £30 million to local authorities to give people what they want? Why does he not listen to what they say that they want?

Mr. Forsyth: Because the difference between the hon. Lady and me is that I think that parents should be able to decide. She thinks that groups such as the Scottish Parent Teacher Council should decide. Even if it is right, I shall give parents choice and they will be able to choose to spend their vouchers in local authority provision, or in voluntary or private sector provision. The difference between the hon. Lady and me is that she wants to tell parents what to do and I wish to give them the choice.

I have been listening to the hon. Lady, and she takes a different line from that of her leader and from what I heard said at the Labour party conference. There, we heard that Labour was in favour of testing and of modifying grant-maintained schools, but the hon. Lady says something different north of the border; she says that Labour policies are still to be developed. The truth is that she stands for old Labour—real Labour.

Scottish Trade Union Council

3. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will meet the Scottish TUC to discuss the unemployed in Scotland. [36031]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I meet the STUC very regularly.

Mr. Clarke: May I ask the Secretary of State about the long-term unemployed, whose numbers seem to be increasing in Scotland, mainly among young people? How can the Government justify a 15 per cent. decrease in the training budget of Scottish Enterprise?

Mr. Forsyth: I am not aware of any 15 per cent. decrease in the training budget of Scottish Enterprise, but I am aware of a 15 per cent. decrease in unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I should have thought that he would welcome that. I am sure that he will be aware of the importance that we attach to training, and to the fact that most training is of course undertaken by the private sector. We want to encourage Investors in People and partnership with the STUC. Although it appears that Mr. Campbell Christie has come in for some flak from Opposition Members, I pay tribute to the role that he plays in trying to ensure that we have proper standards for training and education, and to the positive way in which he has sought to involve the trade union movement, in partnership with the Scottish Office, in ensuring more training in Scotland, which is so vital for competitiveness.

Sir Hector Monro: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in recent years, Opposition Treasury spokesmen have cried doom and gloom about unemployment in Fife? Can he tell us how many jobs are now in the pipeline, and what other successes the Scottish Office and Locate in Scotland have achieved?

Mr. Forsyth: The performance in Fife in terms of attracting new jobs and investment is outstanding. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced yesterday that Rosyth would be sold to the preferred tenderer, Rosyth 2000—an example of partnership between the private sector and a local authority that offers the potential for 3,000 to 5,000 jobs. Of course, Opposition Members are all committed to policies that threaten such jobs—the minimum wage and the social chapter, which would both destroy jobs—and to the special deal for Scotland, the tartan tax, which would mean a jobs holocaust.

Mr. Wallace: I congratulate the Secretary of State on his first appearance in that capacity at Scottish Question Time and I look forward to some lively exchanges. In view of his regular meetings with the STUC, and given the high regard that he has expressed for Mr. Campbell Christie, will he also acknowledge that Campbell Christie yesterday enthusiastically presented to the Scottish people the blueprint for a Scottish Parliament produced by the Scottish Constitutional Convention? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that that offers considerable scope for improving employment prospects in Scotland? Before he

proceeds to criticise it, as will inevitably be his pavlovian response, will he do the people of Scotland the courtesy of visiting places such as Catalonia and Bavaria and see how a considerable amount of devolved government has succeeded in promoting industry and employment?

Mr. Forsyth: Campbell Christie is not right about everything, and I fear that, on this occasion, his enthusiasm for the introduction of a socialist-dominated body has overtaken his judgment. The proposals which were published yesterday by the constitutional convention are for a Parliament, nearly half of whose members would be placemen and women nominated by the patronage of the leaders of the political parties. The proposals for the Parliament feature a patronising gender programme which will offend women up and down the country. Most damaging of all, the proposed Parliament will tax people in Scotland simply because they work in Scotland, and will impose a tartan tax which will destroy our living standards and our jobs and will chase away the inward investment on which our prosperity has been built.

Mr. McFall: When the Secretary of State meets the STUC, will he keep in mind the shabby record of his predecessors? When we compare figures from April 1979 with those of June 1995, we find that there are 23,000 more claimants out of work for a year or more now than there were in 1979. The civilian work force has fallen by 44,000 since 1979, and one in five of all claimants aged under 25 are long-term unemployed. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the only option which will reverse those 16 years of neglect and the accompanying exacerbation of social divisions is a Labour Government and the establishment of a Scottish Parliament so that the needs of Scotland are put first and foremost?

Mr. Forsyth: Is it not extraordinary, Madam Speaker, that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on this subject cannot bring himself to welcome a further fall in unemployment in Scotland today? We heard about the hon. Gentleman's vision for Scotland, which appears to be entirely divorced from reality. The truth is that unemployment in Scotland has fallen steadily and has fallen today. The Opposition Treasury spokesman told us some years ago that unemployment would continue rising, and thereupon it started to fall and it has fallen ever since. Unemployment in Scotland is now below that of England for the first time since the 1920s. We have seen Scotland grow in prosperity, and inward investment brought a further 5,000 jobs in the first six months of this year alone. Why does the hon. Gentleman keep running Scotland down? Why will he not join those of us who wish to see Scotland succeed and welcome its success?

Higher Education

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students will enter higher education in 1995-96. [36032]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Raymond S. Robertson): Since 1979-80, the number of full-time entrants to higher education has more than doubled. Our expenditure plans for 1995-96 assume some 44,500 entrants to full-time higher education. As my hon. Friend will understand, the actual intakes for the 1995-96 academic session are not yet known.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and I congratulate him on his promotion, which is particularly appropriate given that he represents an ancient city, Aberdeen, with an ancient university. Does my hon. Friend remember the forecasts by the professional pessimists that the introduction of student loans would lead to a reduction in the number of students attending university? Do not those prove that the Opposition's policies and forecasts are wrong and that they cannot be trusted?

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I thank him for his kind words. In 1993-94—the last year for which figures are available—132,509 students were in full-time higher education courses in Scotland, compared with only 68,322 in 1978-1979. That is a testament both to this Government's commitment to higher education in Scotland and to the increasing confidence which Scots and others of all ages and backgrounds have in pursuing all of the opportunities available in higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Chisholm: Did the Minister see the survey during the summer which highlighted the fact that there has been a 30 per cent. increase in the number of students leaving university for non-academic reasons? Is it not shameful that a rising number of young people are being forced to abandon their studies because of poverty? Is that not damaging for the country as a whole at a time when there is a skills barrier preventing further economic growth?

Mr. Robertson: I am a newcomer to the Dispatch Box, so you will correct me if I am wrong, Madam Speaker, but is it possible to repeat my previous answer, as the hon. Gentleman was obviously not listening? There are greater numbers of young people and others in higher education than ever before. We are spending record amounts of money on student support—£386 million last year alone. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that that is not enough? If it is not, will he write and tell me how much is?

Shadow Councils

5. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of shadow councils. [36033]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Progress is mixed.

Sir David Steel: Can the Secretary of State confirm that there appears to be a substantial difference between the notional budgets of the new councils drawn up by the Scottish Office and their forecasts of likely expenditure? If that is so, will he undertake to the House that those things will be assessed region by region, otherwise councils such as the Scottish Borders council could end up being starved of funds because of high-spending councils elsewhere?

Mr. Forsyth: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the mismatch that could arise from the new boundaries. That is a particular problem. In part, it can reflect the priorities that previous councils set—sometimes wanting to spend more money in Dundee or Glasgow, for example, than in the outward areas, for

reasons on which I can only speculate. It means, however, that there is a problem and it is one that we want to discuss with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and one that I mean to address. Of course, we would not underwrite some of the high spending that we have already seen in the unitary authorities. The jobs for the boys culture and the decisions taken on members' allowances and salaries for staff by some councils are difficult to justify, so we shall be keeping a close eye on the matter. The right hon. Gentleman makes a serious point and it is one with which we mean to deal. It is not easy to resolve within existing resources, but we mean to tackle it.

Mr. Gallie: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern at the recruitment policies of some of the new local authorities—perhaps at the number of high-earning officials who have been appointed in North Lanarkshire and Angus? Would he also say whether he shares my concern at the appointment to the North Lanarkshire authority, in a very senior position, of an elderly gentleman who is about to retire? Is there anything that my right hon. Friend can do about that?

Mr. Forsyth: It is extremely important that officials appointed to local government are seen to be appointed on merit and fairly. On the point about North Lanarkshire, I have had representations from the staff commission on that matter and it has said that it is unable to give the local authority a clean bill of health. It is a matter for the staff commission alone to decide whether appointments should be re-run. Let me make it absolutely clear to the House, however, that if the commission wants appointments to be re-run, it will have my full and absolute backing. Where there are examples of concern about appointments procedures, I expect local authorities to take those concerns into account and to do everything they can to reassure the public. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) would agree with that.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is growing concern among arts organisations, particularly those in Glasgow, such as the Citizens' theatre, that the ending of Strathclyde region on 1 April next year will mean the end of generous grants from that region, which will not be replaced by grants from the new, small, tinpot authorities that he has created? Will he therefore ensure that the Arts Council is given extra money to make up any imbalance that is left as a result of the ending of Strathclyde region?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has so little faith in Labour councils and in the likelihood of their supporting the arts. When he returns to his constituency at the weekend, having described Glasgow council as tinpot may get him into some difficulty.

Mr. Jenkin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us elsewhere in the United Kingdom regard jealously the emergence of unitary authorities in Scotland? Would not the worst result of all be the imposition of a whole new layer of bureaucracy in the form of a Scottish Assembly? Does he care to compare youth unemployment in Catalonia, where they have an extra assembly, with youth unemployment in Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not know why, today, everyone in the House wants to send me off to Spain. I will bear the representations in mind. As my hon. Friend says, the unitary authorities are something in which Scotland can take pride. They are a new start for local government and I hope that advantage will be taken of that new start. As he says, the English have much to be jealous about as regards what we have north of the border. A Scottish Parliament would put all that at risk, not least the generous funding that we enjoy, which the Scottish Constitutional Convention tells us will now be decided by a block grant to a Scottish Parliament—a block grant determined here in Westminster, where the number of Members of Parliament would have to be reduced, as the Liberals admit, at least privately, if not inside the convention. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) acknowledges that we would have fewer Scottish Members of Parliament here. I may be the last Scottish Secretary with the power to argue for Scotland's interests inside the Cabinet where the key decisions are taken. The Opposition put all that at risk. That is grossly irresponsible and my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to it.

Mr. George Robertson: I add my welcome to the new Secretary of State at his first Scottish Question Time and congratulate him in particular on moving from his last job as Minister with responsibility for prisons, or should I say responsibility for prison escapes, to the high office that he now holds.

On the subject of the new councils, does the Secretary of State agree that if we had had a Scottish Parliament we would never have had the wretched, gerrymandered, unnecessary, reorganisation of Scottish local government in the first place? Will he accept that giving a few powers back to local councils in Scotland and beefing up a few old quangos will be seen not as devolution but as a con trick? Given the systematic stripping of power at local level in Scotland over the past 16 years, the Secretary of State looks like the burglar who strips a house and expects to be thanked for giving back the candlesticks. When is he going to grasp the fact that the people of Scotland want a devolved Scottish Parliament and will not settle for anything less than that?

Mr. Forsyth: When is the hon. Gentleman going to grasp the fact that the people of Scotland do not want to pay higher income tax than the rest of the United Kingdom and that inward investment into Scotland would be damaged if companies could go to Wales, the north of England or elsewhere and have their workers paying lower rates of income tax? The hon. Gentleman is being grossly irresponsible.

As for the reference to prisons, I do not know whether the shadow Cabinet elections and alterations of responsibilities will touch the hon. Gentleman. It may well be that, after his performance over the summer, he is moved to some other position. Through the summer, we have put serious questions to him about the funding of the Scottish Parliament and the nature of the West Lothian question. All we get is abuse and no answers; we want answers. The people of Scotland are entitled to answers and to more than deals coming from smoke-filled rooms and threats to vital services in Scotland as a consequence of policies to which the hon. Gentleman has put his name.

Scotch Whisky (Tax)

6. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will discuss with the Chancellor of the Exchequer a reduction in the tax on Scotch whisky. [36034]

Mr. Kynoch: My right hon. Friend maintains close and regular contact with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this and other matters.

Mr. McKelvey: You will be as disappointed as I am with that response, Madam Speaker.

Has the Minister had the opportunity to read the Fraser of Allender report, commissioned by Allied Distillers, and the Adam Smith Institute report, "Too Much to Swallow", which clearly show that the Scotch whisky industry has been proved to be the biggest job provider among the manufacturing industries in Scotland. They also say that the obscene tax that is being paid on bottles of whisky has already cost us jobs and is likely to cost us more. Why then does not the Minister, along with his boss, have the courage to take Scotland's case to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and tell him that, on the law of diminishing returns, it would be lunacy not to reduce the cost of a bottle of whisky, in the first instance by at least 50p?

Mr. Kynoch: It is good to see the hon. Gentleman in such good spirits this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, as a Back Bencher, I joined him and other colleagues in making representations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on behalf of the Scotch whisky industry. I am well aware of both reports that he has talked about and I have spoken to the Adam Smith Institute about its report in some depth. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the views of both reports are well known to my right hon. and learned Friend and the last time that I saw the Scottish whisky industry, it was happy with the support that the Scottish Office was giving.

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful reply to the Opposition Front Bench. I have no doubt whatever that he and his colleagues on the Government Front Bench understand the critical importance of the scotch whisky industry to the wellbeing of the export trade and jobs in Scotland. The point that we are trying to make today is that, when he and his colleagues make their representations, they have the full support of every Scottish Member of Parliament.

Mr. Kynoch: I thank my hon. Friend for what he said. I am pleased to have been on two recent export missions—one to Taiwan and one to north America—both of which included representations from the whisky industry, which have been remarkably successful for exports for Scotland and for whisky.

Mr. Salmond: Should not the Minister responsible for industry be careful about how he handles that question, as I saw the last Secretary of State for Scotland nodding during the question by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey)? The Minister has a reputation as a serial tax raiser, having voted for 20 Tory tartan tax rises in the course of this Parliament alone. Is there any hope of rehabilitation for the whisky industry? As whisky is overtaxed relative to other products, is it not costing employment and even Exchequer revenue? Does the Minister therefore regret voting for the latest tax rise of 26p on 23 January this year? Will he reverse his position and bring the total number of tax rises that he supports down to 19?

Mr. Kynoch: I am not aware of the last Secretary of State for Scotland being here, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman believes that he is here, in spirit at least. The hon. Gentleman would do better to explain to the Scottish people and the scotch whisky industry the taxation implications of a separate Scotland. We have already seen figures of the deficit between funding and expenditure in Scotland of some £8 billion, excluding North sea oil revenue. I wonder how the hon. Gentleman plans to fund that. I suspect that the whisky industry would be sitting very worried if we went independent.

Mrs. Liddell: I do not wish to add to the peregrinations of Scottish Office Ministers around Europe but may I suggest that, given his concerns for the scotch whisky industry, the Minister might turn his attention to Geneva where, in a short time, discussions will begin again about the equalisation of tariffs for scotch whisky compared with local spirits within Japan? Will he undertake to brief Britain's negotiators on the arguments that they should use in relation to the Scottish economy? Will he share with the House the arguments that he will suggest that they use to explain why the British Chancellor of the Exchequer discriminates against scotch whisky?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Lady is absolutely right to refer to the unacceptable taxation of scotch whisky in Japan, where the local brew, shochu, is taxed at one sixth of the rate of scotch whisky. She can rest assured that every time not only a Scottish Office Minister but any Government Minister is in contact with Japan, either by visiting Japan—my right hon. Friend is due to visit Japan in the not too distant future—he or she will make representations on behalf of the scotch whisky industry among many other industries in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Inward Investment

7. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the sums of money paid to inward investors in (a) Strathclyde and (b) Scotland as a whole by way of (i) regional selective assistance grant, (ii) regional enterprise grants and (iii) grants from Scottish Enterprise in the past three years. [36035]

Mr. Kynoch: In the three years to March 1995, payments of regional selective assistance to overseas-owned companies in Scotland totalled £112.5 million, of which £57.5 million related to projects in Strathclyde. Figures for other grants are not available.

Dr. Godman: That is a tidy sum. With the honourable exception of a tiny handful of recipient companies, such as IBM and National Semiconductor, few of those companies set up research and development facilities. Why does the Scottish Office allow them to avoid such a responsibility? Should it not be a condition of such grants that those incoming companies must create research and development facilities?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman is right. We want to encourage research and development facilities to come to Scotland. On my two most recent trips abroad to promote inward investment as well as exports, we have specifically tried to encourage research and development to come to Scotland. Several organisations may be considering Scotland in the future and we shall continue with our efforts. If we can get research and development, a lot follows on thereafter.

Dr. Reid: Despite the free market rhetoric we are all pleased that the Minister has been following a rather

interventionist course when it comes to encouraging inward investment—presumably that is part of the package of the new user-friendly Scottish Secretary of State. Nevertheless, does he recall that we have unfortunately lost one or two rather large projects in the past? Can he give us an assurance that lessons have been learnt from that and that whenever there is a possibility of attracting substantial inward investment that involves regional selective assistance it is monitored closely?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman is aware that Locate in Scotland as well as the partnerships that exist throughout Scotland between it and local enterprise companies and local authorities demonstrate that attempts to bring inward investment to Scotland are second to none. We work extremely hard to try to succeed in every case, but we are up against increasing competition and sadly one cannot win them all. With particular reference to the hon. Gentleman's area he will be aware that we have been involved in several significant potential inward investment projects, some of which I hope will come to fruition in the not too distant future.

Skye Bridge

8. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress towards the completion of the Skye bridge. [36036]

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I am delighted to say that the Skye bridge was opened by my right hon. Friend two days ago and is a great success. The hon. Gentleman chose not to attend the opening so he will be unaware of the many positive representations made by his constituents to my right hon. Friend. Those included representations from the convener of Highland regional council for improvements of the Kyle Prospect in the area of the former ferry marshalling area. I am delighted to announce that we shall make £250,000 available to Highland council to allow it to take forward that highly desirable local scheme at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Kennedy: May I point out to the Minister that the convener of Highland region was the only significant elected representative that he met at the bridge because the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) was not there and nor were any of the Skye and Lochalsh district councillors in their official capacity. The only elected member present was the only person in governance in that part of the country who does not have his electoral base in either Skye or Lochalsh. That speaks for itself.

As for the extra money, would the Minister confirm that it was promised as part of the original package when Highland regional council voted for the bridge? It has taken all these years for it to come forward. As for the funding of the bridge, does the Minister agree that the completion is marked by the fact that the remedial work had begun before the official opening took place? Given that extra money is being expended on repairing the cracks to the bridge and to the infrastructure, will he give us an assurance that that extra expenditure will not be levied on the toll payers for years hence? They will have to pay enough as it is for the unjust imposition of a monopoly upon them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is ill informed about the cracks, which were largely cosmetic. Attention has been paid to them. [*Laughter.*] The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) may laugh, but if he had dealt with construction he would know that when concrete is poured cracks develop frequently and have to be filled in. That is an absolutely straightforward job and the cracks pose no structural risk whatever.

My right hon. Friend made an award available for investing in people when he visited the bridge two days ago. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that his constituents will benefit enormously from the bridge, which will greatly increase tourism. What is more, those who pay tolls will pay less than they paid for the ferry, so they will benefit. Before long that bridge will be a free one when the costs have been paid off.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister agree that the high-toll bridge project is tawdry, aesthetically unattractive, profoundly undemocratic and in every way unacceptable at the price that must be paid for it? In all those circumstances it was entirely appropriate that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should have opened it. Will the Minister try to tell us in one sentence why the people who live in those communities should have inflicted upon them the highest tolls in Europe? Can he also tell us why Ministers who were babbling earlier today about choice have denied the people in those communities the choice of using a ferry rather than a monopoly bridge in order to line the pockets of the funders of the Tory party?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This was a partnership project. The Scottish Office provided about £8 million for the approach roads, which is a very significant figure. The tolls should pay off the costs in about 14 years. We envisage that the economy of the Western Isles and Skye will enormously benefit from a great increase in tourism. Average journey times will be at least 15 minutes less. In the summer peak times, it may save travellers up to an hour. That will make a considerable difference. There will be the economies of scale.

I remind the hon. Gentleman of the great benefits that will accrue to the islands as a result of that decision, which we believe will stand the whole of the north-west of Scotland in very good stead.

Local Government

9. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to strengthen the local accountability of local government in the highlands. [36037]

Mr. Kynoch: All new councils are required to prepare decentralisation schemes within the first year of being set up.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister accept that if there is to be an effective decentralisation, in the highlands region especially, bearing in mind its enormous size, there needs to be some budgetary decentralisation to districts as well as administrative management? Does he recognise the immediate need to tackle the problem of consolidation of premises, which is costly if there is to be area management?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The Highland council area is very large and I am well

aware of the difficulties and the importance of decentralisation proposals. The council has a year to come up with those, but I know that the new Highland council is keen to have those in place by April 1996 rather than 1997. To that end, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that this afternoon I have approved a bid from the new Highland council of £275,000 of capital resources for its accommodation needs so that it can provide one stop shop public access information facilities in small towns and villages in Badenoch and Strathspey, Caithness, Inverness, Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Sutherland. By that means, the council should be better placed to have those decentralisation proposals off the ground for April 1996.

Ms Roseanna Cunningham: While the Minister is considering accountability of local authorities, will he consider the accountability of central Government in the decision that may yet be made in America to send nuclear fuel elements through Scotland at anything up to—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am very tolerant to new Members who have not been here a long time, but this question refers specifically to local government in the highlands of Scotland. If the hon. Lady can relate a question directly to that, of course I will listen to it.

Ms Cunningham: Perhaps I can rephrase my question. If local authority accountability is to be considered seriously by the Government, would the Minister please advise Highland council and other planning authorities in Scotland, how they can in any way be accountable to their populations for the planning implications of the consistent transport of nuclear fuel elements through Scotland without advance warning to the emergency planning officers? That problem will become even more acute if the American Government take the decision that they might, which will result in one of those shipments per week coming through Scotland for the next 10 years.

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Lady of course is keeping up the honourable tradition—or dishonourable tradition—of her colleagues in trying to scaremonger and trying to deprive people in the highlands of jobs in connection with that product.

Planning matters are a matter for local district councils and they will be for the new unitary authorities. Indeed the whole planning process is under review at present, and I hear the arguments that the hon. Lady has made.

Nursing Homes

10. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to tighten up the inspection procedures for nursing homes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [36038]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Health board general managers are funding a project to produce national standards for the registration and inspection of nursing homes.

Mr. Hood: I am not wholly satisfied by that answer. May I ask the Minister something specifically about Orchard House nursing home in my constituency? In doing so, I remind him of a "Front Line Scotland" television programme that exposed serious problems with the management administration and with the treatment of residents in that home—so much so that Lanarkshire health board conducted an inquiry. Apparently, it was so terrified by the result of its inquiry that it is now refusing, claiming that it is the result of legal advice, to make that report public.

As the local Member of Parliament, I hope that the Minister agrees that the people have a right to know what happens in nursing homes when they close the door and leave their relatives after visiting time.

Is the Minister also aware that I am reliably informed that the police are interested in investigating some of the happenings in that nursing home at that time? Will he therefore initiate an independent inquiry—independent of the Lanarkshire health board, which is only investigating its own inspection record—and serve the public interest so that people are confident that they can be looked after in nursing homes? We are caring—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have been tolerant enough. The hon. Gentleman's subject might be more suitable for an Adjournment debate. I think that the Minister has got the gist of the hon. Gentleman's question and I am sure that he can give a reply.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I do have the gist of it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State understands that the Lanarkshire health board has completed its inquiry into the standards of care at Orchard House nursing home and that the necessary follow-up action is now under way. A decision about the report's publication is a matter for the board as the registration authority. I can announce this afternoon that my right hon. Friend has asked the social work services inspectorate to examine community care assessments of older people with complex needs within Lanarkshire, the decisions arising from those assessments and the choices made available. We have made a commitment that users should be able to choose their residential care or nursing home care. We are determined to ensure that that policy of choice is in place.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are many nursing homes and residential homes of the highest quality in Scotland which are very much welcomed by those who reside there? Does he agree that those residents are concerned about the capital limit above which they pay the full fee? Will he have discussions with his right hon. Friends to see whether that limit should be raised in the near future?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I shall certainly pass on my right hon. Friend's concern to the Chancellor. My right hon. Friend is right to praise many nursing homes throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. National guidelines on nursing home client groups have been issued and we expect boards to comply with them.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Minister agree that there should be tighter inspection of nursing homes, which are increasingly being run by private sector health care companies which give priority to taking profits out of the homes rather than ensuring that the best nursing care is available in the homes? Does he accept that while, for the moment, Ministers can sit there smugly choosing to put public money into the pockets of their pals in the private sector, a day of reckoning is at hand when they and their kind will be swept away in a deluge of votes and a Scottish parliament, elected by the Scottish people, will

set about the task of restoring to robust health a people's health service that is run for the people, not the profiteers who cluster around the Tory party?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not in favour of profiteering anywhere—

Mr. McAllion: It is happening.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If so, the hon. Gentleman should send in direct evidence and I shall look at it. Under the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938, health boards in Scotland have a statutory responsibility to visit and inspect all nursing homes in their area at least twice a year. If they do not do carry out that duty, they are in contravention of the Act. They have the power to intervene and close a nursing home if it does not meet the proper standards. It is right that the highest standards should be met—

Mr. McAllion: Public money going into private pockets.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman says public funds—we are providing more than £4,000 million for the national health service in Scotland and it is right that it should be given the highest priority.

Fish Catches

11. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total tonnage of fish caught by fishermen in Scotland last year; and what were the comparable totals 10 and 20 years previously. [36039]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The total standard landed weight of fish landings into Scotland by UK vessels in 1994 was 459,268 tonnes. In 1984 that stood at 543,312 tonnes, and in 1974 477,210 tonnes.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As Scottish waters are now a European Union resource and future decisions will be made by majority vote, is the Minister confident that he can secure the long-term future of that vital Scottish industry?

Mr. Robertson: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be the first to agree that, unlike him, fish do not respect international boundaries. Therefore, international co-operation is vital to ensure the proper management of fisheries and the long-term conservation of the fish stocks. That is in everyone's best interests and it will not occur without co-operation.

I am the first to concede to my hon. Friend that the common fisheries policy may be far from perfect, but we are reviewing our approach to it and we shall continue to press for improvements. I am delighted that the CFP review group has two Scottish members who are playing a full role in developing thinking at this crucial time.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that the fishermen of Scotland and Northern Ireland share my concern and that of my colleagues and the people from the Clyde coast constituencies about the threat to safety posed by the phosphorus incendiaries that have been washed up in the past 10 days? As the fisheries and environment Minister for Scotland, will he explain what the Secretary of State for Scotland is doing to ensure that there is no recurrence of the incident? Will he join with me and hon. Members from all parties and ask British Gas—we know that its pipe laying has caused the problem—to suspend its operations immediately until it is clear that there can be no recurrence of that appalling and horrendous danger?

Mr. Robertson: I know that the hon. Gentleman had meetings yesterday with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, which I understand proved constructive. I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, in his role as Scotland's lead fisheries and environment Minister, has been following up those discussions.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that the prawn catch in the Clyde estuary is nearing its limit under the total allowable catch? Is he also aware that the volume and the quality of the catch is being maintained at very high levels? On that basis, will he consider extending the TAC for prawns in the Clyde estuary?

Mr. Robertson: I commend my hon. Friend for the way in which he has doggedly pursued the matter with me for some time. As he is aware, I travelled the length and breadth of Scotland during the recess in order to hear what fishermen had to say. The matter is clearly of great concern to fishermen on the west coast and I am pleased to announce to the House today that Her Majesty's Government will press the Commission for an increase of 1,000 tonnes on the 1995 precautionary TAC for nephrops off the west coast of Scotland. I am confident that that will ensure a sustained fishery until the end of the year.

Highlands and Islands

12. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on economic prospects for the highlands and islands. [36040]

Mr. Kynoch: The success of the Government's economic policies means that the prospects for continuing growth and long-term economic prosperity in the highlands and islands look very encouraging.

Mr. Macdonald: I return to the question of the Skye bridge. Contrary to the benefits claimed by the Government, everyone in Scotland recognises that the policy of high tolls is creating an economic barrier to progress in Skye and the western isles that is every bit as great as the physical barrier that the bridge is intended to overcome.

I ask the Minister to look specifically at the question of disabled drivers using the bridge. Disabled drivers who display orange badges receive a 100 per cent. exemption from tolls on every other toll bridge in Scotland, but they are having to pay the full whack on the Skye bridge. That is surely completely unjustifiable and an example of what happens when the profit motive is put before the interests of the community.

Mr. Kynoch: I am very disappointed that the hon. Gentleman seeks to try to run down Skye. The Skye bridge is a much better transport link that makes Skye more accessible. As I understand it, the tolls on the Skye bridge are much less than people would pay on the ferries.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to disabled people. Arrangements for the disabled using the Skye bridge are better than arrangements on the ferries and, in fact, disabled drivers are exempt from tolls.

Mr. Dalyell: Who has given the evidence that the cracks are only simply cosmetic?

Mr. Kynoch: I trained as a mechanical not a civil engineer, but even I am aware that, as my hon. Friend explained, when one pours concrete surface cracks may appear. Those surface cracks must then be covered over for cosmetic reasons. As far as I am aware, the hon. Gentleman need have no worries about the structural arrangements for the bridge. They have been looked at thoroughly and everyone is quite confident that the bridge will go from strength to strength and will greatly assist the people of Skye about whom the Government are concerned.

Poll Tax

13. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of poll tax still outstanding at today's date. [36041]

Mr. Kynoch: As at 30 June 1995, the total amount of community charge income which remained uncollected in Scotland was £310.8 million.

Mr. Martin: Does the Minister know whether Mr. Dick Douglas cleared his poll tax bill before the Government appointed him, or afterwards? That would be interesting to know as Mr. Douglas sat on the Opposition Benches beside me for three or four years saying that he would not pay it. Now that Mr. Douglas has a nice salary, does the Secretary of State intend that he should pay something towards that salary because he encouraged people not to pay the poll tax?

Mr. Kynoch: What the hon. Gentleman should consider is that of the £310.8 million of community charge outstanding, £208.8 million relates to Strathclyde. That has come about because of the totally reckless campaign by the Scottish Nationalists and the total inefficiency of the Labour-controlled council in collecting the tax. To put the matter in perspective for the people of Strathclyde, that sum of money as a one-off payment would save £280 on a band-D tax bill and represents 37 per cent. of the total council tax revenue. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will try to make sure that the council goes ahead and collects that tax in the interests of the people of Strathclyde.

Mr. Worthington: What about Dick Douglas?

Mr. Kynoch: Mr. Douglas is the chairman of the water customers' council. I am sure that he will look after customers' interests to the best of his ability and I commend my right hon. Friend for making that appointment.

Mr. George Robertson: Mr. Dick Douglas was plucked from obscurity, to which he was consigned by the electors, by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Has he or has he not paid the poll tax or is it another example of the Government's double standards? Perhaps it is revealing that the inventor of the poll tax is not answering questions at this point in the Order Paper today. Let me make the obvious point that there would never have been the poll tax—the only and real tartan tax that the people of Scotland have to pay—if we had a Scottish parliament. It would never have passed that legislation. Will the Minister answer the straight question that has been put to him? Mr. Douglas is being paid a high salary to head a quango. He was appointed by the man who invented the poll tax. Has Mr. Douglas paid it?

Mr. Kynoch: I really do think that the hon. Gentleman has given a pretty weak performance this afternoon. I hope for his sake that he is successful in the reshuffle within his party today. The one thing that he fails to tell the electorate of Scotland is the taxation that will apply to the people of Scotland should his Scottish parliament come about. He has had questions put to him throughout the summer by the Government and the Conservative party about the income and the revenue for the Scottish parliament. He has failed to answer those questions. Unfortunately, he will cost the Scottish people and that is not in the interests of the Scottish people, the Scottish economy or Scottish business.

Mr. Martin: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Due to the unsatisfactory reply from the Minister, perhaps I could raise this matter in an Adjournment debate.

Forestry Review

14. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Forestry Commissioners to discuss the implementation of the forestry review. [36042]

Mr. Kynoch: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discussed the forestry review with the chairman and director general of the Forestry Commission in August. We shall make an announcement about its implementation soon.

Sir Thomas Arnold: What success is my hon. Friend having towards ensuring that there is adequate public access whenever woodland is sold by the Forestry Commissioners?

Mr. Kynoch: Obviously, access is important to the Government and access to woodlands which are sold are of prime concern to the Forestry Commission. Every effort is made to secure access agreements which guarantee access for the public on foot. However, on the woodlands that have been sold so far, there has been a presumption by the Forestry Commission against selling woodlands with a need for high level of access, therefore it has occurred on only several occasions.

Health Issues (Glasgow)

15. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health issues in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement. [36043]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I met Greater Glasgow health board most recently on 3 October to discuss its plans to further improve health care for the people of Glasgow.

Mr. McAvoy: Will the Minister confirm that at that meeting the board put to him the proposal to close Rutherglen maternity hospital? If it did, and if he is now considering the proposal, will he bear in mind that this is one of the safest, most efficient and most modern maternity units in the greater Glasgow health board area?

Does he agree that it would be ludicrous to close such a facility and replace it with another unit costing between £13 million and £15 million?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The health board has not put any plans for Rutherglen maternity hospital to Ministers. I understand that it has carried out a thorough review of the organisation of maternity services, and has consulted publicly. It stressed the importance of integrating maternity care with the full range of support facilities available in general hospitals.

I am fully aware of the strength of local support, and of the fact that the Government have provided some £612 million for health care for Glasgow's residents this year.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Before the vote on the defence estimates yesterday evening, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed the House that I, along with some of my hon. Friends, had withdrawn my name from the amendment. In a point of order later in the evening, I explained that that was not the case. I assumed that an apology would be forthcoming from the Minister, but it has not. Have you, Madam Speaker, been informed that the Minister intends to make a statement, and that part of it will constitute an apology?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed that a Minister is seeking to make a statement on that matter, but I have before me the exchanges that took place on the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I believe that at that time my Deputy Speaker dealt with the matter in the right manner, and that no further point of order arises on the issue.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance on whether, and in what circumstances, parliamentary privilege should be used to overturn or ignore a legal requirement of the European Court of Justice.

You will be aware, Madam Speaker, that yesterday the European Court of Justice said that it was illegal for women to be appointed to organisations on a quota basis, and that those organisations are therefore questionable. One such organisation exists in the House: I refer, of course, to the shadow Cabinet. Someone who is salaried by the House—the shadow Chief Whip—is appointed from what, allegedly, is now an illegally constituted body. Would you entertain any application from Opposition Members to use parliamentary privilege to overturn that legal requirement, and what would that do constitutionally to our relationship with the European Court of Justice?

Madam Speaker: I am not prepared to give a ruling on the matter at present, but now that the hon. Gentleman has made the point to me I shall certainly look at it and give him a carefully considered response.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Question Time, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Dick Douglas—whom we all know—was mentioned. Is it not a matter of fact that, when the legislation went through the House, it made it the local authority's responsibility to deal with individuals?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. Of course it was the local authority's responsibility to see that the tax was collected from each individual.

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Several hundred disabled people and carers are currently holding a meeting in Westminster Hall because the booking of the Grand Committee Room, which was made in advance, has been superseded. Those people have been forced to hold their meeting in Westminster Hall without the advantage of a public address system. Will you please look into the matter, Madam Speaker? On a number of occasions, people have come here and have been forced to attend meetings in which they cannot hear what people are saying. Surely we should welcome disabled people and carers to the House, rather than making them feel unwelcome.

Madam Speaker: The Committee considering the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill is sitting in the Committee Room in question; it takes precedence over any lobbying of the House. This morning I carefully went into the circumstances of the lobby to which the hon. Gentleman refers, which is greatly welcome here. I understand that about 300 disabled people and carers have come here. The best possible facilities have been provided for them in Westminster Hall, where there is a loudspeaker to let Members know where their constituents are. Everything possible is being done by the Serjeant at Arms Department to see that these people are made comfortable and welcome and that hon. Members know where their constituents are.

Mr. Berry: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, he cannot pursue the point of order—I have already answered the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Greenway: On another point of order, Madam Speaker. I have been to Westminster Hall to try to find constituents of mine who have sent me green cards and who are there, and I must respectfully tell you that no loudspeaker system is in operation. It was extremely difficult to find people, although I did manage to find one or two of them. Whatever system is in place is not working as it should be, so the people who have come here are not being seen as they are entitled to be.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. At 12 o'clock today I was assured that the loudspeaker system was working, so perhaps the Serjeant at Arms will take care of the matter without further delay.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

VALUE ADDED TAX

That the Value Added Tax (Tour Operators) (Amendment) Order 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1495) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

Question agreed to.

Pet Animal Welfare

3.35 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to control the sale of animals in pet shops and the breeding of dogs; and for connected purposes.

My Bill aims to end puppy farming, to control the sale of animals to young people, to ban the importing of exotic pets and to modify the quarantine system in this country. I realise at this late stage of the parliamentary year that my chances of legislative success are even less than my chances of entering the kingdom of heaven—or indeed the shadow Cabinet, although I am assured by my more ambitious colleagues that the two are one and the same place.

It is not my intention to stop people enjoying the company of animals and pets; rather I intend to promote the welfare of animals through effective regulation of the pet trade.

I shall deal first with the scandal of puppy farming, and begin by paying a warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) for his tireless efforts to stamp it out.

The trade began in earnest in 1984. Amazingly, it seems that the Agricultural Development Advisory Service suggested at that time that farmers struggling because of EC milk quotas should go into puppy farming. More recently, public awareness of this vile practice has been heightened following campaigns by organisations such as the National Canine Defence League, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Puppy Watch and the *News of the World*. That paper may occasionally catch out some politico doing naughty things but it sure knows how to run an effective animal welfare campaign. Any newspaper that concentrates on the sex lives of Members of Parliament and the cruel mistreatment of animals will never run out of copy.

Remarkably, there are probably about 1,000 puppy farms in west Wales alone, but the trade thrives across Britain, with an estimated 200,000 dogs being produced each year from puppy farms. Owing to a loophole in the law, anyone can set up a puppy farm, although the 1992 legislation now allows local authorities and the RSPCA to inspect premises.

I should like to outline the main areas of concern in respect of these farms. They involve indiscriminate and unprincipled breeding, with bitches often kept in appalling conditions. They are bred twice a year, to exhaustion, typically over an eight-year period, and then disposed of—all for profit, not the betterment of the breed.

This disgusting process also involves puppies being removed from their mothers soon after birth and transported hundreds of miles before being purchased by unsuspecting people wanting a pet. Some of the vile people involved in the trade are now exporting to the far east in the certain knowledge, I believe, that some of the dogs will end up in a pot or on a plate. We have the nerve to describe ourselves as a country of animal lovers, yet we do nothing about these dog factories, despite extensive public opposition.

A survey earlier this month carried out on behalf of the National Canine Defence League revealed that 95 per cent. of vets are against the mass breeding of puppies on puppy farms; 84 per cent. believe that their clients are unlikely to know whether their puppies have been mass-bred; 63 per cent. of these same vets felt that hereditary disorders are more likely with this process; and 76 per cent. felt that not seeing the puppies' mothers made it more difficult to judge the likelihood of their developing physical or mental disorders.

Finally, a massive 91 per cent. believe that the lack of socialisation causes more problems as animals grow older. Perhaps that has been the reason for many, if not all, of the cases in which a seemingly docile family pet suddenly becomes an aggressive creature capable of savaging or killing members of the family. The first thing that any potential puppy owner should insist on is seeing the mother. If the breeder or pet shop cannot or will not do that, the advice must be to refuse to purchase.

It is the intention of my Bill to secure the better enforcement by local authorities of existing legislation, in particular the Breeding of Dogs Acts 1973 and 1991. I also wish to secure much tighter legislation on licensing and animal welfare, since, in breeding, the interests of the dog must come first. It is essential that puppies stay with their mothers for at least eight weeks and have social contact with humans before joining a family. It would also greatly assist the welfare of what we describe as our best friend if one Government Department rather than a whole clutch of them were designated responsible for all aspects relating to dogs.

Although I have reservations, I still believe that it is good for a child to be brought up with a pet. Social contact with a suitable pet can teach affection, knowledge and respect for animals at an early age, and with more of that we might be able to avoid much of the brutality that so many perverted individuals inflict on animals.

To encourage responsible pet ownership, my Bill would make it illegal to sell an animal to any person under 16. At present, the law allows the sale to any child of 12 or more. There is already widespread support for such a change, from the public, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, and the Pet Trade and Industry Association. Its adoption into law would also put the country into line with the European convention on the protection of pet animals. I would warn Conservative Members that, in the Government's rush to deregulate, they should not further weaken the already inadequate controls over the sale of animals through pet shops.

Keeping an animal for a pet should involve great commitment. A pet should never be reduced to the indignity of being a mere present to please a child at Christmas or a birthday. Nor should a pet be an exotic creature captured in the wild for our pleasure. Anyone who keeps a fashionably exotic animal, such as a snake, alligator, pot-bellied pig, monkey or parrot, either knows a lot about them or is a fool. Regrettably, we know that a significant number of fools think that they know how to keep an exotic pet, and the result is so often tragic for the animal.

In my opinion, there is little if any justification for keeping such animals, and we should impose either a ban or much tougher and enforced regulation. There is overwhelming evidence that well over 50 per cent. of wild birds exported from third-world countries die between capture and final destination. This is not trade; it is mass slaughter, and it must be stopped. European Union countries have banned the export of their own native wild

[Mr. Tony Banks]

bird species, yet the Union remains the world's largest importer of birds. Ideally, we should stop the trade altogether. I pay credit to airlines such as British Airways, Lufthansa, Virgin, KLM and others that are refusing to transport wild birds. Those airlines are setting an example to European Governments, who must now respond by refusing to grant import licences.

I would wish my Bill to contain changes to the archaic British quarantine system, along the lines of the recommendations from our own Agriculture Select Committee. We should replace the quarantine system with a modern one based on vaccinations, antibody testing and approved identification. The present system, in my opinion, merely succeeds in parting responsible owners from their pets and condemning many pets to a miserable life and death in quarantine. Our present quarantine system seems more voodoo than veterinary and it should be changed forthwith.

For all those connected reasons concerning the welfare of pets, I beg leave to be allowed to introduce my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Who will prepare and bring in the Bill?

Mr. Banks: The usual list of suspects, Madam Speaker.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Alan Williams, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Simon Hughes, Miss Kate Hoey, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Chris Mullin and Mr. Tony Benn.

PET ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Tony Banks accordingly presented a Bill to control the sale of animals in pet shops and the breeding of dogs; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Thursday, and to be printed. [Bill 172.]

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Rail Privatisation

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.44 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, bearing in mind that both the sale of the train franchises and the flotation of Railtrack are falling further and further behind schedule because of investor disinterest or distrust, and noting that the run-up to privatisation has revealed a lamentable decline in safety standards, an unprecedented collapse of investment and almost universal opposition from the travelling public, calls upon the Government to abandon this sell-off and switch expenditure from promoting the dogma of privatisation to improving a vital public service based on renewal of rolling-stock, upgrading of lines and higher standards for passengers.

I congratulate the Secretary of State for Transport, the new holder of the post. I hope that he enjoys his time in office for the brief tenure that is all that awaits him.

At the risk of intruding into private grief, I also wish the right hon. Gentleman well in his search for a new seat at Maidenhead, where, I understand, his deputy, the Minister for Railways and Roads, is the other main contender. I do not wish to spoil his chances by announcing that I am backing him. As, however, this is the first time in the current chicken run that two Ministers in the same Department have scurried for the same seat, all that I say is, "May the best chicken win!"

On 24 November last year, the previous Secretary of State for Transport announced that the Government intended to privatise Railtrack by April 1996—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That is a little premature in view of what is coming. Almost a year later, so far has the proposed privatisation fallen into public disrepute and commercial suspicion that the present Secretary of State was obliged to reannounce it a week ago to the Tory party conference. This time, there were two important differences. First, he was forced to admit that the Government could not meet their target for the sale of 1 April next and that the aim now was for it to be some time in spring. As every single target in this whole sorry saga has been missed, normally by a wide margin, we can take that promise with a pinch of salt.

Secondly, the Secretary of State had to admit that the sale would comprise

"at least 51 per cent. of the assets."

That is a major climbdown. Hitherto, there had never been any doubt that the figure would be 100 per cent. Indeed, on 15 November last year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote to the Prime Minister in one of those leaked letters saying that the privatisation of Railtrack was

"integral to the Budget arithmetic."

In other words, given that the whole aim of the exercise is to raise funds for tax cuts, it is clearly a humiliating admission that the Government may now be able to sell only half. It is the most obvious sign yet that the Government are in deep trouble over this privatisation, both with investors and with the travelling public.

It is scarcely surprising. Who in their right mind would want to buy into an industry that, uniquely and unlike any previous privatisation, will always be dependent on a high level of Government subsidy—£2 billion this year—which no Government, Tory or Labour, can automatically guarantee for ever? Who in their right mind would want to buy a piece of an industry split up into 94 separate parts, all independent and competing against each other, where the profitability of each part is unpredictably dependent on the condition and performance of all the other parts?

Who would want to buy into a train company when the revenue and profits will be squeezed by the fares cut which the Government have imposed, while the fixed costs are continually being forced up by Railtrack's ever-rising track access charges and when they know—I make this clear—that a Labour Government will not allow them to go for a quick profit by lowering any further the already too low passenger service requirements fixed by the franchise director?

Who would want to buy into Railtrack when 80 per cent. of its revenue comes from track access charges, and there can be no certainty about their future level? Current charges are based on valuing Railtrack at about £8 billion, under an accounting system known as modern equivalent assets valuation. However, if Railtrack is sold at a fraction of that value that must significantly reduce the track access charges that would be permitted by the regulator.

In the light of all that, it is hardly surprising that, when Sir Bob Reid, the former chairman of British Rail, and therefore someone who knows more about the subject than most, was asked about Railtrack's investment prospects, he said that he would rather put his money into a butcher's shop.

That also helps to explain why, despite all the huffing and puffing about privatisation that has gone on for a year, the Government have managed to sell only one quarry in Devon, an electronics firm, four British Rail maintenance workshops, two smaller workshops and two depots, together with the train charters to run services for special events. That is all they have achieved after a whole year of seeking to privatise the railways.

Far from meeting the timetable by selling half the network by 1 April 1996, the Government may now fail to have sold even one passenger franchise, and they will certainly not have sold more than a tiny handful by that date. The Secretary of State, carried along on a high of pre-privatisation complacency, appears not even to understand his own target. On 10 September he said:

"This month, 51 per cent. [of the franchises] will have had their service requirements defined. At the end of the year, about 51 per cent. of the franchises will be out to tender".

The right hon. Gentleman was not even right about that. By the end of last month only seven of the 25 franchises have had their service levels defined. But that is not the point. The real point, which the right hon. Gentleman seems unable or unwilling to grasp, is the fact that the Government's commitment was to sell 51 per cent. by turnover of the franchises by 1 April 1996. On that score they have comprehensively and ignominiously failed.

Far from going away, the problems are multiplying. We know from leaks—I am glad to say that so hated is rail privatisation that we have had plenty of those over the summer—that plans for Railtrack to produce new computer software for the May 1996 timetable, by which time it is supposed to be operating as a private company, are in a state of collapse.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): The hon. Gentleman said that he was glad that there had been plenty of leaks. Are we to take that as an official statement from the Opposition Front Bench? Do Front-Bench spokesmen wish to encourage the release of confidential information? Is that the attitude of new Labour?

Mr. Meacher: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety on that score. Of course I am not encouraging leaks; I am simply a recipient of them, but they have been most revealing and I have no doubt—

The Secretary of State for Transport (Sir George Young) *rose—*

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman should let me finish answering his hon. Friend.

I have no doubt that, until the Government give up their madcap privatisation, leaks will continue to flow.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman told the House that he did not encourage leaks. Is he aware that, in an article that he wrote for *Railway Magazine*, he said:

"leaked documents are particularly welcome. I promise to make good use of them."

Mr. Meacher: Absolutely. Leaked documents are particularly welcome; I am not encouraging them, but if I—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hawkins: New Labour.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Since one of the terms of service for anybody now working in this highly responsible new organisation is that they must not disclose information of any kind—even that which clearly is in the public interest—is it not absolutely essential if passengers are to be safeguarded that railwaymen and women, far from being treated in a contemptible way and told that they are not trusted, tell the truth? Should they not have the right to pass on such information to the public?

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. The situation in the rail industry is exactly the same as that which is operated in the health service—employees who know that the interests of the public are being undermined or put at risk are forbidden to make that information known. That shows how ashamed the Government are of what is going on in the services for which they are responsible. It is an act of public duty for those people who know facts which are in the public interest to ensure that those facts are made known. There are so many of examples of that that the Opposition do not have to ask for them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my hon. Friend agree that the road to socialism is strewn with photocopies and brown envelopes?

Mr. Meacher: I certainly think that the road to retaining the rail industry within the public sector is strewn with a mountain of leaks. Those leaks indicate—and public polls confirm—that 88 per cent. of the population are deeply opposed to this privatisation. That

[Mr. Meacher]

number must include half the Tory party and, of course, many employees who know better than anyone what is going on.

I was talking about the computer software and the problems that the Government are having before I was temporarily interrupted. I received a letter from a senior Railtrack employee, dated 26 September, which stated:

"The present crisis is because the next May (1996) timetable needs to be on our systems within the next couple of months, but there is no chance of this happening. The next system simply will not be ready, if indeed it will ever be ready.

Of course Railtrack decided they needed to have all sorts of fancy line and time charging systems on the new software, things that were naturally totally unnecessary on the unified BR software, but that is a natural consequence of Rail Fragmentation.

If Railtrack were passed back to the BR board, all these problems would just disappear, and an awful lot of taxpayers money would instantly be saved as a result."

What a pity that the Secretary of State cannot rise above the dogmatism of his predecessor and, for once, show a bit of common sense.

Even that is not the end of the timetable farce. Railtrack produced a 2,100-page timetable for the current year which was so pitted with errors and misprints that two supplements of 300 pages of corrections were required. Even that was not enough, as I understand that trains were still apparently scheduled to collide on the route from Waterloo to Exeter. Railtrack decided to recall and pulp 100,000 existing timetables, which retailed at £7.50 each, and print another 100,000. But I understand from industry sources that further misprints and errors are likely, so we can expect more supplements. At this rate we will soon have more rewritten timetables than John Major relaunches—with, I must say, about the same degree of success.

It is not just the industry and investors who are bemused and bewildered. The travelling public are equally bilious. In his speech last week to the Tory party conference, the Secretary of State said that, no matter who ran the railway, there would be "no compromise on safety". Does he have the faintest idea what has been going on? I must pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) for his remarkable series of revelations during the summer.

Mr. Jack Rose—Railtrack's senior manager responsible for safety—warned two months ago that Railtrack needed 18 months if it was to manage safety effectively, yet the Secretary of State continues to insist on concluding privatisation within the next six months—a year before those systems can be in place.

Then there was the botched £2.5 million resignalling project on the Glasgow to Perth line, which led to signals showing green on 10 separate occasions when they should have been showing red, revealing that the lessons of Clapham, when 35 people were killed, had still not been learnt. It also revealed the dishonesty of Railtrack, which initially lied that passenger trains were not involved.

Now the safety and standards directorate within Railtrack is being sold off. The body responsible for safety policy throughout the network is being made subject to the commercial pressures of the private market.

We have a leaked report—one of the many that we have received—of internal Department of Transport correspondence, which shows the ultimate cynicism about investment in new and safer trains. I shall again quote that correspondence word for word. It states:

"Statistics show that the actual number of accidents occurring is small. This has been tolerable to customers and users of the railways so that the promise of better trains in the future has been an acceptable situation, and there is not generally a demand for the immediate renewal of older vehicles simply because they are less crashworthy than new vehicles."

If all that is what the Secretary of State means by no compromise on safety then God help our railways and the travelling public if the Conservatives win a fifth term.

Nor is this merely a matter of safety. Every other promise the Tories made about a privatised railway has gone sour. They said that it would produce a better service for passengers. The Secretary of State said that again this morning. In fact, the passenger service requirements have been consistently fixed at 15 to 20 per cent. below current timetable provisions. They said that it would be less costly for the taxpayer. In fact, the Tory-dominated Select Committee on Transport said a few months ago that it would cost £700 million more to run a private rather than a public railway.

The Tories said that privatisation would reduce bureaucracy. In fact, the increase in bureaucracy will be stifling. According to Railtrack's legal advisers, for every station used by more than one of the 25 train companies, there will have to be a 42-page lease and a 196-page station access conditions document plus, for every user, a 26-page collateral contract and a 31-page station access agreement. All the documents have to be customised and there are 2,500 stations. Indeed, the hideous complexities of this crackpot privatisation structure are mainly responsible for the continually missed deadlines and abandoned targets.

The previous Secretary of State, in his statement on Railtrack last year, said that privatisation would allow for

"delivering efficient track maintenance and encouraging investment in the upgrading of railway lines. It will provide even greater scope for private capital to be injected into better facilities."—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1994; Vol.250, c. 729.]

What exactly happened? Since privatisation was announced in 1992, investment in the network has halved in real terms. Track maintenance has been cut so that, according to the Department's written answer on 17 July in column 887 of *Hansard*, on one line alone—the Paddington to Plymouth line—no fewer than 16 speed restrictions are in force because of the condition of the track. According to the excellent Select Committee on Transport report of 5 July, about 195 miles of track are now subject to speed restrictions.

What about the previous Secretary of State's statement about the greater scope for private capital to be injected into better facilities? In fact, privatisation has generated the biggest dearth of investment in the history of the industry. Last year, for the first time since the war, there was not a single order for new rolling stock. There have been no orders this year and next year already seems certain to be the same.

The right hon. Gentleman said in his speech last week:

"My job is to show, before the next election, that our vision is the right one"—

he has certainly got a hard job—

"for passengers . . . for those who work on the railways."

Perhaps he could make a start on his task by trying to persuade the workers at ABB at York, the most efficient skilled carriage builders in Europe, that his vision is the right one when it is the Government-induced investment blight arising from privatisation that has just destroyed the 750 of their jobs.

The right hon. Gentleman—he will be relieved to know that this will be my last quotation from his speech, which is a mine of information—also said:

"Privatisation is happening; and will bring better services to passengers."

Before hon. Members cheer, I would like to know where on earth the Secretary of State thinks he has been. Does he not know that private train operators will not have to meet minimum standards for rolling stock, including the provision of on-board lavatories, space for storing bicycles and proper facilities for wheelchair users; that minimum station standards, including security and cleanliness, will be relaxed by the franchising director where stations are repeatedly vandalised if he thinks that it would not be cost-effective for train operators to keep to those standards; and that train operators will be free to cut staffing on trains down to a minimum safety level which will mean fewer guards and staff?

Does not the Secretary of State know that train operators will not even have to publish timetables for all passenger trains stopping at particular stations where more than one operator runs those services? Despite all the hoo-hah that the previous Secretary of State made about ending overcrowding on commuter routes, does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that train operators on commuter routes will be allowed to increase passenger loading and standing during the rush hour after privatisation because all but five routes are now below the maximum level of excess capacity that he is permitting?

If the right hon. Gentleman really wants to find out what the ethos of privatisation means for passengers, he need look no further than at what happened only last week on the Torquay line for an elementary lesson in privatisation economics. He will learn that while there was a time when people used the trains to travel to their destinations, in the run-up to privatisation, as the pricing manager for South Wales and West Railways has been frank enough to admit, trains are now run to satisfy

"value for money aspirations of its customers."

If, to use the pricing manager's phrase, exceptional loadings—which means if there is a high demand for a train service—occur, then, rather than put on more coaches, season ticket fares are increased by no less than 56 per cent. to suppress the demand. That is privatisation economics: do not accept people simply because they want to use train to travel; bung up prices to maximise revenues and profits and turn away half those who want to use the services if they cannot pay.

Not a single specific argument for rail privatisation stands up to scrutiny. The only defence to which the right hon. Gentleman can resort, as he did last week and again this morning—unfortunately too late in our interview for me to reply, so I will do so now—is that other privatisations such as British Airways, British Telecom and the British Airports Authority have, he says, been a success. He therefore claims that this privatisation will succeed, too.

Quite apart from the fact that most people would not regard the privatisation of water and the utilities as a howling success, let me ask the right hon. Gentleman one straight question: does he really believe that a privatised British Airways or British Telecom would have been a success if they had been split up into 94 separate, independent parts all competing against each other?

Sir George Young: If the hon. Gentleman knew how British Airways worked, he would understand that it sub-contracts a large part of its work. It does not own its aircraft but leases most of them. It sub-contracts baggage handling and buying in meals. It is a decentralised and disaggregated business, much as British Rail will be.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State cannot get away with that. He misrepresents the position. In the case of the privatisation of British Rail, no single command centre within the organisation is proposed. Every piece will be independent and separate, and must negotiate and commercially compete against every other section. The right hon. Gentleman must take that point on board. It is a crackpot structure, which is the basic reason why it cannot succeed.

Let me make it clear that Labour wants not merely a publicly owned railway but a much better railway. We want a rail renaissance in this country. Our objective is a high-speed rail link, not merely from the Channel tunnel to London—under this Government that is 10 years too late—but up through the heart of Britain to the north of England and Scotland, with high-speed connections to the east and west of England and to Wales. Our objective is to transfer freight from road to rail by creating a piggy-back freight network with freight terminals in all major urban and industrial areas. We shall develop a national public transport information network integrating rail and light rail with bus services wherever feasible.

At the heart of our policy is the integrated transport strategy that this nation now desperately needs. Such a strategy is incompatible with the privatisation and break-up of our railways. The sooner this absurd privatisation is swept away into the dustbin of history, the better for our nation.

4.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Sir George Young): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that privatisation of the railways will bring better services to passengers, as has happened with previous privatisations, such as British Airways and British Airports Authority; contrasts this with the Opposition's commitment to renationalise the railways; welcomes the announcement that Railtrack will be floated next Spring, allowing access to private capital and opportunities for investors; and further welcomes the progress that has already been made on privatisation, which will lead to a new era for passengers, with fares and services protected for the first time.'.

First, I thank the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for his good wishes at the inception of his speech. May I reciprocate by saying how much Conservative Members wish him good fortune in the shadow Cabinet elections?

I welcome the opportunity to have another debate on railway privatisation. First, I should like to say a word or two about the dilemma for the Opposition, not just in opposing a policy that is under way but also when their own policy is changing. Then I shall bring the House up to date on the progress that has been made with privatisation since we last debated it in July, after which I shall deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's criticisms,

[Sir George Young]

particularly on safety and the position in the south-west. Finally, I shall explain how our policies will bring about the revival of the railways, which I am sure the whole House wants to see.

Listening to the hon. Gentleman speak, who would have thought that since 1964, under Labour, 655 stations were closed whereas, under the Conservatives, 244 stations have been opened? So I shall take no lectures from the Opposition on running a decent railway.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir George Young: May I get a little further away from the terminus before I grind to a halt at the first signal?

Earlier this month, there was a humiliating U-turn on railways at a seaside conference. That was in Brighton at the Labour party conference, where the Leader of the Opposition caved in to the trade unions and promised to renationalise the railways—a commitment carefully avoided for two years but now entered into not just at some unspecified date in the future but as soon as possible.

The reasons for that change of heart remain obscure. I must tell the brothers below the Gangway that, although they accepted the resolution at the party conference, the motion before the House contains no such mention of a publicly owned railway. Why is it that, having made that commitment and reconfirmed it, the Opposition make no mention whatever of it in the motion?

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Perhaps the reason for the reversal of Opposition policy would be less obscure if my right hon. Friend had a glance at the Register of Members' Interests and saw how many of the Opposition are sponsored by railway unions.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will have noticed that no answers were given to the questions we have consistently asked: what are they going to buy back, and how will they pay for that? The hon. Member for Oldham, West made not a single mention of how the Labour party would fund the policy that he has recently embraced.

No sooner had the leader of the Labour party declared his new policy, and had it repeated by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, than he was backing off from it as fast as possible on the "Today" programme the very next day. No sooner was the Opposition's timetable published than they had to rush out a supplement. The transcript of the "Today" programme shows that it is clear that the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) refused to answer the question of how Labour would pay for renationalisation. The question was again ducked this morning by the hon. Member for Oldham, West when Sue MacGregor asked it. He was totally unable to answer it.

I put the same question to the hon. Member again. How will the Opposition pay for renationalisation? Is the answer to be higher fares, or is it to be higher taxes or higher borrowing? What exactly is it that they propose to renationalise? Is it Railtrack? Is it the rolling stock companies? Is it the franchised companies? It is odd that, having given that commitment, there is nothing about it in the Opposition motion.

The story gets more confusing because, on 26 September, on the Channel 4 news, the hon. Member for Oldham, West said:

"there can be no guarantee that the level of public subsidy will continue indefinitely into the future."

Having listened to the hon. Member restate his commitment to publicly funded railways, I find it odd that at the same time the Opposition are refusing to commit themselves to continuing public subsidy for the railways. What kind of message does that send to passengers? No wonder a recent headline in *The Guardian* read, "Meacher in trouble over rail privatisation pledge".

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): This is a repeat.

Sir George Young: I made a very good speech at Blackpool and it deserves a further audience. The hon. Member for Oldham, West omitted to read out some sections of it.

During the summer, we saw the other traditional Labour tactic—the scare story. The Opposition are now so desperate to frighten passengers off the railways that the hon. Member for Oldham, West is soliciting leaked documents. As he said in an article for *Railway Magazine*:

"leaked documents are particularly welcome. I promise to make good use of them."

Those Opposition Members who hope at some point to be Ministers may well come to regret the day that that statement was made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

In response to the scare stories on safety, I would like to draw attention to the independent Health and Safety Commission, which reported on 23 August:

"there is no evidence of any overall decline in health and safety standards".

Even the trade unions are beginning to lose patience with the hon. Member for Oldham, West. A representative of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers said in a BBC Bristol interview on 14 September that the hon. Gentleman's claims in that particular case were nonsense.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before we leave the question of safety, may we consider the Forth rail bridge and Mr. John Rimington's various examinations? I do not expect an answer from the Secretary of State off the top of his head, but may I ask the Department of Transport in all seriousness to give a full statement of its assessment of the safety involved in what is the greatest engineering monument to the 19th century?

Sir George Young: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, but I think that I am right to say that we have asked the HSE to do a survey of the Forth bridge and to let us have its findings by the end of the year. I believe that to be the case, but I shall confirm it in writing.

After the incident that I have just described, we then had the spectacle of the hon. Member for Oldham, West attacking the Government in a press release on 26 September for helping railway employees to make bids for the various rail companies that we are privatising. Is the hon. Gentleman really saying that he does not want the people who run the services at the moment to have a stake in their future?

What about the management and the employees who recently bought the former British Rail sandwich operations for £11.5 million? Is he really saying that Labour wants to spend £11.5 million buying that company back from its employees rather than conceding that his policy on renationalisation is old-fashioned and out of date?

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the Labour party were to go ahead with proposals such as those made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), they would undoubtedly be vetoed by the shadow Chancellor, who would say that there was not enough money to carry them out?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend's point gives rise to an interesting question. Why is it that the shadow Chancellor has not allowed a motion to be tabled in the name of the Opposition, reaffirming the commitment carried without any contradiction at the Labour party conference only 14 days ago? I wonder whether there is a split in the shadow Cabinet.

We have heard scare stories about fare increases. I remind the House that fares increased by more than 22 per cent. in real terms in four years under Labour. Under the present Government, key fares will be frozen to the retail prices index for the first three years from January 1996, and then fall below that for a further four years.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West repeated that Railtrack's access charges will increase. He must know that that is not the case. The rail regulator has said that, on average, access charges will be 8 per cent. less in real terms this year than they were in 1994-95 and should then fall below the RPI for the next five years. They will go down, not up.

The Opposition claim that train operators will be able to make cuts in services for profits. According to the legislation, that will not be possible, as service levels, for the first time ever, are specified by the franchising director in the passenger service requirements for each company.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: I shall give way once more, but then try to make progress.

Mr. Mackinlay: If a franchiser rats on his obligations, will the Secretary of State ensure that the franchise is terminated? In our opinion, the arithmetic does not add up. One cannot prevent fares from increasing and at the same time maintain services under that scheme. I want an undertaking from the Secretary of State that if there is any failure—any reneging on the franchise—that part of the service will be brought back into the public sector immediately.

Sir George Young: It would revert to the franchising director, to the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising. If the person with the franchise for that seven years reneged on his obligations, the franchising director would have to re-let the franchise.

All Labour says is that it will campaign to prevent privatisation, but that campaign has already failed. Privatisation is happening and, month by month, businesses are being put into the private sector. Already, more than £4 billion by turnover of the old British Rail is on the market. The momentum will continue well into next year, with the flotation of Railtrack and the start of the new franchised train services. No wonder the *Sunday Times* reported this week:

"the privatisation war is being won."

Our policies are clear and succeeding; Labour's policies are muddled and failing.

I shall now describe the progress that we have made since we last debated the subject, in July. As the House knows, there will be 25 geographically based franchises for the existing train operating units. We have made substantial progress. Invitations to tender for seven franchises—41 per cent. of the total by turnover—have been issued. I expect that figure to increase to 51 per cent. by about the turn of the year, when the next two invitations to tender are issued. Those are serious bids from serious bidders. Final negotiations with the shortlisted bidders for the first batch—three franchises—are under way. I look forward to announcing the results shortly. The passenger service requirements for a further three franchises have been published, so now more than 55 per cent. of services are being, or have been subject to, consultation.

The franchising director and his staff are working to put further franchises out to tender in a responsible, responsive way as part of a rolling programme. We want a flourishing rail freight industry in the private sector. British Rail's freight customers are enthusiastic supporters of privatisation. They know that competition should give them a better choice of better services. I share that enthusiasm.

We have already offered freight businesses for sale with a turnover of £750 million. The loss-making Red Star has been sold. We have indicative bids for the three Trainload Freight businesses. We have final bids for Rail Express Systems. I expect bids for Freightliner early next year.

Another cornerstone of privatisation is the sale of the three passenger rolling stock companies. Rolling stock leasing will leave train operators free to concentrate on their main business: planning, operating services and looking after the customers. All three ROSCOs, with a turnover in excess of £750 million, are being sold. Final bids for the companies were received last month and I am confident they too will be in private hands before the turn of the year.

We have sold the six British Rail heavy maintenance depots, seven design offices and the on-board catering operation. For the depots, more than 70 organisations expressed interest. There were competitive bids from engineering companies, train builders, and management buy-out teams. All were sold as going concerns. That gives the lie to the Opposition's claim that privatisation cannot succeed.

I want to record that we are pleased to see, not just here with the maintenance depots but in all sectors of privatisation, strong bids by management-employee teams. It is clear from the way that those bidders are reacting to the new opportunities that they see privatisation as the best way to escape from the confines of a structure that has crushed their imagination and sapped their energy.

To complete my progress report, I announced last week that the Railtrack stock market flotation will take place next spring; it will put control of railway infrastructure

[Sir George Young]

firmly where it belongs—in the private sector—and will bring the total turnover of all the railway businesses on the market to more than £6.5 billion. I congratulate all those who have worked hard to achieve that progress. Clearly, Labour's campaign to prevent privatisation is not working.

Let me now deal with some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, including the fare increase in south Devon which he mentioned. That fare increase came into effect in May under the traditional publicly owned and publicly accountable regime. It is exactly the sort of approach that rail privatisation is designed to stamp out. Once the services involved are franchised, there will be a private sector operator who will be more responsive to passengers.

As I said last week, I am concerned about this case. For the present I have asked British Rail to look urgently into the decisions that have been taken. But for the future, under the new fares regime, that sort of price rise simply could not happen. The franchising director has announced that for three years from January 1996 operators will not be able to increase key fares overall above inflation. After that, fares will be capped at an average of RPI minus 1 per cent. for each of the following years. In this particular case, the weekly season ticket would be protected as well as saver fares. More generally, the franchising director will take into account local needs when he publishes for consultation his draft passenger service requirement.

Every privatisation has had its share of scare stories: for example, the privatisation of British Telecom and the pay phones which, it was said, would close, and the fuel price rises that have never happened. It is therefore hardly surprising that the safety issue has emerged for the railways—it is an issue that I take seriously. There is no reason to expect privatisation of an industry to destroy management's concern for the safety of its customers, its staff or the population at large. There is no evidence to suggest that privatisation of British Airways or the British Airports Authority has reduced safety standards in the aviation industry. There is no evidence to suggest that separation of responsibility between those organisations and others does not work effectively, reliably and safely.

Safety remains of paramount importance in the railway industry and the key factor should be that it is overseen independently. We have implemented in full the Health and Safety Commission's recommendations for an enhanced safety regime for the restructured industry. The Health and Safety Executive has a continuing responsibility in law for the regulation of the industry's safety.

As I have said, the Health and Safety Commission confirmed there is no evidence of any overall decline in standards. In fact, during Railtrack's first year of operation there were major improvements in seven of the eight main indicators measuring injury levels, which were 18 per cent. better, and the passenger train collision/derailment figures were 31 per cent. better.

We are not complacent about safety; Railtrack is not complacent, nor are the train operating companies, nor are the thousands of people who work in the industry.

Mr. Bayley: In the Hidden report on the Clapham rail crash, Sir Anthony Hidden recommended that

"British Rail shall ensure that the organisational framework exists to prevent commercial considerations of a business-led railway from compromising safety."

I believe that that responsibility has passed from British Rail to Railtrack. How does the Secretary of State square the fact that Railtrack will be able to exclude commercial considerations when it is a commercial company in a private sector?

Sir George Young: Its safety regime must be validated and scrutinised regularly by the Health and Safety Commission. That regime has been established in the full knowledge that the various components were about to be privatised. We are not complacent about safety. The HSE will continue its independent monitoring and investigation to ensure that standards are maintained and commitments are met.

We remain firmly committed to the modernisation of the west coast main line and I am pleased that it is progressing well. The west coast main line modernisation has been designated as a priority project on the trans-European railway network.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): When did the Secretary of State last use it?

Sir George Young: I used it when I visited Blackpool. I am pleased to announce that the United Kingdom has secured nearly £7 million of European funding this year for the scheme, and I am confident of securing further funds in 1996 and beyond.

I shall conclude by setting out how our policies will bring about a much-desired revival of the railways. In the past 45 years or so, Governments of all persuasions have poured money—more than £54 billion—into British Rail. Despite that, the railways declined. In 1953, 17 per cent. of journeys were by train and 24 per cent. of goods were moved by rail. Today, both figures are about 5 per cent. and they have continued to drop. Why? I believe that it is because state ownership and state control have failed the railways. The monolithic monopoly failed the passenger, it failed the freight customer, and it failed the owners—the taxpayers.

Mr. Lewis: Does the Minister not think that the concentration of public investment in roads during that period had something to do with it?

Sir George Young: No, I do not think that one can sustain that case. I do not think that that explains why the percentages have decreased. It may explain why the number of people who use cars has increased, but I do not think that it explains the modal shift.

The old-style British Rail structure was an introspective organisation and I am determined to refocus it outwards onto passengers. Something had to be done to wipe out the past and make a fresh start and someone had to create the conditions for a new approach. That is what we did with the Railways Act 1993. It restructured the industry: first, to improve the quality of service to the customer;

secondly, to improve the efficiency of the railways; and, thirdly, to halt and reverse the decline in the use of the railways.

We have put in place bodies to safeguard the wider interests of users and to regulate the industry. We have created a franchising director, who awards franchises to run passenger services on the basis of competitive tendering. He is also required to secure an overall improvement in the quality of railway passenger and station services.

The Government want to see more people travelling by train. One of the ways to persuade people to travel by train is to give them stable fares. That is what we have done, as I said a moment ago. We have given that commitment because we are confident that privatisation will reduce costs and benefit the travellers. For the first time, the wide-ranging protection and supervision of an independent external regulator has been placed on the industry, with clear duties to protect the interests of rail users. We have seen that working in practice: the regulator has taken firm steps to ensure that the number of stations selling through tickets will not be reduced.

I announced last week that we intend to privatise Railtrack in the spring so that, freed from the inevitable constraints of public sector funding, it can and will look to raise investment from a wide range of private sector sources. The flotation will open the way for institutional investors and lenders to finance Railtrack, thus harnessing private sector capital for investment in the railways. The privatisation programme will make Railtrack even more accountable to train operators who are freed from the old monolithic framework.

Labour's only ambition for the railways is to look back, not forward, and to return them to the dark ages of state control when they must compete with the national health service and education for taxpayers' money. Privatisation is already bringing better services to passengers and opening up new opportunities for businesses.

InterCity West Coast has introduced packages, including car park and meal costs. On all the Anglia trains there are facilities to improve access for disabled people. Thames Trains has connecting bus services using joint ticketing for tourist locations. With all that successful change in the railways, who knows? Perhaps the Opposition will do another about-turn and adopt our policy on privatisation. I invite the House to support the amendment in my name.

4.34 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): In his rapid and plainly uncomfortable gallop through the speech that, presumably, was written by the same people who wrote speeches for his six predecessors, the Secretary of State did not mention the real reason for privatisation. We know from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and from a leaked memo that the real reason why privatisation has to be pushed ahead is that it should raise £1.5 billion and it is absolutely essential for the arithmetic of tax cuts. That is what it is all about—putting money into the system before the general election, even if the cost to the taxpayer will be much higher thereafter.

It is clear that the chaos that is the hallmark of privatisation is spreading through the system. Some things are absolutely plain to the naked eye. When we stand on stations and look at the track, we see weeds growing between the rails and we suddenly realise that the system does not carry out even routine maintenance.

The Secretary of State made play of the fact that the new regulator will insist on a new fixing of rail fares. He managed not to say that that resulted from an outcry over through ticketing, which the regulator has made clear he does not like. One suspects that he will get away from it as fast as possible.

The Secretary of State did not mention the fact that most rail travellers use discounted tickets. They represent the largest number of travellers, yet no guarantee has been offered that their interests will be safeguarded.

The position is much more serious and is truly depressing, because the Government are not interested in transport and are prepared to stand aside and watch the entire system fall apart. That is the political and economic reality.

Railtrack is not in command. Simple things are totally beyond it. I have watched disabled people try to stagger up a staircase where normally lifts would be available only to be told by Railtrack that it could take up to six weeks to get things moving again.

Railtrack's day-to-day administration is failing disastrously. It did not surprise me, therefore, that when its chairman was asked to present a clear plan for the next 10 years to the Select Committee on Transport he singularly failed to do so. He has given us no indication of how he expects Railtrack to develop, nor has he addressed what will happen when taxpayers realise that they will have to contribute even more to the dismembered system after privatisation. That will not be particularly popular with the electorate.

People have been told that privatisation is the answer as it will attract vast amounts of private finance and there will be a much higher standard of service. When they suddenly discover that, far from getting a higher standard, they will have to pay more to maintain less than they have now, they will be quite upset. They may even feel that the Government have failed to make a honest statement of what will happen to the railway industry after privatisation.

It is frightening. Two years ago, the Railway Industry Association told the Government that no contracts for rolling stock were being signed. It told them what would happen this year and next year. What was the Government's answer? They said, "Do not worry, all will be well in future." The Secretary of State said, "Do not worry about safety; everything is in control." He gave answers listing the recommendations in Sir Anthony Hidden's report on the Clapham disaster that were implemented. What he has not answered is why specific, important developments have not been carried out, even on the timetable set by his Government.

On train data recorders, we are told:

"this equipment is specified for new rolling stock."

Great. True, we are not going to have any new rolling stock, but, if we did have any, it would have all the new equipment. I am sure that that will satisfy everyone.

We are told:

"the National Radio Network system of communication"

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

is to be installed. We have seen the need for that in the recent past. The system will be completed by 1997, because

"Technical difficulties and higher priority safety projects have extended completion of this programme beyond BR's original target of 1995."

We know that the Government are very concerned about safety; surely they must be going to make automatic train protection a priority. No, I am afraid that they are not. By some dreadful mischance that is not at all plain to me, they have decided that that is not the answer.

"A programme of alternative train protection measures is being developed"—

alternative measures, hon. Members will notice.

"Railtrack and BR continue to examine the implementation of these measures"—

and so on and so forth; there are reams of it, all signed by the junior Minister.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Dunwoody: No. I have a very short time in which to speak, and I am not going to waste it.

The reality is clear: the rolling stock is virtually not being built. That has caused job losses in York, and a knock-on effect in Derby and Crewe. If an incoming Government wanted to invest a large amount in rolling stock, they would find that very few companies were capable of tendering; those that did would almost automatically be foreign-owned. Why does that matter? The simple answer is that employment is needed in this country. The skills were available in this country; the Government not only dissipated them, but seemed to go out of their way to make it impossible for those men and women to find jobs.

I believe that the whole idea of privatising the railway system should have been abandoned. It really does not work. It is clear from the day-to-day operation of the system that it is creating incredible ill will among both passengers and staff. Above all, it is not addressing the real problems. No investment is being made in the system, because no one knows for how long the changes will be in place. There is no indication that there are vast amounts to be made through investment in new rolling stock, because no one knows who will lease it, how long they will be there and what charges they will have to pay.

We hear about Railtrack's demands for economic rates; what we do not hear about is the effect on many people of its immediate application—even simple, mean little things such as the fact that charity trips for people in my constituency have been wrecked because the charges are too high; stupid things such as the fact that rolling stock must be carried on the roads, not because that is an effective way of moving engines but because the charge for moving an engine from one end of the system to the other is so high that people prefer to transport them on the roads. What a crazy development. How can anyone even pretend to defend it?

The most depressing and frightening aspect of the programme, however, is the fact that the Government do not care about the railway system. What they care about is the money that they can raise, in any way at all, before the next general election. That is as clear as daylight. It is clear to those who find themselves—as I did recently—standing on an empty platform. Although nearly 600 people were affected, not one member of staff was available to give any information. There had been an accident, but so many stations have now been "de-staffed" that the public had no one to turn to. One marvellous man on his way to give a concert in Liverpool addressed the air, asking, "Is there anyone, anywhere, who knows anything about what is happening?"

Answer came there none, because in 1995, under this Conservative Government, transport is not even a means to an end. It is not even a safe system of moving people and goods around. It is a way of flogging off assets. Handing over Red Star for £1 was an open insult to those who had built up the business which, until all this crazy reorganisation, used to make a profit. Looking at the railway system only as a means of making money out of its estates is an insult to all who want safe, warm and punctual trains to carry them to work and home again.

The Secretary of State is an honourable man, but like most of his predecessors he is hoping that, with any luck, he will not be in his job long, so it will not matter to him what happens when the Government's policy comes home to roost in a big way. I should warn him that morale in the rail system is disastrously low, because railway men and women have been treated with open contempt. They are forbidden to speak openly about the problems that arise in their daily jobs, they are continually asked to reapply for their own positions and many of them are told that they are no longer useful. Executives who boast that they do not understand the system are brought in to organise, and the results are seen from day to day in the administration of the system.

I believe that this is going to be a political catastrophe for the Government that will make many of their previous idiocies look like a beginner's effort. In the meantime, however, they will strip a respectable system in need of investment of all hope, and the cost to us all will be very great indeed.

4.46 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Although I enjoyed her hyperbole I found it somewhat distracting to hear her speak so obviously from the viewpoint of a vested interest. She is sponsored by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. I recall that in the debate here on 17 May almost every Opposition speaker was sponsored by one or other of the rail unions. That shows up the clear difference between them and us: they speak for the vested interest, we speak for the public interest. So much was clear from the two Opposition speeches that we have already heard today.

The Railways Act 1993 provided the legal framework for the privatisation of British Rail and the introduction of a new industry structure. The Act received Royal Assent in November 1993, and most of its principal changes were brought into effect by April 1994. But I shall begin by dealing with the recent history of the railways in this country.

The railways were first nationalised in 1948, created as a monolithic monopoly, a trade union-oriented organisation that ill served the general public. Over the past 45 years, about £54 billion of public money has been

ploughed into the rail system, but the return on that investment has been very poor. The number of journeys travelled by rail has fallen from 17 per cent. in 1953 to only 5 per cent. today—a lamentable statistic that we must do something to turn around. Indeed, today only 10 per cent. of the British public can claim to travel regularly by rail. We must increase that figure.

It would, in the face of the statistics and of this brief thumbnail sketch of the past 45 years, be irresponsible not to act to bring about change. It would be irresponsible also simply to throw more public money at the rail system, because that clearly has not done any good in the past and it is not the answer. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was quite outrageous and, I believe, disgraceful in his speech today. He misrepresented the facts and I shall make it clear how he did so.

The need for change is clearly established, and all parties agree on that. The only question is what form that change will take. In considering that, we must first define the objectives of the change and then make a sound judgment on its efficacy. Let me state what I consider, from my humble perspective, to be the three key objectives. I shall keep it simple for the benefit of Opposition Members, who like it that way.

The first—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has acknowledged it—is to ensure, safeguard and, indeed, enhance safety.

The second objective is to improve services and quality and to deliver lower costs for rail users. We owe it to them to make an improvement.

The third objective is to attract more passengers on to the railway, which would reduce costs for everybody by spreading the high fixed costs. It would improve the environment tremendously, particularly by reducing pollution, and by delivering a more friendly use of land many other environmental benefits would be delivered. It would also take the pressure off the rest of our transport infrastructure, which is very necessary. Achievement of the third objective would, of course, assist delivery of the first two objectives.

We must consider how to move forward. Privatisation is, I believe, clearly the best way to do so. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, it proved to be the best option with British Airways and the British Airports Authority. Opposition Members, I seem to recall, although I was not in the House then, said that the privatisation of BA would end in tears. They said that safety would be jettisoned, if hon. Members will excuse the pun. What happened? BA went from strength to strength. Nothing could have been further from the truth than Opposition Members' claims. They were irresponsible to make those claims, and they are irresponsible now to make claims about the railways.

BA has gone from strength to strength and is delivering better customer services. It is competitive and is one of the best carriers in the world, whereas French airlines are still absorbing massive amounts of public subsidy every year, taking money that could be spent on pensions, education and health. They will continue to fail until they are privatised, as they will be quite shortly, I guess.

If we decide that privatisation is the best way forward, we must look carefully at the mode of privatisation. The way in which we privatise must be carefully designed and controlled to ensure that it yields the maximum benefits to the travelling public and entices more people to use the train.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), on the excellent privatisation scheme—it is extremely well based—that they have introduced. I am sure that, given good will and integrity, it will be made to work very well and will deliver great benefits to my constituents. I believe that my right hon. Friends have created the right climate for it to work. They have created the right climate for service levels to be improved through the passenger service requirements and for costs to be reduced by their decision to stop the continued and seemingly unavoidable increase in fares.

The facts are quite clear. Fares have increased by 29 per cent. in real terms over the past 16 years, during which we happen to have had a Conservative Government. That is a fact. That is a rise of less than 2 per cent. a year in real terms. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) revealed to the House on 17 May that, under Labour from 1974 to 1979, fares increased by 31 per cent. in real terms—a rise of over 6 per cent. a year in real terms. These figures are provided by the House of Commons Library.

There we have it. Under Labour, there was a more than 6 per cent. increase in real terms every year and under the Conservatives the increase has been under 2 per cent. I know which my constituents would prefer.

I also know that my constituents would prefer no rise at all—in fact they would prefer fares to fall in real terms; that would be good. It would address the cost-volume argument and get more passengers on to the railways so that we could continue to drive costs down. I know, therefore, how much my constituents welcome the policy of my right hon. and hon. Friends to hold fares at the level of inflation—that is, no real-terms rise—for the next three years and then to cut fares by 1 per cent. below inflation for the four years following. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their policies.

I now turn to my own railway line, the London-Tilbury-Southend line which my hon. Friend the Minister knows well. Bids are now maturing for my line. I understand from the press—I have no privy knowledge of this—that there are four short-listed contenders, three private and one management bid. I do not expect any nods or winks from my hon. Friend the Minister on that. However, I expect that he will make a decision on the matter in the coming weeks.

Thus we can see that there has been a healthy bidding process. There has been real competition and I am sure that the financial backers of all those four bidders have exercised great diligence in ensuring that the bids are sound and viable. I do not envy my right hon. and hon. Friends the decision that they will have to make. I shall try to help them by giving a personal view of the process of evaluation through which they will be going.

First, all my right hon. and hon. Friends know that I believe in smaller government, unlike the Opposition. Rail privatisation has a part to play in smaller government so we must look in the bid for a lower subsidy profile. We must look for subsidies to decline year on year. I freely acknowledge that it is unlikely that we shall get to zero

[Dr. Robert Spink]

subsidy on the LTS line over the franchise period, which is said to be seven years. Nevertheless, we should see subsidies falling.

The question of the franchise period brings me to my second point, which is that the successful bidder must bring a significant investment programme with his bid. The problem is, however, that a seven-year franchise term militates against the investment that is needed. Such investment may not be viable over a six-year period. Perhaps a great investment programme would be more viable over a 10-year or 15-year period. I therefore urge my hon. Friend the Minister to be flexible in looking at the franchise periods when he is deciding on the bid, and especially so if the bidders are prepared to countenance new train orders as part of their bid. The bidders should, of course, be prepared to take on risk.

Mr. Bayley: The hon. Gentleman talks about the benefits of competition being brought into the railways. Once a franchise has been granted, the franchise operator—the train operating company—will have a monopoly for however long that franchise lasts. By suggesting that the franchise period is extended, is not the hon. Gentleman giving the private operator the opportunity to have a total monopoly?

The hon. Gentleman says that subsidy will continue and that all the profit during that period will come out of public subsidy, yet he is suggesting that there should be a monopoly on the line for a very long time—for twice as long as the Government have recommended in their proposals.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and does so well. Of course there is a fine balance here, and a decision to be made between the monopoly and the need for a longer franchise period so that proper investment can be encouraged. He will be aware that ABB will deliver trains to the Great Northern line soon, after which it will be without substantial future rolling stock orders, so I hope that bidders will promote orders so that we can build up our manufacturing base in the area. I hope that he will moderate his tone and listen to what the Minister says on the subject when he winds up.

Mr. Bayley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting me intervene again, but perhaps he has missed the fact that the ABB factory in my constituency, which makes those trains, is to close in December because of the lack of orders that has resulted from rail privatisation.

Dr. Spink: That is the point that I was making. I am aware of what is happening and will deal with it later, but first I must make a little progress.

Bidders must be prepared to take risks. The private sector must accept the maximum responsibility for planning in the general economic environment. They must cope with risks such as changes in GDP, in inflation, in track access costs and in VAT regimes, and in many other factors. The public purse should be protected from those inherent risks as far as possible. That happens with other private businesses, and it has happened with other privatisations, such as that of British Airways, so I am sure that the Secretary of State will look to bidders to take on such risks.

I have covered three criteria. The House may consider those in a technical manner, but what really matters is the criteria that our constituents and passengers will adopt when judging rail privatisation policy, so I shall list some of the criteria in which my constituents will be interested.

First and foremost, the public want to see real change. Leaving things as they are does not represent a solution for my constituents. I do not know what the hon. Member for Oldham, West thinks about that. He sits there smiling, but it appears to me that he advocates no change. Or does he advocate throwing more public money at the railways? He has not told us.

The public, especially passengers, are impatient for change, and rightly so, because they have been ill served by the nationalised British Rail for 45 years, and at great cost to themselves—no less than £45 billion.

But changes must not be superficial. I am not talking about a new paint job for the coaches, a new uniform for the staff or a girl walking up and down like an air hostess—although that would be delightful, and most welcome on my LTS line.

The speed of implementation of change is a crucial requirement for securing public confidence. Equally crucial is quality, which must be present in every possible aspect of the business.

Mr. Stephen: My hon. Friend will know that Opposition Members are fond of painting the privatised railway as one in which franchise operators will cram passengers into cattle trucks. Surely he accepts that it will be in the interests of private train operators to make their railway as safe and reliable as possible to ensure that the customer sees rail transport as good value for money.

Dr. Spink: My hon. Friend makes a wise point. He is characteristically supportive of the Government and I thank him for his comments. I entirely accept what he says.

My local line, the London-Tilbury-Southend line, has enjoyed an investment of £150 million in resignalling. The money will have been spent by summer 1996, and the benefits in terms of reliability are already flowing through.

Reliability is not the only thing that needs to be improved; station services need to be improved too. We need real commitment from bidders, not just general aspirations, and I am sure that Ministers will consider such matters carefully. Reliability must continue to be driven up to higher levels than those dictated by the current passengers charter, and I am sure that really serious bidders will achieve that within their bids. Likewise, they must commit themselves to outperform the passenger service requirement. I am sure that they will consider that carefully.

Like reliability, the number of trains and seats provided is crucial on the LTS line. Again, we should be well served on the LTS line, because as well as the investment in resignalling, for which I thank my right hon. Friend, 25 replacement 317 sliding-door trains are coming to the line. I understand that the first two, for driver training, will be delivered in March 1996, and a further 10 by May that year. The full 25 will be in service by October next year, subject only to the ability of ABB of York to deliver the new 365 trains to the Great Northern route to release the 317 trains for service on the LTS line. They will replace some of the 35-year-old stock now on my local

line. I understand that the lease documentation for the 317 trains that are expected is now completed, and I hope that there will be no hiccups.

We cannot rest on our laurels or be complacent. We need a new option for new trains on the LTS line in addition to the 24 extra 317 sliding-door trains. There are two reasons for that. Clearly, new trains would deliver improved quality and reliability, attract more passengers on to the line and so drive down costs. Secondly, ordering new trains will help the United Kingdom manufacturing base. We need flexible financial arrangements, and we need the City to be innovative in developing those with the industry.

That is one of the most exciting elements in the franchise programme developments. It gives the private sector the opportunity to respond to the challenge of reviving rolling stock manufacturing in Great Britain and delivering the benefits that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) seeks.

It has been some time since new rolling stock orders were placed. I hope that bidders will set out how they will place orders for leasing trains, and that that will breathe much-needed life into our rolling stock manufacturing industry.

All that will promote a more efficient and cost-effective railway on the LTS line, and at the same time improve service levels and quality. The public will want that to happen quickly, and if it does we shall see an improved development of the network and more passengers coming on to the line.

Four years ago, 35,000 passengers a day travelled on the LTS line, but now only 22,000 do so. There are two reasons for that fall, one cyclical and the other structural, and we understand them well. The cyclical reason is being dealt with now, as unemployment falls. Today I see that unemployment is at its lowest level for four years, and I welcome that.

We must have more employment in the construction industry in docklands, in the service industries and in the financial institutions in London. That will bring more passengers on to the line. But there is also a structural change, in that patterns of work are changing and employment is restructuring. Changing technology in City financial institutions has displaced many jobs. We must increase the number of passengers travelling on the line to 40,000 a day by 2000, and we shall do that only by privatisation. Doing nothing will result in the number of passengers continuing to fall, with those who remain bearing a greater burden of the cost, as they did under Labour from 1974 to 1979.

One item needed for the development of the network and the LTS line is a new Parkway station in my constituency, and I shall argue for the option to be kept open in the Castle Point local plan at the local plan public inquiry. Curiously, the Labour council wants to remove the option.

A new Parkway station would deliver great benefits to my constituents and to all travellers on the line. It would enable the LTS line to compete with the parallel Liverpool street line that lies to the north, and that is important. It would deliver real benefits and greater convenience to existing passengers, and would deliver general planning and landscaping benefits to Castle Point—for instance, a new and secure high-capacity car park. It would entice new passengers off the roads and on to rail, which would have clear and widely accepted environmental benefits. It would protect and enhance the Benfleet station and the adjacent conservation area.

Labour's local strategy reflects Labour's national strategy. Labour talks as though its cares but acts as though it could not care less. Labour calls for more passengers on the line, but it obstructs developments that would encourage passenger growth and proper investment in the line.

I do not want to be party political, and I am sure that the House realises that. I want to act in the best interests of my constituents. I hope that the Labour party, both in this House and on my local council, will review its policy and support the sound common-sense change and development of our railway network.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I should point out that we have two debates today and that Members must exercise great restraint. If each Back-Bench speech is as long as the previous one, there will be many disappointed hon. Members.

5.12 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am very pleased that you are in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, as it gives me an opportunity to say how sad I was to hear two days ago that you intend to complete your distinguished parliamentary career at the next general election. But it also gives me an opportunity—since I know that you know this line as well as I do—to tell the sad story of the south Devon rail farce. It is a farce that will teach us useful lessons about what will happen if the privatisation scheme before the House goes forward in its present form.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you will recall that the original problem was that the railway services in south Devon from Exeter to Torbay did precisely what the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) said it should do. It attracted a lot of people off the roads and on to the rail service. It did precisely what everyone says should be done by the railways—it priced itself to the point where it attracted new custom. But the immediate difficulty was that the railway company found that it could not provide an appropriate supply.

As a result—this is well known following the media attention given to this issue—parents of children who travelled on that service found that their children were constantly having to stand in a dangerous situation. They complained to my colleague Richard Younger-Ross in Teignmouth, who took up the issue with the railway company.

Although both the speeches from the Front-Bench Members referred to the case, it is important that we look at it in slightly more detail than they had time to do. South Wales and West Railway wrote to the Rail Users Consultative Committee to say:

"the changes were made in response to an extreme demand situation that we have experienced for the last two educational years."

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

What changes? The company's response to the changes was to increase fares at a stroke by 56 per cent. The letter went on to state:

"Over 250 passengers were trying to join a train with a maximum of 150 seats.

We have only limited rolling stock resources. This means that we have no extra carriages to put onto the trains—all resources at these times are in use elsewhere, generally for commuters in Exeter. If we transferred coaches on to the Torre train, we would create even worse overcrowding somewhere else."

In effect, the company was admitting that it was trying to suppress demand. That is in direct contradiction to the statements, assurances, promises and prophecies we have had from the Conservative party.

Why did the situation arise? It arose for one simple reason. The explanation was given, not by the railway company and certainly not by the Department of Transport, but by the Rail Users Consultative Committee. Major-General Napier's analysis of the situation was that it occurred because of a gross shortfall in investment of up to 60 per cent. There are different estimates, but the figure is certainly more than 50 per cent. As a direct result of the privatisation hiatus, the company has not been able to deploy appropriate rolling stock to meet demand in the area.

This is not an isolated example—it may be exceptional but it is not isolated, even in the south-west. In my constituency this summer, services were cancelled almost every week, and sometimes several times a week, between Newquay and Par, and all that the travelling public were offered in exchange was a taxi service. That is totally inadequate, and has meant that more and more people have not gone on the railway at all and have driven the full length of their journey.

The cancellations occurred not because there was anything wrong with that particular stretch of line, nor because there was anything wrong with the rolling stock on that line. They did not occur as a result of service or operational difficulties of any sort on that line. The cancellations occurred because of the shortfall in the network as a whole. The company has been taking away rolling stock to meet the shortfalls from as far away as south Wales, and no doubt your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, has suffered in a similar way.

Throughout the network, the hiatus in investment in new rolling stock has caused chaos, and there is no indication whatsoever that the privatisation with which we are threatened in the next two or three years will solve that problem. The result is that we have overcrowding, and that is not just a feature of services in Torbay but a feature of many services throughout the country.

I wish to refer to a letter from someone who was a victim of the recent railway accident at Maidenhead, a tragic accident to which we should pay due heed. Professor Robin Hambleton wrote a short article for *The Guardian* about his experiences in the train accident on the evening of Friday 8 September. He described the frightening experience of being on a grossly overcrowded train when a major incident takes place. He said in a covering letter to me:

"It has always seemed to me to be rather strange that we allow standing on trains—buying a ticket ought to imply buying a seat (compare airplanes, theatres, cinemas).

The thrust of my argument is that the current complacency which permits overcrowding on trains means that we are on track for a tragedy. Remember, banning standing in football stadiums would have seemed unreasonable just ten years ago."

The direct result of the hiatus in investment in rolling stock is not just that we are losing some of the services we need or that we are losing opportunities to get more people back on to the rail system, but that we are creating tragedies in the making.

I do not blame the Secretary of State, who was obviously caught on the hop at the Blackpool conference by the interviewers, but the answer that he gave to this problem was clearly unbriefed and was totally inadequate. I must say that I was also disappointed by his answer this afternoon. To say that all will be well when privatisation takes over does not deal with today's situation, let alone give hope for the future. It was an absurd explanation, and it was made no better by its repetition today. That is symptomatic of the problems that the industry is facing and of the failure of nerve of many people at many levels of the rail industry. Many of the best people are leaving, which is also an indication that all is not well.

The farce of the timetables is also indicative of the chaos that disintegration is bringing to our once proud railway network. We have had as many supplements as *The Sunday Times* and about as much fiction from the British Rail timetable. Yesterday, I tried to get a simple and comprehensive timetable of InterCity services that I am likely to use, which I have always had in recent years. It is impossible to get that list because it is not brought together in any comprehensible form.

The Confederation of British Industry—usually an ally of the Government—has indicated the nature of the chaos that is to come. In its attack on Government transport policy, it said:

"Somewhere in the course of the debate a realistic yet positive approach to transport has been lost."

Clearly, the CBI has no confidence that there are policy objectives and that they are carefully being driven to promote the future of our public transport system. Rail privatisation is clearly an example of blind faith taking precedence over experience.

I am in some difficulty. Having called this debate, I expected that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) would at long last get off the fence on the vexed subject of renationalisation, bringing back into public control Railtrack at least. I know the difficulties under which the Labour party is labouring. It recognises that, if it made a clear commitment to ensuring that the infrastructure is in the public sector, people on the left of the party would ask, "Why not go the whole hog?" I understand that, but after our debate in July when I pressed the Labour spokesman to come clean on the Labour party's intentions, it really seemed as though it was edging slowly but surely towards a recognition that Railtrack is the key to a successful rail system.

Hints were dropped at the Labour party conference. I do not think that one could accuse Mr. Jimmy Knapp of dropping a hint—it was rather more formidable than that. He made it clear that he was expecting a commitment to

match that which we Liberal Democrats have consistently made in the past 12 months. Indeed, he accused us of trying to steal Labour's thunder on the railways—not very difficult, I can assure the House.

We have not had that commitment this evening, but the House is entitled to know. Is it going to be pick and choose, mix and match, or is the Labour party going to commit itself to outright renationalisation of whatever has scampered away into the private sector before the general election?

We assumed that Labour would make its announcement today. The apprentice spokesman on transport, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) might well make it during the final stages of the debate. Let us hope so. The travelling public are entitled to know whether we are going to make certain that Railtrack remains in the public sector. If only the Labour Opposition would get off the fence, stand up with the Liberal Democrats and say clearly, "In the event of our controlling the next Parliament, we will not allow those who have sought to make a profit out of the purchase of Railtrack shares to make that profit and 51 per cent. will be brought back if it has been sold."

It could be funded on a 10-year programme with bonds, it is not difficult, but we need to know whether the Labour party is prepared to make that commitment. The irony is that, once it has been made, it is highly unlikely that Railtrack can be sold. I am sufficiently a realist to understand that institutional investors as well as individuals are not likely to put their money into Railtrack next spring when there are a great many other things into which they could put their money which would have a real prospect of some profit. They will not invest in Railtrack next spring if the Opposition parties are absolutely united in saying that they will ensure that no one benefits from the sale.

During a trip to Wales this July, the hon. Member for Oldham, West was quoted in the *Western Mail* as saying:

"At the moment I do not know how it will be done but when we are in power we will be looking to bring Railtrack and the private companies back into the public sector."

Two months later, responding to the pressure following our conference commitment to buy back Railtrack, he said rather sulkily:

"We are not going to do the Tories' work for them by saying which bits of the rail network we would leave alone if they succeed in selling them."

He must have had some problems with his leader. We know that his leader and the leader's office have been dictating transport policy for some time. "Rail Privatisation News" reported a few months ago that, when it

"suggested to Party insiders that a commitment to keep Railtrack in the public sector would be both electorally popular and appease the Party's left wing membership, the response was that 'these things are settled in the leader's office'."

The leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), has said that he is not going to give any "blank cheques" and yet his spokesman said at the Labour conference, in the debate on the resolution to which hon. Members have referred this afternoon:

"There is the whole question of 51 per cent. buy-back, there are golden shares, there are bonds. There are many different options. I am not at this stage going to give away any details."

That sounds like throwing bones to the jackals at the Labour party conference, but it does not sound as though he is taking the same line as his leader.

I had hoped that we would have a clear commitment this afternoon, but we have not had it. I hope that we will have it later from the hon. Member for Fife, Central, whom I should describe as the transport spokesman-in-waiting.

In the meantime, please may we have a commitment to another important part of the jigsaw of rail privatisation—passenger rolling stock. The development of a rational land use and transport policy surely requires decisions about railway infrastructure to be taken in the national interest, not in the narrow, short-term interests of any private sector company. I ask the Minister and the shadow Minister for a categorical assurance that they are both prepared to spend sufficient money on the renewal of railway infrastructure and of rolling stock to ensure that they comply with the condition that they set out that, in 1994-95, it would remain in a steady and stable state—that we would not have any deterioration. We want a similar commitment for 1995-96.

On the three passenger rolling stock companies, we need to know what is at stake and how the bids will be considered. Are there serious bids and, if so, how many? Why does the Secretary of State think that there are so few? Can he confirm that the whole British Rail passenger fleet—coaches, locomotives, high-speed trains and diesel and electric multiple units—could be sold for as little as £1,300 million? What will be the expenses of that sale?

The House might be interested to know that the Government are engaged in the sale of a whole fleet for about the same sum of money as would be required to renew the fleet of just one train operating company—South East Trains is expected to need about £1,600 million and it serves only the county of Kent.

Rolling stock companies are likely to become unregulated private monopolies. No spare rolling stock will be available. They will simply be interested in short-term profit. If the Government agree leases of just eight to 10 years and guarantee 80 per cent. of that income, train services will simply come to a halt. There will be no spare capacity and there will be real difficulties.

In selling off the passenger rolling stock companies, the Government have stitched up a deal to get some money into the Treasury's coffers to contribute to pre-election tax bribes, without ensuring that there is a fully effective competitive environment. There is no commitment on the part of purchasers to invest any of the rental moneys in new rolling stock. There is no guarantee of improvement. Privatisation is nothing to do with enterprise or competition but is straightforward asset stripping—selling the family silver for a few coppers.

As the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) said, there will be no new orders for rolling stock. There will be no salvation for the beleaguered companies that supply rolling stock manufacturers, let alone for ABB itself. The hiatus in investment which Ministers said would not happen has arrived, is getting worse and will continue. We need commitments from Labour on that matter too.

Liberal Democrats envisage a busier railway which will require new rolling stock and an end to the fares policies that drive people away from the railways, not only in extreme examples such as south Devon but in many other parts of the country.

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

We believe that the rolling stock companies should be given a choice after the general election. They should be invited to become partners in a plan to expand the railway and submit themselves to a licensing regime to control costs and quality. We would ensure that they would be encouraged into new long-term franchise deals which would exclude the leasing companies, which would find themselves with a great deal of aging rolling stock and no financial basis on which to extend its life.

We do not think that taxpayers' money should be poured into the pockets of unregulated monopolies. We hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House accept our position. The rolling stock companies could become what I have described. We want to ensure that those companies are made to face genuine competition in supply and that their leases will not be extended or renewed on existing terms if they fail in that respect.

In our debate on 11 July, we covered a number of other aspects of rail privatisation. With your admonition ringing in my ears, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not propose to go back to them. However, as the Labour party initiated this debate, we want this evening to hear it endorse my last point and give a commitment on the future control of Railtrack. In the meantime, our constituents—the passengers, the travelling public—are suffering from an investment famine not only in respect of rolling stock but in respect of retracking, resignalling and basic track maintenance.

We have heard already of the number of instances where speed and weight restrictions have been imposed—for example, right the way down the Great Western and especially in my county of Cornwall. It is only a matter of time before such restrictions and the investment famine results in a disaster. A tragedy could well be in the making already. As my correspondent pointed out, the Maidenhead crash showed how near we have come to dangerous overcrowding. Safety may, in the Secretary of State's words, be paramount. If it is, the best way that he can serve that objective is to postpone the privatisation of Railtrack.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that Madam Speaker earlier this afternoon reserved her ruling on the implications of the European Court of Justice judgment which outlawed the employment of women by quota. Reports are running around Westminster that three Labour Members have applied to the courts for relief because of the way in which the shadow Cabinet elections were arranged.

There is also a report that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) may be involved since he lost his national executive committee place because of quotas. This clearly touches on some matters relating to privilege. Can you confirm whether those reports are true?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I cannot confirm whether they are true. Whether they are true or not, I cannot see that they are a matter for the Chair.

5.32 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): In the light of what has been said about the need for short speeches, I intend to be brief. The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said two things with which I entirely agreed; with the rest of his speech I entirely disagreed. First, I entirely echo his genuine tribute to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We all wish you well and are sorry to hear that you do not intend to continue in the House beyond the next general election.

I also entirely agreed with the hon. Gentleman's reference to bones being tossed to the jackals of the Labour party at its conference in Brighton. That is something that we have all witnessed in the past and have now seen again. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest, however, that anything at all could happen in response to his own party conference is laughable. I recall that the main news item of the week related to a goldfish at No. 10 Downing street and not to anything that was said at the Liberal Democrat conference.

I want to concentrate on the policies of the Labour party and its lack of firm commitments. Its approach to rail privatisation has degenerated from what was at best a policy of hit and miss to one of scare and miss. In considering rail privatisation, we must examine what services are to be offered to the passengers—the customers. I have spoken on this subject before and I said that the acid test of the involvement of the private sector in running rail services is whether there will be better customer service.

What do we find? We find that the current agreements between Railtrack and the first three franchises have already created between 13 and 20 per cent. more capacity than was needed to deliver the timetable at present in force. In a press release on 31 January, Mr. Bob Horton, the chairman of Railtrack, said:

"This will ensure that they"—

the first three franchise operators—

"are able to run present service levels, and give them space to step them up."

Contrary to Labour party scare stories, the train operators have made it clear that not only do they have no plans to reduce existing service levels but many are planning to increase them. For example, South West Trains has found 20 per cent. more capacity. Its press release of 31 January this year states:

"We plan further new services . . . a new fast service between Waterloo-Guildford and Portsmouth, the Guildford Shuttle; extra trains between Ascot and Reading—providing four trains an hour; and new through services between Waterloo and Horsham and extra trains between Waterloo and Epsom."

Great Western Trains has found 18 per cent. more capacity. Its press release states:

"The timetable plan . . . maintains the current level of services and consideration is being given to the introduction of additional ones."

For many years before coming to the House, I commuted on the London, Tilbury and Southend line and its progress has already been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) in his excellent speech. Its press release states:

"LTS Rail introduced additional off-peak trains . . . Completion of the £150 million LTS resignalling project in 1996"—

to which my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point also rightly referred—

"will provide further opportunities to encourage car users to switch to LTS Rail. We have negotiated a track access contract which provides scope for this".

Let us consider other railway lines with which I am familiar. A press release from the director of ScotRail, Mr. John Ellis, in May this year stated:

"ScotRail is committed to expansion of the services we offer our customers. This is confirmation that contrary to constant speculation, no routes in Scotland are under threat and provides for the first time a longer term commitment for the continuity of services."

A press release from the finance director of Midland Main Line, Mr. Geoff Evans, states:

"Midland Main Line is a commercial organisation and recognises the need to provide the level of service that customers demand and we will continue to strive for these levels of service.

Constantly monitoring needs, we continue to make alterations to improve our service such as the recent introduction of later trains both to and from London."

We can see that, contrary to the myths and scare stories of the Labour party, services are being improved for customers and passengers. That is the acid test, the proof of the pudding.

The Labour party has deliberately and consistently sought to mislead the House and the country about the passenger service requirements. It ignores the fact that, for the first time in the history of railways, the passenger service requirement introduces a guarantee for customers—an irreducible minimum below which no service will ever be allowed to fall. Never in the history of railways, private to 1948 or nationalised since, has that existed. It is this Government who have introduced it as a guarantee for passengers and customers.

That is why I remain confident that privatisation will continue to produce ever more benefits and improvements in services for customers. I travel regularly on the west coast main line and was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirm yet again the Government's commitment to upgrading that line and improving services on it.

Privatisation will undoubtedly result in access to private capital for investment, which the railways will continue to need. It is only through access to private capital that such investment will be made. The Labour party would not be allowed to write blank cheques, as its leader has repeatedly made clear. That is why the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who opened the debate for the Labour party, was not prepared to make any such promises.

Weasel words have been used to suggest to the rail unions that promises have been made in order to try to guarantee their support. It is not surprising that the Labour party continues to be dominated by the rail and other unions when no fewer than 186 Labour Members are sponsored or supported by trade unions. I went through the list of those sponsorships and saw that no fewer than 50 Labour Members are sponsored or supported by transport unions. A list of shadow cabinet members—at least, the current shadow cabinet until later tonight—is sponsored or supported by rail unions.

Once again, the Labour party is in the pocket of the producer culture—the trade unions—bought and paid for. They do not speak for the customers or passengers but continue to speak for the union barons who control Labour, as they have always controlled Labour and will continue to control Labour. The Labour party is interested not in passenger or customer service but in its union paymasters and bosses. The public at large and the travelling public will have no faith in the scare stories and myths put out by the Labour party.

5.41 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): I have been a little surprised by the tone of this debate. I do not know the seat of the last speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Blackpool, South."] It might have been more appropriate if he were the hon. Member for the planet Krypton because he is certainly not from the same planet as me and does not represent the same views as I hear from my constituents. I shall deal with one of his points by saying that I am sponsored by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which is one of the railway unions. I am proud of that and glad that the hon. Gentleman was able to look at lists and see the interests of every Labour Member. I should like to see a list showing Conservative Members' business interests, but unfortunately Conservative Members have consistently tried to block such openness.

I was also surprised that the Liberal Democrats tried to turn this debate into a political point scoring match. We are discussing the country, not party political views, and they have made cheap shots. I am not waiting for my hon. Friends the Members for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) or for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) to make a commitment to return the railways to public control because we have already had that commitment at conference, and it came from neither of those two hon. Friends but from the leader of the Labour party. He made a commitment that the railways would be returned to public control and be publicly accountable, and that is good enough for me. Hon. Members may sneer and try to twist things round, but the commitment effectively exists. When it was made at conference, I saw that Jimmy Knapp was as delighted as I was, and I am certain that the majority of people in the country were also delighted.

While I do not expect it from Conservative Back Benchers, I expected much more sympathy and empathy from the Secretary of State. We have seen recent reports of overcrowding on trains and commuters literally scrambling for seats. Given that the Secretary of State and the Minister for Railways and Roads have spent the past few months scrambling for a seat in terms of parliamentary selection, I thought that they would empathise with commuters.

Rather than abuse the time available as others have, I shall try to keep my speech short and sweet. I sat on the Committee which discussed the Railways Bill, where many assurances were given about what would happen in the privatisation process. Many of my hon. Friends feel that, during the passage of the Bill, we were, if not deceived, at least misled about what would happen. I do not feel that we were misled.

I am not trying to be charitable to the Ministers involved. I recognise that the current Secretary of State and the Minister for Railways and Roads are new boys and I do not wish to make them the villains of the piece, but there is plenty of evidence that their predecessors made commitments on which they have reneged. For example, during the passage of the Bill, the privatisation of Railtrack was not discussed. It was simply not on the cards. We knew nothing about it until, last October, the Secretary of State for Transport suddenly announced that Railtrack would be privatised. So we had no proper debate about that.

[Mr. John Heppell]

After a great deal of pressure, commitments were made on through ticketing and we were told that it would be protected. Then, in the past year, the Government proposed to reduce the number of stations that could sell through tickets. Of the 2,500 stations which currently exist, 1,300 are staffed. We were told that 294 stations would be allowed to sell through tickets, which did not rule out through tickets but meant that nobody could get hold of them. Luckily, because of the prompt action of Labour Front-Bench Members and others who brought the matter to the public's attention, that proposal was dropped.

We were given guarantees about passenger services and told that they would be kept at current levels. Although Conservative Members say that under the passenger services requirements we have been guaranteed a minimum number of trains for the first time, that minimum is 15 or 20 per cent. below the current number so it is not much of a guarantee. After a great battle, we were reassured that there would be free competition and were told that British Rail could bid for franchises. However, when the first three franchises were put out, the Secretary of State excluded British Rail from bidding.

I am an ex-railway employer—I mean employee. The way things are going, I may be an ex-railway employer in the future. I remember when we had a system called "Organising for Quality", when the railways were split into business sectors. It was called "O for Q". I say that carefully because at the time it was a standing joke within the rail industry that "O for Q" was what the Government and British Rail's management thought of their customers and work force. We were suspicious that the railways were being prepared for privatisation. Happily, and unhappily, I was wrong about that.

In some respects, I can understand that, if a Government plan to privatise something, that is a legitimate policy and, although I may not agree with it, they have the right to pursue that policy. However, the Government have not considered the way in which the industry works most effectively. Had the privatisation been done by business sector or by breaking the railways down into geographical areas or regions, one could see some logic in it. But rather than privatise the railway so that it can operate more effectively within the private sector, the Government have simply sought to sell it in the easiest way without considering how it will operate afterwards. Remarks by the Secretary of State and some Conservative Members have proved that, to them, success will be achieved if they manage to sell it all. To me that is nonsense.

I believe that the attempt to pass the railways into the private sector will fail. Should it succeed, however, we should try to ensure that they operate in the most efficient and effective way within the private sector. The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) may talk about the objectives of privatisation, but the big problem for me is that the only objective I can see is that of selling off the railways.

When I served on the Railways Bill, a chart was used to show how the responsibilities, financial arrangements and safety requirements of the various proposed companies would fit together. Even before the creation of Railtrack, involving 12,000 employees, 5,000 of them signalmen, I remember describing the proposals as a cobweb of confusion because it was impossible to tell who would be responsible for finances, operational measures and safety. The scenario is even worse now, because we are talking about 25 train operating units which will become train operating companies, three rolling stock companies which will lease stock, three new freight companies, a regulator and a franchising director. One can see how the confusion will become worse and worse. Without clear lines of responsibility and communication, all that we have is a recipe for disaster.

We need look no further than the events of the past two days to understand the importance of clear lines of responsibility. The arrangements between the Home Secretary and the Director General of the Prison Service appear to be straightforward, sensible ones. The Home Secretary is at the top, and below him is the director. Even in that simplified structure, however, it seems that they could not agree about who should make the decisions. Once we have 100 different rail organisations working independently, who will then decide who is responsible for them? We are talking about thousands of licences being issued as well as thousands of legal agreements between different organisations. What is on offer is a dream for accountants, consultants and solicitors, and a nightmare for the rest of us.

I believe that among Conservative Members there is a significant minority—perhaps not counting those who are present—who recognise that the rail privatisation proposals are a disaster. During the passage of the Railways Bill, I realised, as I am sure many others did, that Ministers were saying things with tongue in cheek. They knew that it was nonsense and they did not believe in it. In some ways the previous Secretary of State for Transport inherited that Bill. He got so used to repeating nonsense, and did it so convincingly, that it made him eminently qualified to become chairman of the Conservative party.

One of the Ministers responsible for driving the Bill through was the Minister for Transport in London, for whom I have a great deal of time: he is witty and I enjoyed working with him on that Bill, as I have done since on local transport projects. He has always been helpful, but after spending all that time working on the privatisation of the railways, what does he plan to do? He plans to go off and sell cars. If I had made such a shambles of the railways as the Government have done, I think that I would go off and sell cars as well.

The privatisation proposal gained little initial support except from within Conservative Central Office. Hardly anyone was in favour of it then, and even fewer people want it to go ahead now. As a result, morale within the railways is at its lowest level ever and investment in the industry is at its lowest level for 20 years. Hon. Members do not need to believe me because one does not have to do a great deal of research to confirm that what I have said is true.

Just this Monday, *The Guardian* quoted not a rabid socialist like me, who is intent on keeping the railways under public control, but the chairman of the Rail Users' Consultative Committee, Major General Lennox Napier—the Conservatives have not managed to replace him yet—who can hardly be described as a hero of the left. The article reported:

"He said investment had never been lower for 20 years. Until 1993, it was running at around £1 billion a year, but it is now down to £400 million."

He said that infrastructure was deteriorating and that up to 85 per cent. of delays were caused by infrastructure failures such as poor signals. He also said that there were now 2,600 fewer coaches than there were six years ago.

Investment in rolling stock is important. When we first started our discussions on the Railways Bill, there was a great deal of talk about competition. Now there is no competition between public and private or between private and private because no coaches are being built. It does not matter whether we are talking about ABB Transportation or GEC Alsthom: there is no competition between them now because they are united in telling the Government that they want any sort of order, but no orders have been made for this year or the next. When one appreciates that such orders have a two-year running period, it is clear that there will be no orders for the next few years.

Unlike the Secretary of State for Defence, I would not describe myself as a little Englander. In a few years' time, when we have a more sensible transport policy under a Labour Government, we shall put money into building rolling stock, but I fear that by then we shall have lost not one coach manufacturing job to Europe, nor even 100 or 1,000 jobs—we shall have lost an entire industry. It will have disappeared because of the Government's short-sighted view.

Given the Conservative Members in the Chamber, I fear that my request may fall upon deaf ears. Nevertheless, I ask those with some honesty and integrity to recognise that the privatisation proposal is nonsense. I do not ask them to take the more drastic course adopted by one of their ex-Members by crossing the Floor, but I hope that when it comes to the vote they will cross into a different Lobby. I hope that they will put common sense above dogma and put commuters and their constituents above Conservative Central Office. They should put the country above their party because that is what the debate is all about.

5.57 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): When the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) presented his ten-minute Bill earlier today, he said that it was supported by a list of the "usual suspects". Today's attendance is rather like that of the usual suspects for any rail privatisation debate.

I am particularly pleased to see that one of those suspects is the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), who is sponsored by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. One of her most celebrated roles before she joined the House was as the Queen who died with the name of Calais engraved on her heart. Perhaps it was over-identification with that particular role that sent her to Dover today—

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Evesham is misleading the House. I have never played the Queen who had the name of Calais carved upon her heart.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I thank the hon. Lady for making that point, which was one of information and not a point of order. I suffer from that practice; if we were all to try to correct what other people say we would never get to the end of any debate.

Mr. Luff: My knowledge of history and literature is as grievous as the hon. Lady's knowledge of geography, because I am the Member for Worcester, not Evesham. I apologise profoundly to the hon. Lady if I got the literary and historic reference wrong; it was a fine role none the less.

I believe that the hon. Lady can at least confirm that she went to Dover today to oppose the privatisation of the port on the grounds that she is scared that the port might be bought by the people of Calais. As far as I am concerned, all that she was doing was trying to rob the port of Dover of the advantages of privatisation which have accrued to the other privatised ports of the United Kingdom. I believe that she will try to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker, when she will seek to do the same things to the railways of the United Kingdom, seeking to rob them of the advantages that will accrue from privatisation.

Another of the usual suspects is the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), whose debate on the rail network on 11 July was not much better attended by Opposition Members than is today's debate. It makes me wonder how passionately they feel on the subject. There were no more Opposition speakers then and there were no better arguments. It is not surprising, really. The Opposition cannot duck the simple fact that they have opposed every privatisation so far, and that every privatisation so far has resulted in improved customer service.

It was obvious from the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that he had no faith in the customer to take decisions about what was in his or her best interests, or in the private sector to take decisions about what was in the best interests of the people whom they sought to serve. His faith reposed entirely in the state knowing best. Old Labour is alive and well in Oldham, West.

Transport privatisations have been especially successful. That is what makes me so sad.

We have heard many times in the House—but they are worth repeating—the comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about the privatisation of British Airways:

"It will be the pantomime horse of capitalism if it is anything at all."—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 125.]

We now know how wrong that prophecy was. British Airways carries more international passengers than any other carrier—about 6 million more than its nearest competitor in 1993.

The extent of the success of those transport privatisations makes me especially delighted that Worcester will be among the first stations in the country to benefit from the first round of franchise awards, when the Great Western main line services are privatised in the first batch of franchise awards.

I am saddened by the fact that Opposition Members appear to believe that we do not share their genuine anxiety—although so many of them are supported by the rail unions, somewhere under that there is a genuine concern for the passenger—to improve the lot of the travelling public. We cannot stand by and watch the continual decline of the railways, whose share of all

[Mr. Luff]

passenger journeys in Britain has decreased so sharply since the nationalisation of the railways after the last war. That decline is the result of many factors, but I am convinced that chief among them has been the stultifying effect of nationalisation.

Speech after speech and article after article by the hon. Member for Oldham, West promises a renaissance of the railways. It makes a great soundbite, but what does it mean? What happened after 1948 when Labour was the Government responsible for the railways? What happened between 1964 and 1970? What happened between 1974 and 1979? No renaissance of the railways there.

Conservative Governments have found it difficult too, labouring under the shackles of nationalisation. The time has come for a new approach to the railways, to reverse that tragic relative decline.

I am not one of the people who believe that everything is wrong about the railways—far from it. I use them as much as possible, although, sadly, that is not as much as I should like. I am always impressed by the punctuality of the services. If only, I repeatedly say, I could reach my destination as reliably by car as I can by train. I am impressed by the commitment of British Rail to care for disabled people. It has an outstanding record in that regard.

However, we cannot allow the decline in market share to continue. That is the ultimate touchstone for any business; if it is losing market share, it is failing. The Government's proposals seek to put right that failure.

The speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West had many echoes of an article in the current edition of *Railway Magazine*—long on cliché and mockery, the politics of destruction, but short on understanding, vision and practical solutions. I especially regretted, in his speech and in the article, his shroud-waving over safety on our railways—shroud-waving that has been repeated by the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and for North Cornwall.

It is worth reminding people the facts about rail safety, not the myths. The independent Health and Safety Commission confirmed that there is no evidence of any overall decline in health and safety standards since the reorganisation of the railways in preparation for privatisation. Railways are one of the safest means of transport—possibly the safest means of transport—and serious train accidents are very rare indeed. Total fatalities on the railways in 1993-94 are the lowest ever recorded.

One rather complicated statistic is worth repeating. A passenger needs to travel more than six hours by rail to risk a one in a million chance of serious injury or death, five hours by air, two and a half hours by coach—still a very safe form of transport—only 30 minutes by car and a minute by motor cycle. I do not have the figures for push-bikes, so the Secretary of State can sleep easily in his bed tonight.

Rail travel is supremely safe, and it is not only the passenger that is safe. In his most recent annual report, Her Majesty's Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways acknowledged that, in 1993-94, the railway coped with organisational change while achieving the fewest ever passenger deaths and work force fatalities. The railways are profoundly safe.

Mr. Bayley: The hon. Gentleman is quoting rather selectively from the reports. A briefing given to me by the Library tells me that, between 1993-94 and 1994-95, deaths from railway accidents increased from 14 to 15, major injuries increased from 46 to 69 and derailments from 113 to 149. He paints a rosy picture by choosing those figures that support his argument rather than looking across the board.

Mr. Luff: I am profoundly disturbed by that intervention. I thought that the hon. Gentleman sought to promote investment in the railways. There he is again, promoting fear of rail travel. If I heard those figures correctly—I am not sure that I heard them entirely correctly—he spoke about an increase in fatalities from 14 to 15. Is that correct?

Mr. Bayley: I spoke about that figure, the increase in major injuries from 46 to 69 and the increase in derailments from 113 to 149.

Mr. Luff: After the debate, the hon. Gentleman and I will together go to the Library and find out how many people are killed and injured on the roads of Britain in accidents. I bet that we find that, each and every day, more people are killed than those figures. Those increases, although regrettable—I do not want any increase—remain tiny and the railways remain one of the safest ways of getting from A to B that one can devise.

I am profoundly disappointed that the hon. Member for York, who rightly wants people to invest more in railways, should suggest that the railways are becoming more dangerous when it is transparently obvious that they are not from the very figures that he quoted.

The article by the shadow Transport Secretary, the hon. Member for Oldham, West, is littered with pejorative and inaccurate statements. I despair that a transport spokesman can write such an article.

I have some sympathy with one argument in the article. The hon. Gentleman speaks about the relatively short length of franchises. I believe that there would have been some advantage in having franchises longer than seven years. Apart from anything else, if, by some dreadful misfortune—which I do not think will befall the country—there were to be a Labour Government, the period of the franchise would carry on beyond the time of the Labour Government and could be renewed by the next Conservative Government. However, I believe that it is a hypothetical worry.

What about the claim that we have made a shambles of services to the passenger? The hon. Member for Oldham, West is not in the Chamber, but I shall happily invite him to come to Worcester and look at the services to passengers in my area, which are steadily improving, as I shall show him if he intends to come. I shall discuss that later.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West commented about passenger services requirements—an issue also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). The comment that the hon. Member for Oldham, West made was a profoundly dishonest misrepresentation of the truth when my constituents, for the first time ever, have a guarantee about rail services. I

believe that there is even a guarantee on the sleeper services to Cornwall that so worried the hon. Member for North Cornwall earlier. The guarantee that those services will run has never existed before. It is not a specification but a guarantee.

Mr. Tyler: As you, Madam Deputy Speaker, know, the service between the west country and Scotland, far from being guaranteed, has actually been removed.

Mr. Luff: I was, of course, referring to the service between London and the west country. If I remember rightly, it is now being run from Waterloo to enable better connections with the Eurostar services, which should make it still more attractive.

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I am pleased that my hon. Friend has given way. He may be unaware that one of my regular trips to the Department of Transport to visit my hon. Friend the Minister of State's predecessor was made in order to plead the case for the sleeper. We had deep discussions with British Rail, which could at no stage guarantee the sleeper service for more than five or six months at a time. The point that must be made is that for the first time the sleeper service is now enshrined in a mechanism that will guarantee it for the next seven years. We could never have had that guarantee under the existing system.

Mr. Luff: And that is one of the great advantages of the privatisation process. I thank my hon. Friend for his comments.

In the article, the shadow Secretary of State for Transport talks about job cuts, which are always regrettable. I do not welcome redundancies, but I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that the hon. Gentleman still feels that the railways are being run for the benefit of those who work for them, not for the benefit of those who use them. It drives me back to my deeply held conviction that the Labour party remains driven by producer interests. The secret deals that it now seems to be doing with the unions in the event that it should ever gain power further reinforce that view. Of course we want to see a vibrant railway industry. I want employment in the railway industry to increase as more people use it. But I do not want the railways to be used as a job creation scheme which would increase taxes and fares.

In the article we also read about one of Labour's old canards. The hon. Member for Oldham, West states:

"Privatisation will break up the railways into no less than 94 separate units, all competing, contracting and co-operating with each other simultaneously.

Every station with more than one operator will need more than one timetable"

I honestly do not think that the hon. Gentleman understands the complexity of the status quo. Just because a huge, bureaucratic monolith is running the railways it does not mean that they are run efficiently or that there are not agreements between the operating units and the railways.

I again ask the hon. Gentleman to come to Worcester. I have in my hand the five timetables that I presently have to contend with in Worcester—not under a privatised railway. They are the timetables that we have had year in, year out in Worcester under British Rail. I hope that a privatised railway will consider the subject and decide that it would be easier for passengers if all the timetables were put into one booklet. I hope that the privatised railways will co-operate with each other to produce a single booklet. What I have in my hand is the product of a unified British Rail, not of the 94 units of which the hon. Gentleman speaks.

Later in the article, the hon. Gentleman mentions an issue that was discussed at great length when he was still in the Chamber. He states:

"Leaked documents are particularly welcome. I promise to make good use of them"

I wonder whether that gives the game away for Labour. First, it proves that the Labour party is unfit to govern because it encourages civil servants to leak. If ever the Labour party formed a Government it would find how impossible that makes it for a Government to conduct a rational discussion of the issues. Secondly, perhaps it is because the hon. Gentleman knows in his heart of hearts that Labour never will form a Government that he is so anxious to encourage the leaking process to continue.

Under the direction of the hon. Member for North Cornwall the debate moved on to the issue of what Labour intended to do if by any misfortune it ever gained power. In the article the hon. Member for Oldham, West said:

"Labour believes in a publicly-owned, publicly accountable rail system. If the Tories push through this idiotic policy and complete the sell-off, we will rebuild a public railway during the life of the next Labour Government."

How? What will they do? We are all in the dark. None of us has the slightest idea, least of all the Labour party.

May I draw the Labour party's attention to an editorial in a newspaper that urged the Labour vote at the last election—so it is no friend of the Conservative party. On Thursday 12 October the *Financial Times* states:

"The starting point for both sides should be the needs of the passengers and freight carriers whom the railway exists to serve. This rules out any return to the status quo ante, which was chronically inefficient and could not in any event be recreated without massive, debilitating upheaval.

The opposition parties appear to accept this, which makes their renationalisation commitment bizarre as anything other than a cheap electoral gimmick. In practice, it appears that Labour will follow the Liberal Democrats and interpret 'state control' as meaning a majority stake in Railtrack. Mr. Tony Blair would be foolish to pledge any more if he has any regard for his 'tax and spend' reputation . . . Any renationalisation commitment will create damaging uncertainty for Railtrack's management. But far more problematic is the future subsidy regime for the network . . . The cry for subsidies will not be reduced when the trains are privately operated"—

although the hon. Member for Oldham, West threatens, bizarrely, a reduction in subsidy to privatised operators, and I simply do not understand his logic—

"particularly if transport policy . . . remains so heavily weighted against rail use."

I believe that it is weighted in that way, which is what privatisation should address.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition dare not say publicly what he intends to do about the railways for fear of upsetting those very unions that sponsor so many Labour Members.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend referred to the excellent quote from the *Financial Times* and the importance of getting freight back on to rail. Does he agree that one of the chief faults of the nationalised railways since 1948 is that they have consistently taken freight off rail? There has been more and more waste in the use of resources.

[Mr. Hawkins]

One of the chief benefits of privatisation will be a private sector organisation dedicated to getting freight back on to rail.

Mr. Luff: I could not have put it better myself and I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am confident that one of the many advantages will be an increase in the share of freight traffic using railways, in particular using the access to continental markets through the channel tunnel.

Four key advantages of privatisation have come through in today's debate. First, the individual railway companies will become more responsive and accountable to their customers, which is what matters, not to a Secretary of State sitting in Marsham street, worried about juggling figures between education, health and railways. They will be responsive and accountable to their customers. They will offer an improved service to their customers, not a worse service, which they have no interest in providing.

The railway companies have fixed costs and, to reduce them, they will improve the service and get more people on to the railways. They will do so largely through the better marketing of services. Only about 7.5 per cent. of our constituents ever use trains. The other 90-odd per cent. do not. Half of them do not even know how to use trains; they do not what trains go where or when; they do not understand the railways, which are almost a closely guarded secret within the railway establishment. We need to break out of that secrecy with private sector marketing skills and with access to private finance.

We have seen the promise; we have seen what is to come. We saw the privatisation of On Board Services. A newspaper stated that a spokesman for the company said:

"In the future, passengers could find a hot meal, prepared on board and delivered to their seats, included in the ticket price. 'You're going to see an increase in customer service,' he said. A range of new products will also be introduced."

That is what railway privatisation will do—it will provide a better service and more people will use it. I commend the privatisation to the House.

6.16 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) referred to myself and my colleagues sitting on the Labour Benches as "The Usual Suspects". One good film title deserves another and everything that we have heard emanating from the hon. Gentleman's colleagues on the Conservative Benches could justifiably be defined as "Pulp Fiction".

The hon. Member for Worcester mentioned the visit that I made today with my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) to Dover. He made two correct statements to the House. First, in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell), I am proud to be sponsored by a transport union—in my case, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. We were campaigning in Dover against the Government's proposed enforced privatisation of the Dover port.

The hon. Member for Worcester was markedly lacking in information—not only of a literary and historical nature—about what has motivated that campaign, over and above the Government's attempts to impose yet another privatisation. The people, the public, the citizens of Dover—those who live and work there—are utterly opposed to the privatisation. It is not only the citizens of the town, but the people who use the port, the businesses, the chamber of commerce, the mayor of Dover and the mayor of Deal who are totally opposed to the privatisation.

In a nutshell, the pulp fiction that we have heard emanating from the Conservatives is that the Labour party is opposed to the privatisation of the railways because we are not concerned with the public interest while Conservative Members are committed to privatisation because they have the public interest at heart. Every poll conducted in this country since the Government set off on their benighted journey of railway privatisation has proved overwhelmingly that the people of this country reject the idea of rail privatisation because they know that, far from expanding and improving railway services in this country, it will destroy them. They are already seeing that such services as they have are deteriorating.

Last year, the report on the requirements laid down for railways under the citizens charter showed that, within those seven franchise networks, there have been increases in the number of cancellations. Increasingly trains fail to reach their destinations on time. Over-arching the arguments about rail privatisation is the salient point—that everyone except Conservative Members seem to have taken on board—about the environment. People in this country and throughout the world are recognising that over-dependence on forms of transport that require petrol-driven engines is leading to the destruction of the environment in our local communities and possibly the world.

Yet the Government are presenting the idea of rail privatisation as a means of enlarging and enhancing the use of our railways. The system would mean the destruction of our railways. As my colleagues have pointed out on more than one occasion, the Government's much-vaunted guarantee of minimum service guarantees a service that is infinitely less and, in many instances, infinitely more expensive than the previous one.

I recently had the privilege of being invited to address the annual conference of the National Association of Rail Users, which was held within the confines of my local authority last weekend. Representatives from every corner of these islands attended the conference and each and every one of them provided anecdotal evidence about the reduction in their rail services since the Government set out on that benighted track. The representatives are passionate about their desire to use the railways, to encourage others to use them and to see an expansion of our railway system. Every delegate, without fail, said that the Government's privatisation plans would not secure the expansion of our rail network.

There has been much talk about the need for additional investment in our railway system, and no one would argue with that. However, I think that Conservative Members have been less than direct in making it clear to the House and to the country that privatisation has so far brought no new money to our railway system and that no new money will be introduced via the franchises when they are up and running.

The Government have spent £1.25 billion of taxpayers' money in an attempt to bring about privatisation, without investing one penny piece in our railway network. The

Government are spending £25,000 per day on lawyers' fees alone in their attempt to privatise our railways. That money would have been much better spent laying new track, buying new rolling stock, improving signalling and ensuring that safety measures are adhered to.

No one in this country—apart from Conservative Members—wants or believes in rail privatisation. Earlier today my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) urged Conservative Members if not to cross the Floor permanently, at least to join us in the Division Lobby tonight. I join him in that call.

6.23 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Conservative Member after Conservative Member has risen in the debate to say that every privatisation that has taken place under the Conservative Government has been a success. I remind them of one early rail privatisation—the privatisation of British Rail Engineering Ltd. five years ago—which was hardly a success.

Five years ago, the British Rail carriage works in York employed 3,000 people. By the time of the last election, that figure had decreased to 1,650, and by the end of the year no one will be employed there. ABB invested £50 million in the York works on the basis of the Government's indications about likely investment by railway companies in new rolling stock. However, that investment never came, and the factory closed.

Those who are considering buying into the operational parts of the railway should think about it very carefully. The Government may be guaranteeing them future streams of income, but prospective buyers should recall what happened to the rolling stock manufacturers: they invested heavily, only to be dumped by the Government. The work force were dumped by the Government and the workers' Christmas present this year will be unemployment.

This summer, I tried to stick to my resolution to boycott all things French as a protest against French nuclear tests. However, I was stranded for a night in Strasbourg while on my way to a family holiday in Switzerland. I had not visited Strasbourg before. It is a beautiful city and it is easy to travel around on the magnificent modern tram system, which was opened recently. The trams were built in York in my constituency—it is written on the side of the trams. An efficient factory in York beat off the French competition and won the contract. However, when the tram system in Strasbourg is expanded, the new trams will not be built in my constituency because the factory will no longer be there. That is one result of the Government's policy.

The Government have invested a little in new rolling stock: they let a contract to the German company Siemens. If the contract had been let to a British company, the jobs would have stayed in this country and we would have retained the ability to manufacture trains in this country, but the Government have thrown away that chance.

If rail privatisation were such a rip-roaring success, the Government would be publicising it; instead, they are complaining about leaks. Confidential advice given to Ministers is that rail privatisation is a disaster; it is not working. So, instead of encouraging openness, the Government have shrouded the privatisation process in secrecy.

The answer to a parliamentary question asked by me appears in *Hansard* of 9 February 1995. I asked the Minister for Railways and Roads, who is now in the Chamber, to publish the Hesketh report into BR signalling, but he refused to do so. I congratulate the Transport Select Committee on its persistence in using its powers to call for documents to be provided and, as a result, a copy of the Hesketh report has come into the public domain.

Hesketh was commissioned to conduct a study of the signalling system throughout the British Rail network following the Clapham rail crash and to implement recommendation No. 49 of Sir Anthony Hidden's report, which stated:

"BR shall develop an adequate system of allocating priority to projects to ensure that safety standards are not compromised by delay".

The Hesketh report on signalling listed 95 renewal schemes that were required around the country in order of priority and set a "latest start date" for each of those schemes. Some 13 schemes, estimated to cost about £170 million, had "latest start dates" in 1993, 1994 or 1995.

The Hesketh report is the bible for signal engineers and its importance was reiterated by John Edmonds, chief executive of Railtrack, in his evidence to the Transport Select Committee. He described the Hesketh report as "the base document" from which signal engineers worked. He went on to state:

"We are spending at a level which entirely fits the sequence which Hesketh originally proposed".

Mr. Edmonds was clearly trying to give members of the Committee the impression that they did not need to worry about the Hesketh report because the work was going ahead. However, he misled the Committee. If one compares the detailed recommendations in the Hesketh report with the Minister's answer to a parliamentary question that I asked on 26 April, one finds that three quarters of Hesketh's top 13 schemes, which should have been started this year, are running behind schedule or have simply been shelved altogether by the Government.

I shall give the House an example. The Hidden report into the Clapham crash said:

"British Rail shall . . . ensure that all working drawings are complete and an accurate representation of the system to be worked on".

In the report on the Kingmoor relay room in Carlisle, Hesketh says:

"Wiring diagrams have inconsistencies with the site installation".

He continues:

"There is high risk present at this site and work should be undertaken quickly to renew the equipment in this area".

Hesketh laid down a later start date of 1994 on safety grounds. The Minister stated in his answer:

"The programme for this project is currently under review."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1995; Vol. 1686, c. 592.]

Location by location, page after page, the Hesketh report reveals glaring faults with signalling systems. Slade lane relay room in Manchester is so corroded that there is a risk to internal equipment. The Longsite No. 1 relay room in Manchester is operated with second-hand spares from Crewe. In regard to the Brewery Sidings signal box in Manchester—vintage 1894—Hesketh says:

"The cable route is destroyed at a number of sites . . . Cables have . . . core to core contacts."

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

That scheme is running two years behind the Hesketh timetable. Signal boxes in Scotland at Grangemouth and Carmuirs East junctions have to have their mechanical switch diamonds cooled with continuous water spray during hot weather to stop them bursting into flames. According to Hesketh, signal boxes at Stratford in east London, Forest Gate and Goodmayes have a high risk of fire.

The Secretary of State sweeps aside the recommendation in Sir Anthony Hidden's report on the Clapham crash cash that

"BR shall ensure that the organisational framework exists to prevent commercial considerations of a business-led railway from compromising safety."

He says that we need not worry about that, because the railway inspectorate will oversee what Railtrack does when it is privatised. That is an admission that Railtrack needs policing. It sadly and dangerously misses the point that a safe railway must have safety as the core concern of every structure and every worker in every rail company and rail business.

There is a conflict of interest between shareholders and safety. The Government have not resolved that contradiction and conflict. It is right to highlight the danger that rail privatisation causes. We look with interest at the new annual report of the railway inspectorate to see whether, as early figures show, there has been an increase in the number of accidents on the railway since Railtrack took over responsibility.

6.32 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): At the Tory conference in Blackpool, the Prime Minister made a 31-page speech. Interestingly, he did not mention the railways once. I wonder why. It is clear to us that the country shares our view that rail privatisation is a monumentally stupid idea. Debates such as this have a useful purpose as they allow us to visit some reality on Conservative Members who are now outwith any suggestion of common sense and any suggestion of what passengers and the public want. They now seem destined to implement ideology regardless of the damage and distortion to our great rail network. No one should be surprised by that, because they are trying to create an artificial market where none exists.

We are delighted that the Government were animated about the leaked documents, but we take no pleasure in quoting one of the key safety experts in Railtrack, Mr. Rose, suggesting that it would take 18 months for Railtrack to be safety competent. What is the Government's response? They say that that is scaremongering. What is Railtrack's response? It is typically complacent and also says that that is scaremongering.

The Government should accept that the documents come from the heart of the industry and not from Labour party headquarters. The industry is telling the Government that it is a crazy idea. Morale is at rock bottom, there are major problems and there is a chronic lack of investment; despite all that, the Government are not listening.

Mr. Luff: On the subject of leaked documents, does that mean that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) who says in his article in *Rail* magazine that leaked documents are welcome? Does that mean that it is now official Labour party policy to encourage civil servants to breach the Official Secrets Act 1911?

Mr. McLeish: That intervention suggests that I should not give way much more during the rest of my speech.

The Government want to deflect attention from what they are doing, so we are constantly asked what Labour would do. The real issue is: what are the Government doing to the rail network now? That is the subject that I want to address.

Mr. Tyler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: I shall give way in a few minutes when I have made some progress.

We are looking at a set of Ministers—aided and abetted by Sir Robert Horton of Railtrack—who are guilty on a number of counts. The first is grotesque misuse of taxpayers' money. By any objective analysis, something like £1 billion has been spent on the privatisation process at a time when the industry is suffering from chronic under-investment. That simply cannot be right.

Secondly, we are witnessing the mindless destruction of the rail network. The rail network works, but it is quite clear from the bureaucratic mess that has been created that it simply will not work next year. It may work the year after because, by then, we shall have a Government committed to the railways rather than to the ideology of privatising them.

Thirdly, the Government are unique in generating an unparalleled hostility to any privatisation issue. The City is negative, sentiment is weak, passengers are angry, the public is dismayed and even among Conservative supporters every opinion poll suggests that they share our view. It is simply a daft idea.

One would have thought that, faced with that, there might be some remorse at the damage being done—not at all. This evening, we witnessed the typical view that privatisation will work again because—it is alleged—it has worked in the past. That is the triumph of hope over reality.

The most punishing charge that could be levelled at the Government is that they are driving passengers towards the edge of a nightmare. In the early days of rail privatisation, the Government said that there would be network benefits. How can there be network benefits when they propose to dismember an organisation into 94 pieces and then suggest that it will all mysteriously hang together? They said that through ticketing was fine and that passengers would have the same services as before—that ScotRail would compete with South West Trains. That is a wonderful illustration of a ludicrous system. At the end of the day, the Government will not accept the premise that only passengers will suffer.

Every day, our great rail industry is subjected, in both quality and tabloid press, to ridicule through no fault of its own but through the sheer stupidity and stubbornness of Ministers.

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the shadow Minister for giving way and I note his formidable argument for retaining a national rail network. He said that he believes that the public have a right to know, and I agree with that too. Will he give the House an explicit assurance that if

the Labour party is in a position to do so and if Railtrack is sold before the general election, a Labour Government or Labour minority Government will immediately take steps to bring Railtrack under public control and public ownership again under a 51 per cent.-plus majority shareholding? The House is entitled to know the answer.

Mr. McLeish: I am delighted to repeat that Labour wants a publicly owned, publicly accountable and publicly controlled railway.

We heard earlier all about the debacle with children and passengers overloading on coaches, but I am informed—sadly, this is another leak which may upset the Government, but the next part will cheer them up—that Devon county council was informed in October 1994 of what was to happen. It was given the new pricing structure and told the problems, but—surprisingly—did nothing about it.

The issue tonight, however, is the railways. There is now a crisis at the heart of our national rail network; the tragedy is that it need not have happened. We need investment, and a new way forward. Other European countries have a sensible approach that seeks to attract private capital, but also seeks a genuine partnership rather than espousing the ideological claptrap that we hear from the Government.

Let us recap briefly. I am sure that Conservative Members will enjoy being reminded of the summer of discontent that they have created on the railways. We have heard a great deal about safety. It is massively complacent to suggest that safety standards cannot be improved. I accept that rail is one of the safest methods of travel, but that does not mean that there are no risks. When a network is dismembered, there is every opportunity for mistakes to be made—and Railtrack, although charged with ensuring safety, is more interested in its flotation. I challenge Sir Robert Horton to state the real priorities of his chairmanship.

Then there is the timetable debacle. The original timetable contained more than 2,000 pages, but that was not enough: a supplement was needed, then another, and I gather that there is to be a fourth. Indeed, I believe that the timetable is so bad that it may be reprinted, as was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Must the public pay again? Will the debacle for which Railtrack is responsible necessitate another contribution from the taxpayer?

A further debacle involving the west coast main line would be funny, if people, industries and routes were not being harmed by the Government's incompetence. The line is desperate for finance. The Secretary of State announced today that £7 million had been gathered in from Europe. What is it for? It is simply to finance more feasibility studies. It seems that a £1 billion project is lying in tatters. *[Interruption.]* Ministers are saying, from a sedentary position, that that is not the case. I challenge them to tell me when work on the line will start—not the resignalling work, but the full reconstruction of the west coast main line.

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): In 1996.

Mr. McLeish: I do not know whether the work will be done early or late in 1996; nevertheless, progress has been made, and I will not challenge the Minister further.

The simple fact is that Ministers will not say how much money they have. They must say where the money is coming from. From what we have heard, it seems that not one penny—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) would sit quietly for a while, he would probably add to his knowledge.

Not one penny is coming from the private sector. Track access charges will support part of the project. The Government are trying to get £200 million from Europe; the trans-European networks money does not stretch to that. We shall wait with interest following the Minister's commitment to a 1996 start to the project.

The Secretary of State should be embarrassed about two other issues—or, rather, not necessarily the current Secretary of State, but his predecessor. Although 250 applications were received for a job on the Rail Users Consultative Committee, the Minister for Railways and Roads apparently suggested that none of the applicants was suitable. The Government then went on a spree to find a "placeperson". Will the Minister tell us whether the search has been successful? Are we to have a "yes-person" in the post? Obviously, the Government will be happy to see the departure of the present incumbent, who is retiring; but I sincerely hope that this will not be a manipulated quango job. If it is, it is another subject that the Nolan committee should investigate at an early stage.

The Secretary of State will probably know that his predecessor started a project called "the informed traveller". The essential aim was to retain network benefits in the crazy system of the privatised rail network. Are the Government still committed to that project? If they are, when benefits are likely to accrue—at least in directions from the Secretary of State?

The Government's key defence, advanced from both the Front and the Back Benches, is, "Do not worry about this privatisation; it is just like what happened with British Airways." That myth should be buried once and for all. Let us imagine that British Airways had been privatised in the same way as British Rail. We have 25 train operating companies with British Rail, so we should have had 25 aeroplane operating companies. Let us take the Manchester to London route, and franchise it separately; let us do the same with the Glasgow to London route. The Ministers smile, but that gives the lie to claims that this privatisation is anything like that of British Airways.

We have ROSCOs—rolling stock leasing companies—in the rail network; would we have had PLESCOs, or plane leasing companies, in British Airways, under Lord King? Would 737s, 757s, 767s and 777s be owned by separate companies and leased out? Of course not.

British Airways has one of the best maintenance services in the country. Throughout the country, it employs key people to provide services. In the scenario that I have described, it would not own anything. It sub-contracts, but that is not the same as a system of individual owners.

The key issue, however, is this: if British Airways had been offered a £2 billion subsidy in perpetuity, that would be similar to what the railways are getting. How can a service be privatised when there is a £2 billion subsidy committing Governments in 2010, 2020 or 2030? That is ridiculous. As if the financial position were not bad enough, to add insult to taxpayers' injury, that £2 billion is to be topped up with an extra £600 million once the railways are in the private sector.

[Mr. McLeish]

I am a Scot; I am canny with money; I am a moderate; and I have a lot of common sense. But I must tell people at the next election that the privatised railway will cost them £2.6 billion for ever. When is a privatisation not a privatisation? I suggest that this is one privatisation too many. It does not stand up to any critical analysis or objective criteria.

The Government know that the privatisation is not working. We hoped that the new Secretary of State would have had his honeymoon, bedded into the job and then realised that his predecessors had whipped up some support for a crazy idea. I sincerely hope that the right hon. Gentleman will now wish to back off from an idea that is causing immense damage to the fabric of industry and destroying morale. It is not likely to generate a penny of the extra private investment that we hear about, and, ultimately, will probably deprive the industry of any network benefits.

If the Government do not listen, they must suffer the consequences at the next election. I can tell Conservative Members with hard-pressed commuter seats where train dependency is high that we will campaign in those seats, and the smiles will be taken off their faces if the shambles that we envisage comes to pass. If they do not build the railways for the future, Labour will put them back together when we take power—as quickly as possible.

6.48 pm

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): If the debate has proved nothing else, it has at least proved that King Canute is alive and kicking in Oldham, West. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has convinced himself that if he repeats the claims that rail privatisation will not happen, his empty words can stop it happening. He is oblivious to the water that is already lapping around his feet—presumably as a result of the leaks that he welcomes so openly. He cannot recognise the irresistible tide that is engulfing him.

Arguably, it is unfair to compare the hon. Gentleman to King Canute—unfair to King Canute, that is. As I recall, it was the foolish courtiers surrounding the king who believed that his words had magical powers. The king commanded the waves to show them their folly. But in the context of rail privatisation, we are dealing with a foolish would-be king. His policy can be described in the words of his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) as a "cobweb of confusion".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) have both tried unsuccessfully to prise out of the hon. Members for Oldham, West and for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) precisely what the policy enunciated at their conference really means. Why have both of them refused to clarify the old Labour commitment to nationalisation which new Labour has made? That commitment is to renationalise the railways. Have they realised, for instance, that a commitment to renationalise makes their claim that they can stop the privatisation happening look rather more ludicrous than it does in any event? Or has the shadow Chancellor calculated that the cost of implementing the policy cannot be funded out of "endogenous growth"? Or have they recognised that there is at least a slight inconsistency between this new policy and Labour's much vaunted abandonment of clause IV about a year ago?

The hon. Member for Oldham, West sought to cross swords with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State over the comparison that my right hon. Friend drew between British Airways and British Rail. Not knowing when he was beaten, the hon. Member for Fife, Central returned later to the attack. Both of them are misleading themselves.

A proper comparison between British Rail and the British airline industry would not look at British Airways on its own and ask how it would be if it had been broken up into 90 separate parts. The starting point with rail is an industry which has, in all its aspects, been owned by the public sector since the folly of nationalisation by the post-war Labour Government. The comparison would have to be with one publicly owned corporation owning British Airways, Virgin, British Midland, Air UK and all the other operators, plus all the airports and probably control of air traffic control services as well. That would be a true comparison.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central seems to have been labouring under the misapprehension that British Airways owns all its aircraft. If he checks, he will find that a large part of British Airways' fleet is leased, just as happens throughout the industry internationally. It is a fact, as my right hon. Friend tried to explain to Opposition Front Benchers, that with the airlines—here I draw comparisons, as I have before, with road passenger transport and road haulage—the ownership of the infrastructure over which services are run is not the same as ownership of those who operate services on the structure or who provide for maintaining it.

Mr. McLeish: Why, then, was British Airways not broken up into 25 internal United Kingdom sections? [HON. MEMBERS: "You have just heard why."] I am not talking about the British airline industry. There is a big difference between the Minister's point and what some Conservative Back Benchers were saying earlier.

Mr. Watts: No, there is no difference. With the airline industry we did not start from as bad a position as with the railways, where every aspect of service operation and infrastructure was contained in one monolithic structure. In the airline industry there was already separate ownership of the infrastructure and of operations. I therefore invite the hon. Gentleman to reflect on the seminar that I have just given him.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also revealed once again his complete misunderstanding of the funding of the railways, pre-privatisation and post-privatisation. If he and his hon. Friend will look at the figures, they will see that, in the period before we started on the restructuring and privatisation of rail, Government support for the industry was broadly £1.5 billion a year; and they will see, in the same Transport Select Committee report from which they plucked out the £700 million additional cost figure, that Committee's judgment that in 1997, when privatisation will be complete, the amount of taxpayers' support needed will be broadly £1.5 billion a year.

They are confused about the intervening years because, this year and next, the figures that appear in the public expenditure statements include a line that deals with privatisation effects: a broad estimate and a composite

estimate of the receipts from the sales of the businesses which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has explained, are now gathering pace.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also confused himself about the value of assets at replacement prices in Railtrack and the stock market valuation of the company. Of course there will be no relationship between the stock market valuation of the company when it is floated next spring and the way in which track access charges are calculated and approved by the rail regulator.

Mr. Dalyell: What evidence does the Minister have for saying that sales are gathering pace?

Mr. Watts: My right hon. Friend said earlier that businesses with a turnover of about £4 billion are now on the market, some of them sold—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West has an inaccurate list of what has been sold. He mentioned heavy maintenance depots, but omitted the recent sale of On Board Services.

Mr. Meacher: Wow!

Mr. Watts: The hon. Gentleman sneers, but the business ranks third in this country's catering industry in terms of the number of pre-prepared meals that it serves every day—so it is not chickenfeed—[*Laughter.*] In fact, it is good Minister feed, as the photographs in the *Evening Standard* of that day showed. However, I understand why the hon. Gentleman wants to deflect attention from his misunderstanding of track access charges.

The relevance of replacement values to calculating track access charges is that the regulator has set charges at a level that will ensure that Railtrack has the funds of about £600 million a year which it needs to spend to maintain and improve the system. But the stock market valuation has no relevance whatever to the level of track access charges. Because of the increased efficiency that will come from the private sector operation of Railtrack, track access charges are falling, by 8 per cent. in real terms immediately, and thereafter by 2 per cent. below the retail prices index for the next five years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) reminded the House that the passenger service requirement introduces a guarantee of service levels for the first time ever. The publicly owned and accountable railway to which Opposition Front Benchers are so attracted has never given such guarantees. In fact, the publicly owned and accountable railway has the power, which it sometimes exercises, to reduce services to the point at which any further cut in services would mean that they disappeared altogether. So that is the sort of guarantee that passengers have with the structure that Opposition Members find so attractive.

I must tell the hon. Member for North Cornwall, moreover, that, in the publicly owned and accountable railway, management have the power to increase fares by as much as 56 per cent. What is the benefit of public ownership and accountability when that is what passengers may have to face? By contrast, the fares regime announced by the franchising director provides greater protection for passengers than they have ever enjoyed in the past.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) referred correctly to the stultifying effect of nationalisation. Privatisation of the railways will be the trigger for the renaissance of the railway industry, to which Opposition Members pay lip service but which they are not prepared to deliver. My hon. Friend rightly castigated the hon. Member for Oldham, West and others for their irresponsible and mischievous scaremongering over safety. The reality is that the safety regime that is introduced with the restructuring and privatisation of the railways is much more rigorous than the blanket safety authorisation covering the whole of British Rail, under which the nationalised railway has operated.

Under the new regime, every individual company and unit operating within the railway industry must satisfy, first, Railtrack and, ultimately, the Health and Safety Executive that it is competent to manage safety on the railway. That is a much higher requirement than has ever existed before, and it is also an open regime which involves people broadly across the railway industry, including the trade unions, which, of course, have valuable expertise and views to express on safety measures. It is part of that open regime that information about the causes of accidents and the way in which they might be avoided in the future must be disseminated widely if we are to ensure the highest possible standards.

I am conscious of the time, as no doubt you are, Madam Speaker; therefore I do not have time, sadly, to respond to all the other interesting and valuable points made by my right hon. and hon. Friends or to continue rebutting all the fallacies on which the arguments of Opposition Members were based. It must be clear, even to King Canute sitting opposite, that there is now an irresistible momentum to privatisation. If the hon. Member for Oldham, West does not recognise that, he will be swept away as the tide continues to come in.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 259, Noes 288.

Division No. 217] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Davis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam

Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCartney, Robert
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Joe Benton and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Sir Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House believes that privatisation of the railways will bring better services to passengers, as has happened with previous privatisations, such as British Airways and British Airports Authority; contrasts this with the Opposition's commitment to renationalise the railways; welcomes the announcement that Railtrack will be floated next Spring, allowing access to private capital and opportunities for investors; and further welcomes the progress that has already been made on privatisation, which will lead to a new era for passengers, with fares and services protected for the first time.

National Blood Service

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.16 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I beg to move,

That this House pays tribute to the nation's two million blood donors, on whose goodwill and generosity the National Blood Service and National Health Service depend; congratulates blood service staff in the regional blood transfusion centres for maintaining a high quality service despite the continuing uncertainty surrounding the service; deplores the proposal to close testing and/or processing facilities at Liverpool, Lancaster, Oxford, Brentwood and Plymouth blood centres in the absence of any conclusive evidence that closure will lead to improvements in the quality of service to people living in those areas; condemns the National Blood Authority for pre-empting the Secretary of State's decision on the future of the National Blood Service by pushing ahead with its proposed re-organisation before any final announcement; and calls on the Secretary of State to visit each threatened centre to hear at first hand the concerns of donors and staff and take account of their representations before finalising his decision about the future organisation of the blood service.

It is appropriate to begin on the point that is not held in contention between ourselves and the Government. I pay tribute to the 2 million people, our fellow citizens, who every year give blood voluntarily and generously, often at their own expense and inconvenience. They do so because they care about the health of other people—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot hear a word that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is saying.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was surprised to see the Secretary of State for Health heckling me from behind your Chair. I note that he has left the business end of the debate in the hands of his very capable deputy, the Minister for Health. It is appropriate—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Get on with it.

Mr. Brown: It is always such a pleasure to be urged on by the hon. Lady, who seems to have a special and, dare I say it, unique affection for listening to me speak from the Dispatch Box. I welcome her to this debate.

The blood service is a central part of the national health service. It is a symbol of the enduring philosophical truth that lies behind a health service which is comprehensive, unified, publicly owned, publicly accountable and free at the point of need—the principle that we can achieve more by acting together than if we act alone.

There are currently 15 English regional blood transfusion centres. Each centre carries out blood collection, testing, processing, delivery and specialist services such as research and development. In 1993, the National Blood Authority was set up to oversee the administration of the blood service. It was instructed to carry out a review of the service to maximise efficiency and to minimise waste and inefficiency. There is nothing wrong with that intention. The annual budget of the blood service is about £130 million and it is important that public money is wisely spent.

As part of the review, the National Blood Authority commissioned several private firms of management consultants to offer advice on possible reorganisation—advice which has cost the taxpayer £1.25 million. It is interesting to note that management consultants employed by Government Departments in the past three years have cost on average £500 million per year. It is even more revealing to note that, according to a report from the Cabinet office efficiency unit in August 1994, the savings achieved by those management consultants amount to an average of £12.2 million per year. A total of £500 million pounds spent on achieving savings of £12.2 million is not a ringing endorsement of those management consultants, nor of the Ministers responsible for hiring them.

However, let us be generous and give the consultants the benefit of the doubt, at least for the purposes of the debate. Perhaps the advice offered to the National Blood Authority was of a higher quality than the other advice that management consultants offer to Departments and quangos. Let us look at the advice that the consultants, Bain and Co., provided in exchange for more than £1 million of public money.

Bain and Co. suggested a streamlining of donor sessions, proposing that it should take 9.5 minutes to take a unit of blood. Clearly the consultants were unaware that the current regulations require almost double that time—17.5 minutes—to be taken. They also proposed to end smaller "inefficient" sessions yielding fewer than 90 donations per day, despite the fact that such sessions account for 30 per cent. of all donations.

Next, the consultants proposed using fewer units of blood for operations. That is the sort of recommendation that one would expect from management consultants. According to Bain and Co., such a measure would reduce demand for blood by 23 per cent. The idea is that if we give people less blood the demand will fall. But it seems rather a dangerous proposition. Last Friday the *British Medical Journal* contained advice contradicting that of the consultants. Leading haematologists suggested that even current practices leave critically ill patients short of blood. So there is hardly a case for reducing the amount of blood given.

Bain and Co. also suggested that money could be saved by leaving blood at room temperature for 24 hours before refrigeration. I am sure that it could, but there is a danger that blood products could be infected by bacteria and become unsuitable for use.

The consultants also proposed—this is the heart of the issue that we are debating—that five of the 15 regional transfusion centres should be closed and the blood service restructured into three administrative zones. That is the proposal which has proved so universally unpopular with clinicians, staff and donors. It means that the public will be required to travel further to larger, more impersonal donation sessions, with a consequent fall in donations.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): It is rather a shame that the debate has kicked off to a false start, with the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the centres are to close. It has been suggested that certain processing functions will be moved away from them, but donors will not have to travel further. The centres will still be available for the donation of blood, so what the hon. Gentleman has said is simply not true.

Mr. Brown: The proposals are based on what is called option D of the Bain report, which recommends full

closure of five or six centres. Gary Austin, the designated chief executive of the midlands and south-western zone, has written to representatives of the Oxford blood centre about the "closure" of that centre. That is his word, and if the Minister wishes to dispute it his quarrel is with Gary Austin, not with me.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Given the scale of public and donor opposition to the closure proposals—Oxfordshire has produced the county's biggest ever petition—and given the scale of clinical and consultant concern, with more than 100 clinicians, including world-leading heart surgeons, having signed a statement opposing closure and expressing concern about the effects of the withdrawal of the testing and processing functions, is it not time that the National Blood Authority and the Government took notice and acted to keep the centres, including their testing and processing functions, open?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is right. A hundred clinicians say the same as I have said. The Minister alone denies it.

Mr. Malone: Nonsense.

Mr. Brown: People outside following the debate will make up their own minds whose word is to be relied upon, and I shall have something to say later about the reliability of Ministers.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Does my hon. Friend agree that part of the confusion about language arises from the National Blood Authority itself? Initially, in its shoddy consultation document, it announced closure. Then it started to back-track. Those of us who have tried to pin the authority down to some reasonable proposals are amazed at the way in which it keeps shifting the meaning of language and deliberately confusing the debate, while at the same time implementing the proposals which are so strongly opposed throughout the country.

Mr. Brown: I shall say something later about the way in which the proposals are being implemented, but my hon. Friend is absolutely right. She speaks for the country, while the Minister will have difficulty being treated with respect by those who are following the debate. I shall have something to say about statements by Ministers, too.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why the Labour party wants to take the advice of clinicians only on some occasions? For instance, it entirely ignores the advice of GP fundholders on its policy. Why is it not more consistent?

Mr. Brown: I am being lured slightly away from the main thrust of the debate, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that in *Fundholding* magazine, a periodical specifically for GP fundholders, 75 per cent. of the fundholders polled said that they opposed fundholding. So we are listening to the majority of clinicians. We are more than happy to take advice, as the hon. Gentleman urges. Having satisfied him completely, I shall continue with my speech.

The second implication of the proposals for the blood service is that specialist centres of excellence will be lost. Thirdly, some specialist services, such as transplant technology and cancer treatment research, will be threatened. Above all, we believe that the review has underestimated the future growth in demand for blood and overestimated the excess capacity in the service.

There is a real risk that future supplies of blood to national health service hospitals may be inadequate. What the review calls an excess the service calls a safety margin, to deal with events such as war, or the purchase of Tuta bags. *[Interruption.]* The Minister seems surprised that I refer to wars, but he should think back to the Falklands conflict and the Gulf war. We were all grateful that masses of blood products were not needed, but they might have been.

Mr. Malone: That was not the reason for my incredulity. The suggestion that the problem experienced with Tuta bags can be compared with war is absurd. The hon. Gentleman does himself no credit by making such a comparison.

Mr. Brown: The Minister has missed the point. Both examples represent events which put pressure on the supply of blood products. It is perfectly obvious to most people following the debate that both events, although quite different in their nature, would put pressure on short-term supplies of blood products. That is why it is necessary to have a surplus. It is far better to have a surplus than a deficit.

The proposals are paralleled by other initiatives which have met with considerable opposition. The first, of course, is the sale of blood products—and the confidence of the House in the Conservative party's reform agenda for the blood service is unlikely to have been shored up by the answers that have been given to the House. On 12 December 1994, in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health said:

"Blood collected by the national blood service is for the needs of the national health service not for sale or export."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1994; Vol. 251, c. *473*.]

Given that assurance, many of us were concerned to learn that the National Blood Authority does sell blood to the private sector and does sell blood products overseas. These transactions were said to be worth about £5 million a year. More concern was caused by newspaper reports suggesting that the NBA was considering increasing the volume of sales abroad to around £14 million per annum. That may well be standard practice for a private profit-driven firm in a competitive market, but it surely has no place in an ethically based public service, the overriding purpose of which is to meet the needs of patients. The proposal also does not go down well with donors.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): The blood products sold—in particular, factor VIII—are surplus to requirements in Britain, they are provided at cost and they are provided to help people who are ill. What is wrong with helping people in that way? Surely the hon. Gentleman does not want to stop helping people who need factor VIII just because they are not English. Is that not taking xenophobia a stage too far?

Mr. Brown: I am slightly surprised to be accused of xenophobia by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) and his party. I followed with some interest the speech of the Secretary of State for Defence at the Conservative party conference. Perhaps the hon.

[Mr. Brown]

Gentleman would like to have a word with his right hon. Friend before he starts throwing around charges of xenophobia.

The point I am making is that our fellow citizens give blood freely and altruistically as a public service. They do not give blood to have it treated as a tradeable commodity. The hon. Gentleman implied that all the blood products that are sold are surplus, whereas in fact that is not the case. Blood products are now being treated as a tradeable commodity to generate income for the authority. It is not a question of selling off the surplus.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). People who give blood do so altruistically and generously and because they want to give their blood for humanitarian reasons. What they find offensive is that they are not even told when their blood is sold on to second and third agencies who may well make money out of the transactions.

Mr. Brown: I agree completely with the hon. Gentleman, and I believe that the further the National Blood Authority goes down that route, the more it will put in jeopardy the altruism of those providing blood.

In a survey conducted by the NBA, donors were asked whether they

"support the sale of surplus plasma derivatives for countries in the European Community provided the monies raised offset running costs to the National Blood Service".

I submit that it would be difficult to write the question in such a way as to make it more likely that the answer received would be yes. Nevertheless, more than 8 per cent. of donors who responded were opposed to the idea of selling surplus blood products in the very narrow circumstances outlined in the question.

Mr. Malone *rose—*

Mr. Brown: No doubt the Minister will now say that that is a wholesale endorsement of the selling of blood products.

Mr. Malone: No, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be honest with the House. He should make the point that if the surplus blood products were not sold and the cash brought back into the NHS, the products would be destroyed. Does he think that donors would prefer to see part of what they have given destroyed rather than given to patients, wherever else they may be? That is an extraordinary suggestion.

Mr. Brown: First, the products are not given—they are sold. Secondly, they do not go to patients wherever they may be but are sold at market rates in places such as Turkey.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the price lists in Turkish publications which appear to show that middlemen are making massive profits out of the sale of blood products bought from the National Blood Authority?

Mr. Brown: I was aware of the general market in Turkey, although I was not aware of the price lists or the profit margins of middlemen. No doubt the Minister knows more about the matter than I do.

The point I wanted to make was that if 8 per cent. of donors decided to withhold their gift—and it is a gift—of blood, the effect on national blood stocks would be disastrous. The Government are doing a very dangerous thing in undermining the ethical base of the service.

In addition to the sale of blood and blood products, there is evidence of creeping commercialisation of the service. The removal of the crown emblem from the national blood service logo has met with opposition from donors and blood service staff, and a petition was presented against the plan to the Prime Minister this morning. Why should the crown emblem—the symbol of our country—be removed from something that is supposed to be a public service? What emblem will replace it? Will it be something like the Conservative party torch or an advertisement for Ribena? Who knows?

It was recently revealed that the National Blood Authority is considering plans to allow Ribena and McVitie to provide sponsorship for the service, and it has been suggested that in exchange for that commercial sponsorship access to the database of 1.8 million blood donors could be facilitated so that the poor old blood donors can be targeted with junk mail.

In fairness, I received a letter from Smith Kline Beecham stating that there was never any question of that firm accessing the donor database. Nevertheless, meetings have taken place and surely no one can be in any doubt that commercial involvement puts further pressure on the principle that blood is given freely by altruistic citizens because they care about the health of others.

That brings me to my next point about dangerous cost-cutting. The procurement of Tuta blood bags with faulty and potentially dangerous seals was an ill-thought-out decision made by national blood service chiefs more concerned about cost than about quality. That kind of decision-making undermines people's trust and confidence in the service. Trust and confidence are commodities on which the service relies. They are principles without which the service could not function. The Government's encouragement of commercialisation and cost cutting poses a real threat to the central ethos of the service—that of altruism and public service.

The House should concern itself also with the effect of all this on the morale of staff. The proposals are unpopular, and the uncertainty and confusion which surrounds their implementation has had a damaging effect on staff morale. Resignations and early retirement are the most extreme expressions of disenchantment among staff. Among those who have left the service in recent months are Doctor Hugh Lloyd, from my city of Newcastle; Belinda Phipps, the director of the south London centre at Tooting; Douglas Jinks, chief executive of the Birmingham service; and Doctor Colin Entwistle, head of the Oxford service. The low levels of staff morale are threatening the viability of the service. This summer, Peter Bowells, a laboratory services manager in Oxford, told *The Observer*:

"If more staff were to leave prematurely, it would be very hard to maintain the service."

As well as staff morale, there are concerns about the levels of stock. The national blood service exists to ensure that NHS hospitals have access to all the blood supplies that are needed. Keeping adequate blood stocks is, therefore, a central imperative. But blood stock levels have fallen below the NBA's recommended absolute minimum levels on a number of occasions this year. In

January, stock levels were below the recommended minimum level of 15,000 units on 10 out of 23 recorded days—in other words, 43 per cent. of the time. In June, the picture was equally worrying.

Before I bring my remarks to a conclusion, I want to refer to two constitutional issues which I think should worry the House and should be of concern to every hon Member, regardless of party political affiliation. The points that I want to raise relate directly to the rights of Parliament and the rights of hon. Members of the House of Commons. The NBA's proposed restructuring plans have led to commercialisation, corner-cutting and the alienation of staff and donors. It is my submission that it has also acted outside its authority and has pre-empted parliamentary approval.

Although the NBA proposals were put out for a three-month formal consultation in September 1994, no final decision from the NBA has been presented to Parliament for approval, despite repeated promises from Ministers. That might give us cause to think that the NBA was reconsidering its proposals in the light of the strong opposition from the national blood service staff and the general public, including the donors. Much as we might like to think the best of the NBA, however, the truth is rather far removed from that. The authority has already hired the senior officials—the top brass—for the new zonal administration. It has already filled between 20 and 25 newly created senior posts at a cost to the taxpayer of at least £1.5 million. Those people have been drawing salaries and driving around in company cars for the best part of this year but, it would appear—no doubt the Minister will be able to deal with this point—with no work to do.

The shadow Secretary for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), has referred the matter to the Comptroller and Auditor General for investigation. As parliamentarians, it is clearly right that we should consider carefully the circumstances in which a quango proceeds to make such appointments without having the parliamentary authority that it requires. The matter has not yet been agreed and it should not have proceeded.

That brings me to the second matter, which also ought to concern parliamentarians on both sides of the House, regardless of party affiliation. As well as spending public money without Parliament's approval, the National Blood Authority has issued a gagging clause to its staff which in my view threatens the relationship between Members of Parliament and their constituents. The clause threatens disciplinary action against an employee of the authority for no greater offence than approaching a Member of Parliament. The authority's code states:

"Staff must exhaust the procedures laid down in this document",

which would take around 40 days by my reckoning,

"before contemplating consulting his or her Member of Parliament or disclosing information to the public or media. Failure to do so could undermine public confidence in the service"—

depending, of course, on what they intend to say to their Member of Parliament—

"and may result in disciplinary action being taken."

It is an affront to this House and to every Member of Parliament that a body which is supposedly under parliamentary control can insert in its code a restraint on the rights of citizens to approach their Members of Parliament. It is an affront to this House and it should not be allowed. It is a direct contravention of the constitutional right of every citizen to approach his or her Member of Parliament. Also, it flouts the guidance on staff relations with the public and the media laid down by the national health service management executive. No doubt the Minister will want to brush that matter to one side, but I do not see how he can easily do so.

We therefore ask hon. Members to join together to pay tribute to the nation's 2 million blood donors, on whose altruism and good will the national health service depends and to congratulate the staff of the regional transfusion centres for maintaining a high quality service despite continuing uncertainty about future reorganisations.

We must also deplore the proposals under consideration for the closure of facilities in five regional centres and must condemn the NBA for pre-empting parliamentary approval for its plans and attempting to gag its staff.

Finally, I call on the Secretary of State to consider carefully the proposals in the light of the overwhelming opposition to them and to reject them as ill conceived, damaging to the service and potentially threatening for the well-being of patients.

7.42 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'commends the continued support of blood donors, on which the Blood Service is founded and which is at the heart of the National Health Service; and fully recognises the commitment of blood service regional staff and the importance of ensuring that this vital national service continues to improve and develop into an integrated national service, based on high and uniform standards of safety, reliability and efficiency.'.

I start by assuring the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering extremely carefully the proposals that have been put before him. The hon. Gentleman is probably aware of the fact that they were put before the then Secretary of State in early July. My right hon. Friend has been considering them with great care since. Indeed, a number of meetings with the hon. Gentleman's colleagues and others still have to take place before a final decision is taken on this important matter and I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will read with great care the *Hansard* report of this debate.

Before we enter into detailed debate, let us be clear about the quality of the services that we are discussing. Our blood service is among the world's safest, through the reliability and quality of our donors and the thoroughness of our screening and testing systems. Another system not far from this country in Europe with 1.2 million donations per annum has a high prevalence of HIV—0.129 per thousand. In this country, the figure is much lower at 0.007 per thousand. I draw the attention of the House to that figure because it is a very important one and it underpins the quality of our service.

Last year in England, 2.4 million donations were given through the generosity of our unpaid voluntary donors for the direct benefit of about 800,000 desperately ill patients. The voluntary principle guarantees not only the basic supply, but its quality. In other countries where the voluntary principle does not pertain—in some where it appears to do so it does not in reality as payments are made by a number of means—the quality of blood donated is much worse than in the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

Contamination rates in some countries range from 2.5 times the United Kingdom level to a massive 280 times that level.

The Government clearly understand that the voluntary principle underpins the quality of supply. Our system works and I am pleased to be able to tell the House that it is the Government's firm undertaking and principle in this debate that that principle will remain.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, especially as he wishes to close the east London supply centre in Brentwood. He has paid tribute to blood donors and those of us who are past that age are happy to pay taxes for the process to continue. He has praised and emphasised the voluntary factor. Does he agree that that means that there should be no element of commercialism in anything that happens to the blood subsequently? If there is such commercialism, it is absolutely wrong. It is something that taxpayers and blood donors oppose and they will oppose any Government who change that principle.

Mr. Malone: Before the hon. Gentleman becomes hysterical about commercialism, let me set the matter in context. I was intending to do so later. Blood and the red cells derived from it are not for sale. They are provided at a price—a cost production price—to the national health service and the private sector in this country. With the increasing number of donations, there is an increasing quantity of blood products. The hon. Gentleman must ask himself what donors would say if products derived from blood donations were destroyed rather than sold in other marketplaces.

Mr. Alton *rose—*

Mr. Malone: I will gladly give way when I have finished this point.

The cash received for those products is put back into the national health service to pay for increased patient care. That is something that, when properly explained rather than described in the rather absurd tones that the hon. Gentleman used, would be welcomed by the population of this country.

Mr. Spearing: I was keeping my intervention short. I was excluding the question of the sale of products abroad. I am talking about the attitude of cutting costs and of making one area compete against another and reducing costs, possibly at the expense and risk of providing a lower-quality service. The hon. Gentleman cannot deny that that is happening. Surely that was the way in which the consultants mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) went about their task.

Mr. Malone: I do not agree and, as I get on with my speech, the hon. Gentleman will understand that the proposals put forward for consultation, which are now with the Secretary of State, are designed to get rid of the inequalities in the service—any number of ranges of standards and costs—so that we can have a truly national service.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister accept that the objection is not so much to the reinvestment of money within the national health and blood services, as to the fact that blood is being sold overseas at a list price of £90, but is then sold in countries such as Turkey at a list price of £399. Can he justify the profit made, given that he, his colleagues and the National Blood Authority have said that no profit is made out of blood? The profit is made by middlemen, who are creaming off substantial sums of money from donations given generously out of the good hearts of people in this country. Should not people in this country rightly object to that?

Mr. Malone: Those lists have been drawn to my attention. If the hon. Gentleman suggests that we should have custody from the Dispatch Box of arrangements as to when and in what circumstances blood products will move on from this country or from the national blood service, I must say that that is an extension of control beyond anything that even he should expect. The corollary of what he is saying is that it would be impossible to pass such products into any marketplace because it is not possible to control where they would go from there. Such controls simply do not exist.

Mr. Alton: Why?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, asks why. It is impossible to have controls on passing such products into marketplaces because, as he would know if he were to look at the arrangements for competition policy, for example, in the European Union, it would not be allowed.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Malone: No, I cannot give way to the hon. Lady. I have given way significantly already and I must move on.

The NBA was set up in 1993 because of a range of concerns. Despite the high standards of care achieved by our service, there was clearly some room for improvement. The large number of regional blood centres had led to variable administrative practices, duplication of effort, wasteful use of resources and inadequate co-ordination. Let me give the House some examples to support that suggestion.

First, there are the donor selection criteria. There was a detailed national list of risk factors designed to ensure exclusion of donors at risk of infection. It was subject however to different interpretation of detail from region to region, which meant the unnecessary exclusion of some donors for reasons that did not add to blood safety but was due to an over-rigid interpretation.

The criteria for determining the suitability of locations for collection sessions varied from region to region. There were different methods of processing blood into its different parts, some of which could affect the efficacy of the product, though not its safety.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Malone: If I can get through this point, I will give way to the hon. Lady.

The reserve stockholding considered necessary for each centre varied between one day's supply and seven days' supply. Whatever can be said about that, one of those figures was clearly wrong and a view had to be taken about which was right.

There is also the question of use of stocks. Some regions aimed at self-sufficiency to the extent that they would ration their hospitals at times of temporary shortage rather than call on stocks that were available from other regions.

There is a wide variety of different arrangements for 24-hour on-call access to consultant specialist advice. That causes confusion to doctors who, in the course of their employment, move to other regions.

There was also the question of dissemination of information to donors. The forms, leaflets and other communications to donors varied in content, quality and frequency from region to region. There was clearly an agenda that had to be addressed and that is why the investigation was undertaken

Ms Eagle: I thank the Minister for giving way. He has made valid points but he has not made an argument as to why closing down five transfusion centres, including Liverpool, would deal with those points.

Mr. Malone: I shall deal not with closing down centres but with the restructuring that is proposed in the consultation document and the withdrawal of certain facilities from those centres. I was interested that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) got it right in his concluding remarks when he stopped referring to closure, as he had been doing at the beginning of his speech, and referred to the withdrawal of certain services from centres. I am glad that my intervention in his speech was effective.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The withdrawal to which the Minister refers is closure, is it not?

Mr. Malone: I hardly need to refer the hon. Gentleman to the English dictionary for him to understand that there is a great distinction there. The withdrawal of processing facilities is taking place but the centres will remain as centres for blood donation and other activities; that is very different from closure.

I turn to the principles that lay behind the need for the reorganisation and what will underpin it. From the outset, the NBA has made the broad principles behind its proposals clear.

First, the blood service must remain a voluntary, unpaid donor system within the NHS. That is its great strength, as I have already acknowledged.

Secondly, we want to establish for the first time a truly national blood service based on high and uniform standards of safety, reliability and efficiency. Thirdly, we want to increase supply in line with increasing demand from increasing hospital activity and rapidly developing clinical techniques.

Fourthly, there is a moral obligation to use the generous gift of donors as efficiently as possible. That means working with hospital teams to use blood and blood products in the best possible way for each patient, to improve the safety and quality of the products and to make the services for donors better than they are now.

Fifthly, we want to collect blood at the most convenient locations for donors and ensure that the collection service is cost-effective. Sixthly, we want to rationalise administration to make it more efficient and effective and to remove waste arising from duplication, excess capacity or lack of co-ordination.

In summary, the proposals outlined in the consultation document are designed to increase supply; improve the way the blood supply is used; improve the safety and quality of blood products; improve services for donors; improve services for patients; and provide an efficient, cost-effective, national service.

The first step in the process was to establish the NBA and its main headquarters structure so that it could begin to plan. In effect, this provided a national blood service in name but the substance needed to be added to that. What are now under consideration are the NBA proposals to deliver the key second step of implementing the management arrangements that will convert the goal of a truly integrated national service into a practical reality.

The NBA consulted widely on its initial proposals in 1994 and gave full and detailed consideration to the responses received before arriving at the proposals which are before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Andrew Smith: On consultation, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many of those consulted agreed with the proposals and how many opposed them?

Mr. Malone: No, I cannot give the precise figures. I can tell him—

Mr. Alton: Put it in the Library.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman says put it in the Library. If he tables a parliamentary question he will get an answer, as he would to a question on any other point.

The consultation process was wide and it has been validated. It was far wider than Opposition Members believe and the proposals that followed from it are now before my right hon. Friend, who expects to reach a conclusion shortly.

I find the cries that we hear from the Opposition on all such matters surprising. Faced with any change, the Labour party always in some way demands the restoration or retention of the status quo. Faced with the status quo, it always demands change. Faced with a consultation process it always demands more time; if due time is given for proper consultation, the next cry is, "Why the great delay?"

Throughout the consultation process, absurd and groundless fears have been raised by the Labour party. It has placed or provoked countless scare stories in the tabloid press. I seek to tackle the worst of them head on.

How many scare stories stores have we had about privatisation? They are not true. There is no question of privatising the national blood service.

We dealt with commercialisation earlier in the debate but let me make a final point on it. We produce vastly more blood products, as opposed to the main ingredients of transfusions, than we can use. The NBA disposes of surplus blood products such as factor 8, which is used in the treatment of haemophilia, by selling them abroad. That is a long-standing practice based on the sound and humanitarian principle that someone can at least benefit from what would otherwise be destroyed.

The NBA seeks to recover its costs without any element of profit at all. It is unfortunate that the accusation has been repeated tonight that the NBA is somehow getting inflated prices in places such as Turkey. That is rubbish. Price setting outside the UK has nothing to do with the NBA and is not within the control of the Government.

[Mr. Malone]

On the scare about the closure of blood centres, the transfer of certain functions, as we have already established in exchanges across the Dispatch Box, does not amount to the closure of a service.

Ms Eagle: I thank the Minister for giving way again. Will he admit that, buried within the Bain report, which is some 600 pages long, support was canvassed for possible privatisation but was dismissed. However, there was widespread support for the proposition that the English blood service should pursue profitable commercial opportunities outside the UK. How does the Minister square what he has just told the House with the information that is buried in the Bain report, which cost £600,000 of public money to produce?

Mr. Malone: I am telling the House the policy and what will happen. There is no policy along the lines suggested by the hon. Lady. The Bain report will not drive this process; it will be driven by the Secretary of State's decision, based on proposals put to him by the NBA.

The question of donor confidentiality has also been raised. I confirm, for the sake of donors, that information will remain strictly confidential and will not be made available to commercial companies for any purpose or under any circumstances. There is one simple reason for that. I remind the House that the relationship between the blood service and its donors is exactly the same as the relationship between a doctor and a patient.

As for scares about the safety of supply, it has been wrongly suggested that reorganisation will somehow prejudice security of supply. At present, excess capacity in processing, testing and grouping blood is about 50 per cent.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East made what he thought was an amusing remark about a possible debate on how many pints of blood it is sensible to use in a particular operation. The practice varies across the country, and one purpose of reorganising the service is to establish credibility in the clinical techniques for transfusion so that there can be a proper level of supply for certain operations. If it now ranges, as it often does in orthopaedic surgery for the same procedure, between zero pints and some 2.5 to 3 pints or even more, one of the clinicians has clearly got it wrong. The transfusion service needs to develop its clinical abilities and disseminate them across the country so that a proper view can be taken.

The new service will have three prime objectives: an improved service to donors, an improved service to hospitals and their patients, and lower operating costs and less bureaucracy by removing the present duplication, variation and wasteful use of resources. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East is fast enough to ask questions at the Dispatch Box or on the Order Paper about management costs in the health service. I should have thought that he would welcome the objective of cutting out bureaucracy in our national transfusion service rather than seeming to be entirely against it.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I said in my speech that the efficient running of the service was an objective of ours as well as a claimed objective of the Minister. I raised two important constitutional matters with him and I hope that he will deal with them both before he sits down.

Mr. Malone: I shall indeed. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, a number of people have been employed by the service with a view to putting planning into effect. That is common practice where change is proposed. It would be absurd to suggest that a service facing change should not plan for it and put in place the proper structures to do so. I do not know quite what the hon. Gentleman suggests. Had that not been done, I bet that he would have suggested that there had been a failure of anticipation and would have said that the seamless service now provided by the blood transfusion service had been prejudiced.

The hon. Gentleman's second point, which he always makes, was about gagging clauses. The position is simple. Everybody has a right to talk to his or her Member of Parliament if he or she so wishes. The rules that will affect people in the National Blood Authority are the same because it is a special health authority. It is not a quango, as has been suggested in the House tonight. The rules are the same as those that affect any other employee within the family of the national health service, and the same standards apply.

As has been pointed out in letters issued by the chief executive of the service, it would be absurd if a Member of Parliament were the first resort without exercising the right to talk to the direct employers. So the point made by the hon. Gentleman has no worth at all. My right hon. Friend has taken, and is taking, the keenest interest in the revised proposals submitted to the Department in early July. It is clearly important for the future of the service that decisions are taken as quickly as possible, but it is even more important that they are the right decisions.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Malone: I am concluding my speech.

The principles on which those decisions will be taken, and on which this important service will continue to be based once they are taken, are ones on which the House, the country and donors will be able to rely.

8.5 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): First, I declare an interest in this debate. My candidacy at the general election is sponsored by Unison, a trade union that represents a number of the staff affected by the proposals that we are considering tonight. I also have a constituency interest, which is that many donors and users of the service in Liverpool have expressed their concerns to me. Secondly, surgeons and consultants at the cardiothoracic centre, which is a regional centre providing treatment for heart and lung disease, have expressed their grave concerns, not only to me but to Ministers, about the proposals. I shall return to that shortly.

The Minister said that if we were to table a question, he would place in the Library a list of the people who had responded to the consultation document. On 9 February 1995, my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) asked whether the Secretary of State would

"publish *(a)* all the responses to the National Blood Authority consultation document and *(b)* a list of all the organisations and individuals who have opposed the reorganisation proposals".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1995; Vol. 254, c. *367*.]

The answer was that those were responses to the National Blood Authority and that therefore the replies were the property of the NBA. Will the Minister publish that information if we table a question now directly to the Secretary of State?

Mr. Alton: I support what the hon. Lady says. She will recall from our meetings that John Adey assured us that there would be a rethink if clinical opinion were opposed to the changes. How can there be a rethink if we do not know what clinical opinion was—most of us could have a guess—and if the Government will not publish the responses?

Mrs. Kennedy: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. At that public meeting he had a further assurance from the platform in front of hundreds of people in Liverpool's St. George's hall.

A member of the Liberal Democrat party, Councillor Frank Doran, asked of the Mersey NBA:

"The Liverpool centre is an acknowledged 'centre of excellence'. An assurance has been given that no changes will be implemented if clinical opinion remains opposed. If clinical opinion remains opposed will the changes still go ahead?"

The National Blood Authority replied:

"Clinical opinion has been listened to very seriously and further meetings held. Sir Colin has met with the Mersey branch of the BMA, which is concerned about whether the proposals are workable and deliverable."

That was it. It was no answer at all. Clinical opinion throughout Merseyside remains extremely concerned about the proposals.

From as early as February this year, a referendum has been conducted among senior clinicians in Merseyside, north Wales and the Isle of Man. More than 300 top clinicians have stated that they are strongly opposed to the proposals because of the risks to patients' lives.

The former Secretary of State was sent a copy of the results of that referendum, which I am afraid demonstrates that the Government are prepared to ignore clinical opinion to drive through a change that, as currently proposed, is not in anyone's interest.

Mr. Malone: What risks?

Mrs. Kennedy: I can tell the Minister exactly the risks about which the clinicians are concerned.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The problems encountered in north Wales and Merseyside have been repeated in south Wales, where the specialised screening unit at Cardiff is to be transferred to London. None of its skilled staff are able to transfer, which means that an extremely valuable facility will be lost not just to Wales but to the whole country.

Mrs. Kennedy: Before I outline the risks, I should like to deal with the survey of clinical opinion that was taken on Merseyside. Given the failure of the NBA to reiterate assurances previously given, will the Minister now offer them to us? Will he say that so long as clinical opinion remains deeply unhappy about the proposals he will not force through a closure that his own professional staff have told him they do not believe to be in the interests of patients? [HON. MEMBERS: " Answer"] We do not want any more weasel words; we want a straight answer to a plain question. I was asked to outline the risks, but they have been dismissed by Ministers. That is outrageous.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Lady knows perfectly well that it is not the outcome of a referendum upon which Ministers make their decisions. Proper clinical judgments will be considered and will form part of my right hon. Friend's decision. The hon. Lady is talking about petitions that are circulated and simply signed—I do not know on what basis. They are not what I would represent as clinical opinion in the sense of providing the best basis of evidence upon which to proceed.

Mrs. Kennedy: I do not think that anyone listening to the debate will accept that response.

Ms Eagle: My hon. Friend will have a copy of a letter from Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of the regional health authority on Merseyside. He is hardly a friend of the Opposition, but he, too, is opposed to the proposal and has written to say so.

Mrs. Kennedy: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Clinicians and cardiothoracic surgeons at the cardiothoracic centre in my constituency in Liverpool expressed their concern about the proposal last October in a letter to Sir Colin Walker, the chairman of the NBA. They stated:

"The figure you quote of two hours travelling time in an emergency as a maximum is far too long for the work that we undertake. In the sorts of emergencies that we deal with, such a delay will result in the death of a number of patients."

That is quite plain and straightforward. Those are the risks and it is disturbing that Ministers are prepared to dismiss such comments.

Mr. Malone: Given the way in which the hon. Lady puts them, I am certainly not prepared to accept that they are accurate. Let me remind her that hospitals keep their own store of blood and often it is sufficient to last them for at least one, two or perhaps even more days. Secondly, the standard of two hours is an absolute maximum time. Many hospitals will still be able to receive supplies if they need to call upon them within a far shorter time. Therefore, for the hon. Lady to suggest that two hours will be the norm for anyone who needs to call upon a blood supply is rubbish.

Mrs. Kennedy: I am not making a suggestion but quoting directly from a letter written by clinicians and surgeons at a hospital in my constituency who are deeply concerned about the proposals.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that concern has been expressed by clinicians across the country? For example, the regius professor of medicine at the university of Oxford has written:

"This is a complex hospital with both a busy Accident and Emergency service and a number of specialised services, particularly related to diseases of the blood. We remain unconvinced that a safe and effective service could be maintained for the local population if it were centred in Birmingham or Bristol."

People will know who to believe between the Minister and the regius professor of medicine.

Mrs. Kennedy: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not intend to say any more on that subject, but I will

[Mrs. Kennedy]

ensure that clinicians at the cardiothoracic centre at Liverpool receive a copy of *Hansard* so that they can see how their concerns have been dealt with in the House.

In their letter to the chairman of the NBA, the clinicians and surgeons also said that without the services of the local blood transfusion centre they would have to "dramatically increase" their in-hospital blood stores. The Minister is quite right to say that hospitals have their own stores, but those clinicians have said that they will have to "dramatically increase" them. That is one way in which the notional £10 million saving that the blood transfusion service claims will be made will be passed on to hospitals. The real savings to the health service must be seriously questioned in the House, especially since we have been unable to get to the bottom of the figures produced during the whole sorry business. The clinicians also said in their letter:

"This whole process would be both costly and wasteful of donated blood and blood products."

New information technology systems have been proposed. I am pleased that the NBA has agreed that the new system should operate in tandem with the old one for a pilot period of six months. That is a great relief because the original proposal was to introduce and operate the new system from a standing start. I have been disturbed, however, to hear about plans to trade access to lists of donors in exchange for sponsorship of donor sessions. I firmly believe that throughout this process donors have been treated with scant respect by the people who manage the National Blood Authority and the blood transfusion service.

Mr. Barry Porter: I have listened with great interest to the hon. Lady. I also represent part of Merseyside and I have had considerable correspondence on this matter. The hon. Lady obviously knows a great deal about the issue. Is she suggesting that the present arrangements governing the blood service on Merseyside are absolutely perfect? Is there no room for improvement and, if so—I presume she knows it all—have the clinicians who have come to her door in droves suggested any?

Mrs. Kennedy: The hon. Gentleman need not be patronising. I do not claim to be an expert. His question is a fair one. None of the staff involved in this process have said that they oppose change full stop. I would be the first to recognise that the introduction of a national information system to which all centres have access, as well doctors and clinicians at every hospital, is an improvement on current services. I welcome that.

Donors are concerned at being treated in a cavalier fashion by the managers of the service. They are concerned that their trust in the service has proved to be misplaced. A press report, which has been denied, but the rumours continue, suggested that access to the lists of donors kept on computer was to be sold. I have already referred to sponsorship. Donors could be invited to a centre and, with their invitation, might receive advertisements for Ribena and McVities. Concern has been expressed to blood transfusion staff that donors have lost their free supply of biscuits as a result of that story. Such is the attitude of senior managers in the blood transfusion service. It is symptomatic of the way in which they have dealt with the whole business. Their cavalier attitude has been appalling.

I should like to quote a direct example of the attitude of those managers by quoting from Sir Colin Walker, who had a meeting on 12 September with representatives of Liverpool city council.

In order to extol the virtues of the new information technology system, the chairman said:

"If someone in Liverpool"—

for example—

"was brought in needing an urgent infusion of a rare blood group and the local donor"

was

"away on holiday—then, rather than having to ring around, the doctor"

dealing with the patient

"could tap into the computer and find that the unit of"

the required

"blood was in, say, Taunton."

Councillors expressed incredulity that blood could be brought from Taunton to Liverpool in any short time, let alone two hours. Sir Colin remarked that there was a good rail network between Taunton and Liverpool. But then he conceded that perhaps that might have been a bad example to use.

That is a typical example of the way in which the people responsible, placed in that position of responsibility by Conservative Ministers, have dealt with that process. It has been a public relations disaster. Donors have been dismayed, to say the least, by the way in which their trust has been betrayed. It is about time that Ministers took seriously the anxieties that are being expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

8.21 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The more sophisticated our medical techniques become—with the obvious exception of keyhole and laser surgery—the more we depend on regular supplies of blood products prepared to the highest standard. We are one of the few countries—it is a proud boast—where donors give blood freely, unlike other countries, where it is paid for.

That being so, it is the clear duty of a Government to ensure that that freely donated blood is collected as conveniently as possible from donors in the best possible surroundings and prepared and used in the most effective way for the benefit of patients.

Few, if any, services can more truly claim to be life saving than the blood transfusion service, and no hon. Member in the Chamber tonight can know when we may become grateful recipients.

We are fortunate in having an excellent blood centre in Lancaster and a devoted and committed rota of donors, especially anti-D donors, of whom we have no fewer than 14 per cent. of the national total. We serve eight hospitals in the region, including the Victoria hospital, Blackpool and our local hospitals, and they have a right to expect a high standard of service.

I am proud that 20 of our local plasma donors recently took part in the study of a revolutionary antibody to help mothers with rhesus-negative babies, yet another feather in Lancaster's cap.

When the National Blood Authority's proposals were first published, many of the donors feared that they might have to travel to Manchester to donate blood. I do not know how that rumour got around, but it certainly did get

around and it took a great deal of uprooting. However, I am happy to say that that fear has been put at rest. As the Minister emphasised, donors will continue to be able to donate locally with the teams who have worked with them so long—and the relationship of donors and teams who have serviced them is crucial.

However, the building from which our centre now works is a long way out of the city and it is far from ideal, in spite of efforts to make it as good as it possibly can be. Currently—and we have been striving for that for 20 years, to my certain knowledge—we are in the process of completing phase 3 of the modernisation of the Royal Lancaster infirmary, due to be finished in January. I should very much like consideration to be given to transferring the blood centre to the new RLI, where it could have purpose-built facilities and vastly improved conditions for donors and staff, and an even closer liaison—if that is possible, because it is already very close—with haematologists at the hospital.

The uncertainty that has prevailed for the past year, which was mentioned by Opposition Members, has been bad for the morale of donors and their teams. If the suggestion that the Secretary of State should visit all centres and that service provision be altered were to be adopted, that uncertainty would be unacceptably prolonged. Already, skilled staff are applying for jobs elsewhere. We cannot allow that haemorrhage to continue, or the service that we all wish to protect really will be endangered.

I should like the Secretary of State, who already has all the information regarding the Lancaster centre in his possession, to make a quick decision.

On a quite different subject, there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and misrepresentation about the sale of blood products abroad. Yesterday, I received an excellent, well-balanced letter from the Haemophilia Society—it is an exceptional society—on that subject. It said clearly that the society does not object in principle to the sale of surplus stocks of blood products, provided that does not cause shortages in the United Kingdom and that income earners remained in the national health service.

I am bound to say that I would go further than that and require the money to remain within the NBA for the constant improvement of the service, where technology is evolving with frightening rapidity. We must keep up with the best available techniques. It is our duty to do so and not to waste that valuable product.

The chairman of the NBA, Sir Colin Walker, gave his assurance when he came to talk to donors and staff at our centre last year. He has been several times, not only that time. He said that the only alternative to selling surplus product was to burn it. Hon. Members should have seen the expressions on people's faces when he said that, but that happens to be the truth. I did not know that. It is the only sensible, clean way of disposing of it. That appears to be an awful waste.

Obviously, not all blood components are required in equal quantities, as Opposition Members admitted. It is entirely logical, highly to be recommended and in everyone's interest to earn money on surplus product, as I am sure that no donor would like to feel that any part of his blood had been burnt.

In all our discussions, we must never forget that it is the donors who give their blood freely and regularly whom we must consider. They are the star performers in the act. I believe that a spanking new centre at the RLI, in the centre of the city, would be perfect for them. I urge the Minister to pass on what I have said to the Secretary of State, to ensure that that is the solution he chooses—and quickly, so that our excellent centre can continue happily and efficiently with its life-saving work.

Mr. Jenkin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that activities may be taking place in the Committee Room upstairs that have recently been outlawed by the European Court of Justice, regarding the elections to the Labour shadow Cabinet, which—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is nothing whatever to do with the Chair, and the hon. Gentleman well knows it.

8.27 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The voluntary principle has been mentioned by several hon. Members. It is the crucial principle underlying the existence of the blood donorship scheme in this country. No one in the House would wish that voluntary principle to be lost to the country.

The National Blood Authority appears to have harmed the reputation of that voluntary system in the way in which it has mistakenly allowed some aspects of the sales abroad of factor 8 to take place.

I belong to the school of thought that believes that it would be ridiculous to throw away surplus blood products for some xenophobic reason. I doubt that many people in the House believe that one should throw away surplus factor 8. It should be made available to others who need it. If possible, in the light of the voluntary principle, it should be given to those needing it in other countries. As the Minister of State said, it may be that there are difficulties in doing so for international legal reasons. Also, it is a reasonable argument that the National Blood Authority should cover its costs. I have no quarrel with it for doing that.

In his speech, the Minister of State, who is a lawyer, seemed to be being extremely naive in imagining that it was not possible to regulate, quite simply, what happens to factor 8 after it is sold abroad.

I have in my hand a copy of a price list taken from a Turkish publication. My Turkish hardly runs to a restaurant menu, but it is plain from the price list that blood products—indeed, factor 8—which can be traced to the National Blood Authority, and which has been sold by it, is being sold on at a profit margin of about 450 per cent. I do not understand why the National Blood Authority, when selling that important product abroad, cannot establish in its contracts of sale enforceable conditions to ensure that that does not happen. It is quite normal for international contracts to contain restrictive conditions on what should happen to the product that is sold. It happens regularly with regard to defence material and I do not see why it should not happen in relation to blood.

Bearing in mind the voluntary principle, I ask the Government to reconsider the issue. Is it right that blood products donated freely by people in Britain should be the subject of profiteering by middle men, whether in Turkey or in any other country, when there is a means available to prevent it? Why, at least, does not the National Blood Authority, urged by the Government, try to improve that

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

unhappy and unsatisfactory trade? It is not simply a question of the morality of the contracting procedures, but of whether the National Blood Authority can justify the reputation that it must earn if the voluntary principle is to continue as successfully as before.

Mr. Alton: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most scurrilous factors involves the question put to people in a survey which offered them the crude choice of whether they would prefer to have their blood products and donations burnt or sold? Does he agree that options other than those two stark contrasts are available? One such option is to give those blood products to people in underdeveloped countries who will not live beyond their twenties if they are haemophiliacs and unable to obtain factor 8. We should deny those people who profiteer in a commercial and exploitative way the opportunity of making money out of products that have been voluntarily given by people out of the generosity of their hearts.

Mr. Carlile: As ever, my hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. It is right that people are entitled to expect that, when they are consulted about such issues, they are asked questions that do not ensure an answer that is to the Government's tune. It is a bit like having a referendum in Iraq on who should be the president without having more than one candidate.

The reorganisation proposals justify other criticisms—perhaps it is unfair to say that they are criticisms only of the National Blood Authority. It seems that the criticism could equally be levelled at the Government who, after all, have the disposition of the future of the National Blood Authority in their hands.

Hon. Members have already raised the issue of assurances, given by the National Blood Authority, which have not been fulfilled. I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) that that is particularly true of assurances given in meetings in Liverpool. It is plainly on record that John Adey, the chief executive of the National Blood Authority, underlined an assurance that had already been given by Sir Colin Walker. The assurance was made in the clearest possible terms. It was stated that unless a majority of consultant haematologists and other relevant medical experts in the area agreed that patient services could be at least maintained or preferably improved, the changes would not take place.

We have heard a lame suggestion from the Minister of State that the views of consultant haematologists and other medical experts are the property of the National Blood Authority and therefore we are not entitled to hear about them. Is it a new principle that Members of Parliament are not entitled to be told about consultations in relation to organisations that are part of the Government service, whatever their exact status? That does not ring true when we compare it with what we now know of what was going on in the Prison Service despite its agency status.

I am not seeking to draw a conclusion from what has been said by Opposition parties. I am drawing my conclusion from what is said in the Learmont report. It is clear that there are many precedents, of which the Prison Service is but one—Learmont provides some evidence—to show that Ministers can and do interfere in operational decisions, particularly those that determine the future of a service.

It is outrageous that the clinical opinion that has been given to the National Blood Authority is being concealed from Members of Parliament. One is bound to draw the conclusion that it is being concealed because it is not the same conclusion as that reached by the Government and the National Blood Authority's chief executive and chairman. When the Under-Secretary winds up the debate, I challenge him to tell the House that, having heard the views on the subject, he is prepared to place those representations in the Library of the House so that we can see what they were. It is perhaps an indication of the views of the consultant haematologists that the National Health Service Consultants Association recently passed a motion of no confidence in the National Blood Authority's proposals.

Another criticism that can readily and justifiably be made is that the strategic view has been founded on conclusions based on invalid premises. The most obvious one is the strategic review's fundamental conclusion that blood demand was rising at about 2.6 per cent. year on year. Since that was said it has been demonstrated and admitted that blood demand is now rising at 4 per cent. a year—a significant difference.

The point has been made again and again—it is right and fair to accept it—that blood collection is less affected by the proposals than processing and testing. But processing and testing are significant issues. We have heard some eloquent voices from Liverpool about the effect on that city. But my constituency, which is situated 70 or so miles from Liverpool, and all points in between, will be affected by what happens to processing and testing in Liverpool. Very little regard has been paid to issues relating to transport, cost of transport, and the consequences of delays in transport.

I can only presume that Sir Colin Walker was so confused by his geography that he mixed up Taunton and Wigan—or possibly Welshpool. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) wish me to give way? It is always a pleasure to let him into a debate.

Mr. Barry Porter: I was wondering whether, in some magic way, the hon. and learned Gentleman could put Montgomery closer to Liverpool than it has hitherto been.

Mr. Carlile: Not at all. I am not sure when the hon. Gentleman last visited my constituency, but I can assure him that on the newer roads it is a good deal easier to reach a hospital in Liverpool than some of the much closer hospitals in Wales.

Another issue that seems to have been addressed on the basis of false premises is the cost of holding stock. It has not been possible to find any assessment of the cost of stockholding in the National Blood Authority's proposals. It is said that there will be a national saving of £10 million. However, one must question whether that will be so with the introduction of a completely new management tier, involving 25 senior managers.

As the Labour Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), said, the appointment of so many new managers is unprecedented before reorganisation. I ask the Under-Secretary to inform the House whether the Government have taken advice from the Government

Legal Service as to whether the appointment of 25 senior executives before reorganisation is ultra vires action on the part of the National Blood Authority. I believe that that may be the case as a straightforward matter of law.

Ms Eagle: The hon. and learned Gentleman raises an interesting point about the cost of holding blood in stockholder units. I believe that we must take into account another factor if the Manchester centre prevails in the production of blood. It will cost more to process blood per unit at that centre than at the Liverpool centre and hospitals in the Merseyside area have estimated that it will cost them an extra £3 million to buy the stocks that they currently purchase from the Liverpool centre. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman should also take that sum away from the £10 million saving that Mr. Adey and his cohorts are trying to persuade us that they can achieve.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Lady, with her usual capacity for detail, has made a very good point and I accept what she said. As I understand it, eight key committees were established to advise the National Blood Authority steering group about rationalisation. The membership of the key strategy group could hardly be described as balanced. Liverpool had no representatives on the group, although Manchester did, and Liverpool is to be "reorganised"—to use the euphemism. Lancaster had no representative on the group, although Manchester did, and Lancaster is to be reorganised. I also understand that Oxford had no representative on the group and it is to be reorganised as well.

The Government were asking for trouble—which they now have—by attempting to make a well supported and rational economic change to an important public service without seeking proper representation from the areas that were most likely to be affected. The Government cannot run away from the fact that the public have no confidence in the Government's proposed reorganisation of the National Blood Authority. There are six main points to be made in that regard and I shall summarise them.

The reorganisation is founded upon conclusions, the evidence for which the Government are refusing to publish. Therefore, the case is unsubstantiated. The conclusions are based on inadequate consultation for the reason that I have given in relation to the membership of the steering group and for a whole host of other reasons that we may read about almost daily in the medical literature.

The assurances that were given—when at least three hon. Members were present—have been broken quite outrageously. As a result, the morale of service staff has been undermined. A long list of distinguished haematology experts who have worked in the blood service have left or are leaving as a result of the reorganisation.

Another point is that the Government have undermined donors' faith in the service and they will have to fight hard to restore that faith. All hon. Members hope that the Government will do so, but to succeed they will need to produce a reorganisation that is credible to the donors.

Finally, as the Minister's speech in the debate demonstrated, the Government and the NBA have conspired in a public relations disaster that is hard to parallel—even in the history of the Government's stewardship of the national health service. I hope that when Ministers mull over the debate they will decide that the proposals are flawed and that they will be revised substantially.

8.44 pm

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): The Brentwood centre in my constituency is affected by the proposals. I think that it is correct to stress the good work of the National Blood Authority. Our supply of blood is probably one of the best in the world, and only the Australian Red Cross comes close to meeting our standards. It is also correct to pay tribute to the many thousands of blood donors who freely give their blood and so guarantee a constant supply of high quality blood.

As a former member of a regional health authority, I can recall those early days when the fear of HIV was widespread and when we did not quite understand some of the problems associated with hepatitis. The National Blood Authority and the regional units moved quickly to ensure that our blood supplies remained trouble-free.

If we are to make changes to what is a very successful service, we must be certain that the changes will be lasting and that they will enjoy the support of the most valuable component of the service: the donors. I do not believe that there can be any substantial argument against the need for reform. With the reduction in the size of regional health authorities, we can make a case for moving to a zoning policy. A move to three zones should improve the management of the service and ensure an equalisation of supply. It makes not a jot of sense to ration blood supplies in some hospitals when supplies are available in other parts of the country.

It makes sense to have a system that allows computers to talk to one another so that shortages of blood products in one area can be matched to over-production in another. The problem with the report is that the devil is in the detail. The Bain report's recommendations fly in the face of many of its findings, and its recommendation about Brentwood is perverse.

I thank my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, who is in the Chamber, for his patience and courtesy in listening to my arguments and to those of my constituents. The Government should take their time and listen to such representations. However, the time for a final decision is approaching swiftly. A year is a long time, and we are beginning to see staff drift and a lack of authority within the service to make changes.

I congratulate the Labour party on its choice of motion today. It is quite a feat to complain about the time available for reorganisation while tabling a motion calling for an extension of the consultation exercise.

We come into contact with the national health service when we are ill. We do not often have an opportunity to give something back to the NHS—except through our taxation system—but blood donation gives the ordinary citizen an opportunity to do just that. In our stewardship of the national health service we must be accountable and that is doubly important when it comes to the blood

[Mr. Eric Pickles]

service. There would be no service without the active co-operation of donors. The proposals must continue to attract donors and to enjoy their support.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my hon. Friend agree that the sort of scare stories that we have heard from Labour Members tonight may discourage donors from giving blood in the future?

Mr. Pickles: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is absolutely right. We know from the Bain report that 70 per cent. of donors are happy with the current system and only 1 per cent. are strongly against it. The shift towards mobile collections must not risk jeopardising regular established collection sites. After all, we know that special donors attend the Brentwood centre to donate plasma and platelets and we must retain their confidence.

The staff of Brentwood blood transfusion service have not engaged in opposition for its own sake; they have certainly not engaged in the some of the silly scare stories or the nonsense about the sale of blood products. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said that he was not concerned with matters of xenophobia about the sale of factor 8 and then gave us a lecture on the perfidy of Johnny Turk in making a profit. We know where the Liberal Democrats stand. They would give the product to people abroad. That means that we would have to subsidise the product to go abroad as we would have to pay for its shipping, transportation and distribution.

Mr. Alex Carlile: If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble and had the courtesy to listen, he would have heard me say that it is our view that the National Blood Authority is entitled to cover its costs, so will he now withdraw the entirely false accusation that he made or will he perpetuate such a myth?

Mr. Pickles: I am happy to clarify what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said on a number of occasions from a sedentary position. He said, "Let us give it." As the present arrangements are to cover the costs—exactly what he suggests—perhaps it might be sensible if he withdrew his objections and supported factor 8 which has no international boundaries. *[Interruption.]* The problem is that the hon. and learned Gentleman is jumping from bandwagon to bandwagon and he must understand that he will occasionally fall between them.

Ms Eagle: Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of the Brentwood proposals in the NBA report—that the Brentwood centre should have its heart torn away by having its blood production facilities shifted elsewhere? Is he in favour or will he join us in the Lobby tonight?

Mr. Pickles: I shall come to that point in a few moments. First, I should like to give the views of the staff at Brentwood. I have had no problems with gagging; they have given me full briefing on all the matters concerned. Let us see what concerns them. They are not against the proposals in principle. They say in a detailed document:

"We acknowledge and support the following initiatives which would yield significant cost savings in the short-term:—

Zonal centralisation Administration, financial services (including payroll) and personal services.

Negotiation of purchase contracts on a national basis.

Rationalisation of low volume product production and low volume testing to fewer sites within the NBS.

The introduction of a national IT system to replace the various different IT systems in use."

So why are the recommendation about Brentwood wrong? It is not sensible to transfer Brentwood's facilities to Collingdale. I have yet to meet a health economist, clinician or health worker who thinks that it makes sense. Considerable sums of public money have already been spent on renovating the Brentwood centre, as my hon. Friend the Minister has seen for himself.

I understand the arguments about the storage of blood, but they must not obscure the arguments for having good regional coverage for the processing plants. The initial confusion of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) does not help matters. Our objection is not about the centre, which would remain open as a storage facility, but about the removal of the processing plant. Brentwood transfusion provides reference services on a 24-hour, seven-day week basis for hospital users. Cross matching blood and antibodies is sometimes required urgently. To restrict facilities for Essex and the rest of East Anglia to Collingdale and Cambridge is not a good use of resources.

Essex, in common with the rest of East Anglia, is a rapidly growing county. Its population is growing rapidly. Brentwood is close to the M25, the M11, the A12 and the A13. Blood can be quickly processed and used from an area covering north London and beyond to the whole of East Anglia. Blood from the most remote part of our region can be returned for processing within a relatively short period.

We know from the Bain report that the optimum size for a processing plant is somewhere between 250,000 and 300,000 units per year. Brentwood processes 160,000 units, Cambridge 100,000 units and Collingdale 220,000 units. Collingdale is beginning to approach the upper limits of what Bain considered sensible. Collingdale and Cambridge have restricted sites and the need for blood products within the north London and East Anglia region will continue to grow. Additional space would have to be found in Collingdale to process blood from the north-east Thames region. Brentwood can easily absorb that expansion without any additional building. There is a possibility within the Brentwood centre for a second independent processing line. There is sufficient room to take all the processing from Cambridge.

Cambridge, in addition to blood processing, carries out outstanding research of the storage of human tissue. That work on human tissues is not dependent on its processing work. It is a restricted site and in my view it is in the best interests of the National Blood Authority and the national health service if Cambridge is allowed to continue its research and storage of human tissue and that its facilities for blood processing are transferred to Brentwood.

In conclusion, I ask my hon. Friend to make the decision as quickly as possible, to have high regard to the use of processing and the work of Brentwood and to

ensure that, in the retention of Brentwood, we have the possibility of ensuring that a growing region has the facilities to process blood.

8.57 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): First, I should declare that I am sponsored by Unison, which has members who are affected by some of the proposals as they work in the blood service, but no personal payment is made to me as a result of that sponsorship.

We need to assess what has been going on. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) for the work he has been doing in his own area to try to preserve the facilities that he discussed so eloquently. We have been doing similar work. Many of us agree with and recognise his plea that to remove the processing part of a transfusion centre is to rip out its heart and thereafter it is difficult for it to retain its specialist services and operate as anything more than a glorified fridge.

I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall take the same line as I make a plea for the Liverpool centre. The people of Merseyside have affection for it and know how vital it is to their own well-being. I am not going to plead for the Liverpool centre to be kept open at the expense of another centre. I believe that the entire approach to the rationalisation that we have been discussing has been fundamentally wrong, and that we must take a completely new look at the issue.

The motion suggests that the Secretary of State should visit all five centres that are threatened with—I will continue to call it closure. As the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar pointed out, when we take processing facilities away from centres we are effectively taking the heart out of them. "Closure" strikes me as a reasonably accurate description of what is planned for these centres—and it is the description that the National Blood Authority applied from the beginning in its consultation. It began to drop the term only when it realised what the opposition was.

I associate myself with all that has been said about the precious nature of our donor system, which is based on altruism and relies on trust and confidence. No one, I hope, would deny that it is the highest-quality system of blood provision that any country has managed to design so far. We should all be very proud of that, and pay tribute not only to donors but to the staff who work in the centres and to the national blood service. I am careful not to call it the National Blood Authority, as I have had a rather lower opinion of the body since it was made a special health authority in 1993—partly as a result of my own dealings with it, which I shall mention later.

Why, then, are we trying to introduce a fundamental, root-and-branch reform of a system that has worked so well? Why are we trying to force that reform through? Why was the decision made in secret, and why are we not allowed access to the results—

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): It was not made in secret.

Ms Eagle: It was made in secret, by committees—and, as the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar pointed out, Liverpool was not represented on the committees that decided that that centre was to close. A good deal has been wrong with the way in which the reform has been planned.

Mr. Marshall: Does the hon. Lady not accept that there has been a consultation procedure and that, until a decision has been made following that procedure, nothing has in fact been decided?

Ms Eagle: I only wish that that were true. A zonal system is already operating, however, involving 25 new jobs and very large cars. There is a sense of inevitability about the whole business. The process and our trust in the service have been undermined by the way in which members of the National Blood Authority—particularly Sir Colin Walker and Mr. Adey—have conducted themselves during the past year while the so-called consultation has taken place.

Let us examine the history. First there was the Bain report, which, as was pointed out earlier, was set in train six months after the creation of the new special health authority—the National Blood Authority. After some rather dubious procedures, it came up with a saving of what it says was £10 million out of the overall cost of running the service—£135 million. The consultation document, however, contained few figures and no facts. There was no way of proving where savings could be made, and no obvious sign that any detailed work had been done to establish that. The figures seemed to have been plucked from the air.

The report—all 600 pages of it—cost £682,000 of public money to produce. Bain and Co. also carried out a consultancy job for the National Blood Authority on the future of the bio-products laboratory, which cost £350,000 of taxpayers' money. Of the £1.25 million of taxpayers' money that the National Blood Authority spent on consultants' reports last year, Bain has taken home £1,032,000—a large proportion of the total and, in my view, money for old rope, given the understanding of the workings of the system displayed in some of its recommendations. I consider its standard of work lamentable. It has little understanding of the technical side of blood collection, let alone any idea of the concept of altruism and the "gift relationship" that is so special and central to the way in which our blood service operates. I suppose that that is to be expected.

I am concerned about a number of the proposals, but I shall mention only three. It is clear that Bain canvassed management reaction to privatisation; having said that the idea had been dismissed, it found considerable management support—after circulating a questionnaire—for the idea that

"The English blood service should adopt a more commercial attitude".

It also found overwhelming support among managers for the proposal that the bio-products laboratory should

"sell surplus blood products outside the UK",

and the proposal that

"The English blood service should pursue profitable commercial opportunities outside the UK".

That is a wide-ranging statement, which does not refer just to the sale of surplus blood products. Goodness knows what other "profitable commercial opportunities"

[Ms Eagle]

are envisaged. There was even more support for selling plasma. There is a hint of commercialisation, if not privatisation, in all this.

Mr. Waterson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Eagle: No. I am in the middle of dealing with an issue.

I can demonstrate that Bain did not know what it was talking about in other parts of the report as well, and adopted a wholly inappropriate attitude to the gift relationship and donors in particular. It seems that efficiency is measured by the number of pints of blood collected per employee, which strikes me as rather an unfortunate view of what success should mean in a national blood service. The report then glibly argues:

"Collection teams can be easily designated to collect 140-plus donations per day".

We already know that 30 per cent. of all blood supplies are collected from donation points. Fewer than 90 pints are collected each day. People give blood to nearby villages; they do not want to have to traipse to some central point. They want to go to the local church hall and have a cup of tea with the person who has always collected their blood before giving it. The report suggests, however, that it is not economical to organise collection points for fewer then 140 donations a day. It goes on to say—I can only think that a time-and-motion study was carried out—that a rapid through-put system would enable that target to be reached—that being the "efficient" level of donation.

So, in this 18-minute process, 2.3 minutes are allocated to checking people in; 2.4 minutes to screening and questioning, just to check that the blood products to be donated so kindly are safe; 3.5 minutes to a quick haemoglobin test; and a frantic 9.8 minutes to taking the unit of blood. Rules are already in place—this fantastic firm of consultants who were paid so much did not seem to know anything about them—stating that 17.5 minutes is the minimum time in which to take a pint of blood, for all kinds of reasons. That means that the maximum throughput possible for a bloodmobile of the sort that would go to local villages is 60 or 70 units a day, barely half the recommended efficient amount—which just goes to show how much the consultants understand about blood collection and about what donors want.

The consultants also decided to take a look at keeping the blood at room temperature, to see whether that would be a viable efficiency saving. They concluded that it would, saying:

"room temperature hold is a most desirable approach from a logistical and cost perspective . . . estimated saving potential £500,000".

Thus, to save £500,000, they recommended doing away with fridges. After all, people have to check that they are at the right temperature, which requires staff. Doing away with all those visits to the fridge would surely ease work scheduling and reduce processing and testing costs. The consultants add, at the bottom of the page, that there would be a

"risk of enhancement of selected bacterial growth".

That just means that someone given a bad bag of blood will die or become seriously ill.

It is astonishing that people can come up with such ideas and then write them down. If I had paid £600,000 for such a report, I would feel seriously cheated—but of course the National Blood Authority is not paying for it out of its own pocket. The money is coming from taxpayers' pockets, so Sir Colin Walker can rest easy in his bed.

The consultation document that emerged from this fantastic piece of work was disgracefully shoddy: a masterpiece of doublespeak. It contained very few facts, and had clearly been written back from the conclusions that it created. Graphs were included, but without the relevant identifying axes, so no one could take a close look at what they really meant. They were meaningless, as any GCSE mathematics student could point out. The axes that appeared in the Bain report were removed because the published graphs showed that some of the centres it was felt should close were more efficient than the ones that were to be kept open.

That sort of approach is not only dishonest; it is shoddy and amateurish, and it immediately creates the impression that the wool is being pulled over people's eyes. It dissipates any confidence that we have in management when we see them employing such techniques.

Mr. Waterson: Inherent in the hon. Lady's last few remarks was the notion that efficiency matters, especially in organisations like the one we are debating, and that some centres are more or less efficient than others, as she conceded. If so, why was she so scathing about attempts by the consultants to examine efficiency in a fairly standard sort of fashion?

Ms Eagle: I do not want to get into a philosophical argument about efficiency. Of course efficiency matters; the point is that it must be put in a health context. When bed through-put is measured for efficiency in the usual economic way, it measures the number of patients who are put through beds, but it does not record whether they were dead or alive when they left the beds; so a slightly more sophisticated approach is called for when applying economic principles to the health service.

The consultation document offers a two-hour delivery guarantee for blood, and there has been some discussion this evening of whether that is adequate. It has been said that that would be a maximum time. But if the Liverpool centre closed, and production and supplies of blood went to Manchester, that would represent a gross deterioration in the service supplying the people of Merseyside, my constituents in Wallasey, and the 350,000 people who live in the Wirral. At present, most Liverpool hospitals can get supplies of blood in five to 15 minutes. Wirral hospitals can have supplies from Liverpool sent within 15 to 25 minutes. Wales, the most isolated area of the region, can expect blood supplies within 60 to 75 minutes. If my mathematics is correct, all those times are shorter than the two hours guaranteed once production facilities are closed in Liverpool.

The issue has come up in discussion and consultation with the National Blood Authority. It said, "Of course the centres won't close. Of course we'll have stockholding units." That was the phrase that Mr. Adey and Sir Colin Walker—my friends whom I admire so much—started to use.

We asked what was meant by the term "stockholding units", as they are not mentioned in any detail in the consultation report. In fact, those of us who were lobbying

the National Blood Authority with our concerns were of the opinion that the authority was making it up as it went along. Stockholding units are some kind of enhanced fridge facility where, apparently, one can keep extra supplies of blood in hospitals. The Liverpool centre holds 3,500 units of blood; the average so-called stockholding unit in a major hospital holds about 100. If stockholding units are to be put into local hospitals—for example, Arrowe Park, my local hospital—the cost would be significant. They would need a cold storage room, a fridge, administrators, people to look after the blood and people to dispatch the blood, so I do not see where the saving is if that is what stockholding units are.

I am interested in what Dr. Bill Wagstaff, one of the newly appointed heads of the northern zone, told the *Health Care Management* magazine. He said that there might be no new stockholding units at all and that a stockholding unit just means the old hospital fridge. He said:

"Since some hospitals already holds supplies of blood and blood components for others in their area these may take on the official title of stockholders."

In other words, these are weasel words—something that we have come to expect from Mr. Adey and Sir Colin Walker. I met them and am sorry that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) has left his place, because he was also at the all-party meeting of Wirral Members of Parliament. We were given an assurance at that meeting that there would be no changes to the current arrangements

"unless a majority of consultant haematologists and other relevant medical experts in the area agreed that patient services could be maintained or improved."

Mr. Adey then backtracked and said that he did not want the majority idea to be involved in the agreement that he had made. He then said that, instead of having a majority,

"We will talk to consultant haematologists and other medical experts in the area about our plans to maintain and improve patient care and will listen very carefully to their views and will move forward only if medical opinion is satisfied."

Medical opinion in Liverpool and Merseyside is not satisfied. These changes are opposed by all expert medical opinion. They are opposed by the people of Merseyside, of whom more than 1,000 attended a public meeting and told Mr. Adey and his blood authority exactly what they thought of these proposals. We will continue to fight them.

We hope that Ministers are listening, not only to medical and clinical experts but to the people of this country, and that they will reassess these disgraceful, damaging proposals and bring back something that we can all support and work for.

9.17 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) on an extremely well researched and well argued speech, but when I compare it with that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) the contrast in tone could not be more marked.

There is a great problem in dealing with a national health service which needs to learn to cope with an ever faster pace of change. Whatever one's views about particular changes as they are proposed, I much prefer the approach of my hon. Friend, who recognises the need for change, the need for things to adapt and to modernise, as opposed to the speech of the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members, who tend to display a wanton disregard for the need for change and to fall back on age-old prejudices that do not help the health service in any way at all.

If we had not managed to change the health service in the past 17 years of Conservative Government, goodness me the health service would be in a great mess today. We would not be treating an extra 3,500 patients per day in the modern NHS. If one looks at all the different reforms that the Conservatives have pushed through the House over the years, I am afraid that there is a rather consistent theme which runs alongside every one of them—that however good the reforms have been and however effective and successful they have proved eventually, the Opposition have exploited every opportunity to oppose them, to scare the public and to put around endless scare stories and myths about what is likely to happen.

That theme goes right back to the much missed, we were to understand, area health authorities. They were abolished in the early 1980s. Who talks about re-establishing them or mourns their passing now? Yet we were told then that the abolition of the area health authorities was the abolition of the NHS as we knew it.

The same happened with the introduction of the limited list system for drugs. We were told that it would be a great curtailment of the choices of clinicians and doctors in the health service and that it would be the end of the national health service as we knew it. The necessary savings and limitations that were put on doctors were totally disregarded, but they are now broadly accepted. Had we listened to all the doctors then, and had we behaved like the walking opinion poll of a Government that the Opposition seem to expect us to be, we would not have made those savings or that progress.

The same was true of the introduction of the NHS trusts, and what a success they have been. They have been so successful that even the Labour party is trying to pretend that its policy will emulate the advantages of NHS trusts in all but name. The Labour party still has a bit to learn about GP fundholders, although fundholding has been an extremely successful reform.

Most recently, there was the abolition of the regional health authorities through the Health Authorities Bill this year. No one, not even the Labour party, now seriously suggests that the regional authorities should be re-established after the next election. If we now allowed the prejudices and the opportunism of the Opposition to exploit public opinion on the extremely sensitive issue of the National Blood Authority and the blood transfusion service and to block progress in this area of the health service, it would be a setback and the Government are right to resist that.

I use the word "prejudice" in the strongest sense. I noted the way in which the hon. Member for Wallasey read out the extract from the Bain report and criticised the recommendation that the NBA should look for profitable commercial opportunities outside the United Kingdom. Why should we be against profit for the national health service? We should be explaining to blood donors that the blood that they give is primarily for the national health service, but if there are surpluses we should let the profit

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

accrue to the national health service instead of the surpluses being burnt and sent up the chimney, which would mean the money going to waste.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend agree that if, for example, a third-world country wanted advice on setting up its own blood service and came to the NBA, it would be perfectly right for the NBA to give that advice for humanitarian reasons—a point on which the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) refused me the opportunity to intervene—in terms of giving humanitarian assistance to that country, and also right that the NBA should charge consultancy fees for so doing?

Mr. Jenkin: Yes, of course. However, as we have heard endlessly in this debate, the Opposition do not understand the word "consultancy". They wantonly criticise anything that purports to be a consultancy document and they would not begin to understand that a consultancy document prepared by the NBA for another country might be worth a great deal of money for the national health service and for the National Blood Authority.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jenkin: I will not give way because I know that others wish to speak in the debate.

The representations that hon. Members have received from constituents probably reflect the proximity of blood transfusion centres that are likely to be affected. In my constituency I have had virtually no representations on the subject. Brentwood is just across the county and it is probably where most of the blood for the Colchester general hospital comes from. The alternative may be Cambridge or Colindale.

In fact, the people who give blood and the hospitals that receive it will see hardly any change in the service. The people who may suffer, and to whom we should pay tribute at a time of change, are the staff—those who will have to change the most. However, it does them little service to gallop off with all the scare stories, making matters worse than they need be instead of helping the Government and the service to provide the change that is so sorely needed.

9.24 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to those who work for the blood service. I know that in my constituency on Sunday there will be people collecting blood from volunteers such as myself. Indeed, I understand that blood has even been collected from members of the Treasury team, although whether the service managed to get blood out of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury I would not like to say.

It has already been pointed out that the blood service in Britain produces the safest blood in the world, but those who rely on blood products from the national health service have not always been able to do so with that assurance. I therefore ask the Minister to think again about the haemophiliacs who were infected with hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood products. The Government acted generously towards haemophiliacs who were infected with HIV, and I would like my hon. Friend to talk again, either in private or in public, about that issue and tell me what progress has been made on providing funds to ensure that those with hepatitis C are being give adequate treatment.

I also reiterate another point, because the chairman of the Haemophilia Society is a constituent of mine: the Haemophilia Society has confirmed that it has no objection to the export of surplus factor 8. The society sees no sense in saying that we should not export it. If we do not, we deny other people a chance of life and the at the same time deny a small sum to the NHS.

Those who give blood do so to save life, and it would be wrong if that donated blood were burnt instead of being used to save lives. I am appalled that people can put political prejudice before the saving of life, and we have heard some pretty unctuous humbug and nonsense talked on that subject tonight.

9.27 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am delighted to have an opportunity, albeit brief, to contribute to the debate. Above all, the debate is a tribute to the willingness of the British people, in places such as Eastbourne and other places all over the country, to give their blood on a perfectly voluntary basis, out of pure altruism.

There were 2.4 million such donations last year, and about 800,000 patients received the benefit of transfusions. I heartily endorse what the Minister said in his opening speech: we support and emphasise the importance of the voluntary principle in the blood service in this country.

If you were a Martian listening to the debate—although I know that you are not, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you might think that Conservatives would be the people who oppose change. I believe that it was Lord Kilmuir who said:

"If it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change."

That has been a strong Conservative tradition, but it means two things. It means preserving traditions which are useful, but it also means testing on a regular basis to find out whether change would bring greater benefits and efficiency.

In the debate it has emerged that it is the Labour party which resists sensible and constructive change. Labour Members are the advocates of continuing a system of bureaucracy which has its roots merely in the historical system which produced 14 or 15 different centres. For the Labour party everything must always remain the same, but the National Blood Authority and I believe that we need a fully integrated modern national blood transfusion service in this country.

What we are talking about tonight will not directly affect donors. We are talking about the consolidation and administration and processing of blood supplies. In doing that, we are aiming for the highest possible standards of safety—in the light of HIV and hepatitis—and reliability of supply. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) spoke at length about the problems of inequality of supply in different parts of the country. We are looking for a reduction in cost and the pursuit in the right circumstances of commercial opportunities—such as the example that I gave in an intervention—which would bring extra revenue into the NHS, as well as save money.

Donors will not have to travel further. Already the majority of blood is donated at mobile centres and units. We have heard a lot of scare stories from the Opposition today. Those scare stories have been a disgrace, and may have led to donors being unwilling to continue providing blood—the very thing of which Opposition Members warned during the debate. Nor, for that matter, is there any threat to specialist services, which will continue to be provided under the proposals. Those services include, for example, platelets for the treatment of leukaemia.

I am grateful to have had the chance to speak in the debate. I wish that I had more time, but Opposition speakers spoke at some length. The Government's proposals are well thought out and there has been very wide consultation. The weight of expert opinion is behind the proposals, which provide a sensible way forward for the blood service of this country—a much loved British institution.

9.30 pm

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Tonight's debate has shown clearly that the future of the blood service concerns hon Members on both sides of the House. It has also been an occasion on which hon. Members have had a chance to restate the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to the nation's 2 million blood donors and to the staff who collect, test and process the blood at 15 regional centres.

We have the safest blood service in the world. Our tradition of donors giving blood for nothing to help those in need is almost unique in world medicine. We have every reason to be proud of it. Richard Titmuss demonstrated 30 years ago that, on the grounds of efficiency, price and safety, the commercialised blood market was wasteful, inefficient and risky to patients. Nothing has changed.

Our motion tonight reflects the public's outrage and its lack of confidence in the National Blood Authority. The proposed reorganisation of the blood service has attracted criticism from across the board. If the need for change is shown, that change should be brought about with the support and guidance of donors and those who work in the service, and not in the teeth of their opposition.

The NBA's chief executive, John Adey, promised my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) that the Liverpool centre would not close unless its closure was supported by clinicians. I ask the Minister whether he can confirm that the Government stand by that pledge. Will he also confirm that the Oxford centre will stay open, given—as my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has made clear—the opposition to its closure from more than 100 eminent clinicians? Hon. Members from all parts of the House, and not least those hon. Members whose seats will be affected by closures, will no doubt want such assurances before they decide how to vote tonight.

The Opposition motion asks the Secretary of State to intervene directly, to visit all the centres currently threatened with closure and to review the National Blood Authority's proposals in the light of what he hears. These are reasonable requests in anybody's language. The Secretary of State must reach beyond the swelling bureaucracy of the National Blood Authority and speak directly to the staff and donors concerned.

The loss of public confidence in the NBA stems directly from the false values which that bureaucracy is adopting. It offers a classic example of how simple virtues of public service have become distorted and lost in the new market culture. What was once a hard-working and lean branch of the NHS is now an independent organisation with its own agenda, a new hierarchy, a new layer of management and—it goes without saying—a new logo and corporate identity, which cost £46,000 and goodness knows how much management time. A health authority with all the pretensions of a macho commercial organisation is slowly suffocating a public service which is admired around the world.

The National Blood Authority's chairman, Sir Colin Walker, has been quoted as saying that all publicity is good publicity for the NBA, however bad. In that case, let me congratulate him on a public relations triumph.

If the language of priorities is the religion of socialism, then competition is the totem pole of the market—any competition. One is not a macho bureaucracy if one does not introduce competition—competition however unnecessary, competition however inefficient, competition however destructive. Competing is macho; simple public service is for wimps in this brave new corporate world.

The direct and immediate result of the new orthodoxy was this summer's blood bag fiasco, to which many hon. Members have referred. It was intolerable to the new macho managers that one firm—Baxter's—was supplying all the blood bags to the national health service. The fact that the bags worked was completely irrelevant. So, for a claimed saving of £700,000, about 20 per cent. of the contract was withdrawn from Baxter's and given to Tuta instead. We all know what happened then—10,000 units of blood, each and every one the product of someone's selflessness, were poured down the drain.

There are other examples of the NBA's commercial madness. It has entered into secret discussions about sponsorship of blood donor sessions with McVitie and Ribena. Donors want to give for the good of others and to repay the debt that many feel they owe for their own transfusions, but they do not want to be at the sharp end of a sales pitch.

The next initiative was to organise a donor recruitment drive in July, just when blood stocks are rightly kept low because of the small amount of surgery that is carried out in August.

On top of that, as other hon. Members have said, the authority has shown a contempt for the House and the Secretary of State by appointing 12 new members of staff to the reorganised organisation before it has been approved. The NBA then compounded its contempt by trying to gag its staff, warning them that if they tried to raise matters of concern with their Members of Parliament they might be the subject of disciplinary action.

It is not difficult to state what the blood service needs to produce its best results, and I have four straightforward proposals which I challenge the Minister to adopt. All have come directly from my six visits to various blood centres. They have all come from staff and donors involved in the work of those centres.

First, steps need to be taken to reduce blood wastage by ensuring that all centres are brought up to the efficiency standards of the best. Secondly, the way in which blood

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is supplied to London needs to be reviewed. At present, some 40,000 to 60,000 units are imported to London, mostly to the two northern London blood centres. If the adjoining centres at Oxford and Cambridge were allowed to provide blood to the London hospitals on their side of London, it would ease the difficulty of matching supply and demand.

Thirdly, the authority should remove the new zonal tier of management. It costs nearly £2 million a year. The proposed organisation would be more unwieldy, with longer lines of communication and decision times, and flies against all the current theories of good management.

The Secretary of State said that he is a bureau-sceptic. Now is his chance to show some healthy scepticism in the bureaucracy that he has created.

Mr. Malone: Does the hon. Lady agree that the best thing for a bureau-sceptic is to get rid of 15 bureaucracies and replace them by only three?''

Ms Jowell: The Secretary of State should listen to some of the excellent ideas for changing, developing and improving the service that he would hear if he took the time and trouble to go and talk directly to the staff.

We must also make it the practice that no plasma is sold without donors' permission. Many hon. Members have expressed concern about that this evening. What matters is not that surplus factor 8 is being sold to Europe and other countries but that Ministers have stated in the House that there will be no sale of factor 8 or other blood products until there is a surplus. We do not have a surplus of factor 8. We have a sufficiency only because we import it for various clinical reasons. Ministers should make the position clear to donors, because it is open to confusion and misinterpretation. It would be fatal if the impression were ever formed that donors are giving their blood so that it could be sold at a profit.

Hon. Members from both sides of the House have raised specific worries about their local centres. I would like to pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) and for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) for their sterling work in defence of the Liverpool blood centre and to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) who spoke so eloquently about the concerns of clinicians in Oxford about the threatened closure of the Oxford centre.

The Minister claims that the Labour party is scaremongering. The problem is that the Government always look for somebody else to blame. We are happy to share with the Minister the hundreds of letters from clinicians who are worried about standards of safety, and we hope that he will take their concerns seriously in considering the recommendations for the future.

The National Blood Authority and the Government seem to base their argument on two grounds. First, they argue that blood centres are currently working below capacity. The Bain report uses a calculation that bears no relation to reality and ignores the fact that machines have to be serviced; that they work five, not six, days a week; and that there are variations in the level of donation. A just-in-time service, as it is known, cannot possibly operate at full or near capacity all the time.

We should not forget that new viral tests are already in use in the United States, France and Japan. If they are introduced in this country, another 28 per cent. of testing capacity will be needed. The Government have trotted out the capacity argument in respect of other parts of the health service. It was the capacity argument that led to the closure of acute beds and produced Bottomley wards—patients on trolleys in corridors for hours on end.

The second area of dispute focuses on projections of likely future demand for blood. Bain foresaw an annual increase of about 1 to 2 per cent. On that basis, the NBA decided to reduce the number of centres. However, the NBA itself, and Ministers, had forecast the growth in need at 4 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively. In those circumstances, there must be doubts about the level of future need. It would be foolish in the extreme to risk exposing the service to shortages.

Tonight's debate gives the House a real opportunity to send a clear message to the Government and the National Blood Authority that the country does not want its precious donor-based blood service messed about by the new breed of macho managers. The giving of blood creates a unique ethical bond between donors, those who manage the service and the patients whose lives depend on it. It is difficult to imagine a relationship further removed from the marketplace or one where crass commercialisation is more out of place.

I ask all hon. Members, many of whom will themselves be donors or recipients, to join us in the Lobby and send a message of support to the people who give their blood and a message of comfort to those patients whose lives depend it.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I shall not accede to the invitation of the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) but I congratulate her on this red letter day because, for once, the Labour party is devoting some time from its Supply days—half a day—to health. That is very welcome and also very rare.

Ms Jowell: Most of the health debates in this Session of Parliament have been held in Opposition time.

Mr. Sackville: Have we heard anything about Labour's health policies? Have we heard anything about how Labour will face up to the great opportunities and challenges of the NHS in the future? No. We have simply heard a series of recycled headlines—thoroughly misleading and damaging headlines—many of which were inspired by the Labour party in the first place.

The speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who opened the debate, consisted of one headline after another. He began on the question of selling blood and we were reminded of an article in *Today* dated 16 December 1994 entitled "Stop Selling Our Blood". That was Germany; he went on to Turkey with an article dated 9 January 1994 entitled "Donors Kebabed". We then heard about the crown on the National Blood Authority's logo, which was totally irrelevant. The headline there was

"Charles out for blood over vanishing crown".

That completes the irrelevance.

Ms Jowell: The removal of the crown from the National Blood Authority's logo was not irrelevant to the people who came to Downing street this morning with the signatures of more than 3,000 people who object to the arbitrary removal of the crown—a logo that they were proud of—with no consultation whatever by the NBA.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East went on to talk about blood shortages. A headline on 30 March 1995 read:

"Blood banks in new crisis".

Within six weeks, we had another headline in the *Sunday Times* about surpluses of blood—"Hospitals dumping surplus blood"—which just shows that one cannot win.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) made a number of sensible points about clinical consensus. Clearly, we shall do nothing which, in general clinical opinion, poses dangers to patients. Neither on this occasion nor at other times when we have debated this matter in the House—the hon. Lady and I have discussed this matter in an Adjournment debate—have we heard any evidence that the proposals, which are still before the Secretary of State, pose a danger to patients.

There are large towns and cities all over the country with hospitals that do not have blood processing, testing or transfusion facilities. I remind the hon. Lady that large cities with one or two acute hospitals, such as Leicester, Nottingham, Coventry, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Durham, Hull and Bradford have never had processing or bulk testing facilities.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Will the Minister publish the responses from clinicians on Merseyside? If those are as he says and if the points that they make can be answered adequately, it will silence the criticism that we have made on that point. But if he will not publish those responses, not only will the clinicians continue to doubt what he says but so will hon. Members, the public and the donors who contribute to the service.

Mr. Sackville: Any of the people who submitted returns during the consultation are free to publish whatever they wrote, but those consultations were conducted on the basis that what was written was confidential and addressed to the NBA. No one is being prevented, however, from saying exactly what they think.

Since the survey was conducted there has been much communication between consultants in the hon. Lady's area and the NBA. Any of those consultants is free to provide evidence that there is some danger to patients in Liverpool, but, as far as I know, none has been forthcoming. It would be deeply insulting to the NBA and all those who have made the proposals to suggest that they would make any that would be dangerous to patients.

The location of processing and testing facilities is not fundamental. What matters is that there is an adequate network of such facilities across the country to provide those services to all hospitals. The hon. Lady is well aware that the blood banks kept at hospitals or at large transfusion centres which may not have access to processing and testing facilities in the future will still be able to benefit from a perfectly adequate service. There are a great many scare stories around and we must have some evidence before we take them seriously.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was particularly interested in the sale of factor 8 and other plasma-based blood products. I cannot help feeling that he is chasing a headline. The price of such products in Turkey or anywhere else is a sufficiently abstruse subject. As has been said to him repeatedly, if we sell such products when they are surplus to requirement it is not possible to control their end price in all markets. There is no mechanism for doing so.

Mr. Jenkin: I half wondered whether the complaint from those on the Liberal Benches was that the price obtained for blood products abroad was not high enough.

Mr. Sackville: If we have surplus products, we must get an acceptable price for them. If we failed to do so, we would be denying funds to the NBA which could be reinvested in the service. If we refused to sell those products, we would have to destroy them. That would be foolish, as several of my hon. Friends have already pointed out, with the support, I understand, of the Haemophilia Society.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the Minister for dealing with the points that I raised, but will he answer my question? Is there any reason why the Government should not insist that the contracts for the sale of factor 8 should include conditions that would avoid profiteering with it thereafter: yes or no?

Mr. Sackville: We are keen to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman's ideas on the subject. We do not wish to encourage profiteering by pharmaceutical middlemen. We are all ears to hear how the hon. and learned Gentleman would avoid that. For the moment we will stick to our policy of disposing of those blood products when they are surplus to requirement. They are high-quality pharmaceutical products for which there is a world market. If they are surplus here, we will sell them abroad.

The hon. and learned Gentleman also said that we have undermined donors' faith in the service. I refute that charge utterly. If anything has undermined their faith—there is no evidence that it has—it is the press campaign encouraged by Opposition Members. It is clear that that might have discouraged donors.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) made several arguments. She said that it was important that donors should be able to donate locally, as now, and that the myth that had got around, which was part of the general black propaganda campaign, is entirely false. Specialist donors and other donors will be able to donate locally, as now.

My hon. Friend made a strong bid for a new blood centre. I am sure that the NBA will have heard that, and perhaps there will be a case for it. She reminded us of the need for an early decision about those matters. Obviously, the uncertainty has been very unsettling.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) made several helpful comments. He was kind enough to thank me for my patience in listening to his eloquent pleas on behalf of Brentwood. I am sure that the NBA will have heard those pleas. I know that my hon. Friend has met representatives of the NBA several times and that those matters have been considered. He said—using several technical arguments—that he saw no reason

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to move facilities into Colindale or Cambridge. I understand his arguments, and assure him that they will be considered very carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) reminded us of the fate of haemophiliacs who had had the misfortune to contract hepatitis C. I heard what he argued so eloquently. His arguments will all be considered, but I must tell him that there is a continuing policy that, where no negligence is proved, the Government do not pay compensation. However, I understand well what he said.

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) informed us that decisions have been taken in secret. I refute that absolutely. She also said that we have spoken, or that Bain has spoken, about commercialising the blood service. I refute that, but we need to have a blood service that is run along business lines and which does everything possible to improve quality throughout the system.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sackville: I will not; I have only three minutes.

I also say to the hon. Member for Wallasey that what appeared in the Bain report is not policy; it is suggestions to the NBA. There is no reason to suppose that, simply because something appeared in the Bain report, it will become policy.

The cynical and underhand campaign that has gone on in the past year to disrupt the blood service has failed. It has not succeeded in deterring our donors, who have ignored all the headlines and scare stories, and have continued to give blood magnificently. The reality is not what has been communicated in various absurd headlines. The reality is that, in each of the past 10 months, the number of donations has been higher than in the equivalent month of last year.

The NBA has succeeded in improving the use of the blood collected by better co-ordination of stock movements—a fundamental part of the new proposals—so supply has better matched demand and wastage has been sharply reduced. That is an important success.

Conservative Members have become used to the fairly systematic denigration of the NHS by the Labour party, but I believe that people are increasingly aware of the contrast between their experience and all that denigration, and increasingly discount what they hear from the Labour party.

The blood service should be exempt from all that because if such attempts to disrupt the service succeeded the consequences would be dire. We all know that if there was a sudden drop in donations, routine operations such as hip and knee replacements and non-emergency cardiac surgery would cease and rationing would start.

It has been a disreputable campaign to disrupt the health service and the blood service that is vital to it. I reject the motion, which I think has flowed directly from that campaign. I hope that the House will treat it with the contempt that it deserves.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose in his place, and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 290

Division No. 218] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S

Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCartney, Robert
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Geoffrey Hoon and
Mr. Robert Ainsworth.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W'[illegible]dshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*

Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Sir Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the continued support of blood donors, on which the Blood Service is founded and which is at the heart of the National Health Service; and fully recognises the commitment of blood service regional staff and the importance of ensuring that this vital national service continues to improve and develop into an integrated national service, based on high and uniform standards of safety, reliability and efficiency.

Cable Companies (Street Works)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend the Minister extol the virtues of Britain being wired into the information super-highway, but my principal purpose is to draw attention to some of the many problems that my constituents have suffered as their streets have been torn up and their pavements littered with junction boxes.

Let me begin by setting the record straight in regard to the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, which gave cable companies powers to dig up our streets. On 11 March last year, the *Bolton Evening News* carried a rather unfortunate cartoon showing my head in a noose, with the caption "Hang him high", after a Labour councillor had accused me of being the number one guilty man for supporting the Bill's passage in May 1991. On examining the record, I see that I was in very good company: so few problems were anticipated that the Bill was given an unopposed Second and Third Reading.

At that time I received no representations from Bolton council or, indeed, from anyone else. Perhaps Councillor Laurie Williamson will now be good enough to withdraw his entirely unwarranted accusation—the claim that I am the "number one guilty man" responsible for the chaos that Bolton has suffered in the past as a result of being a pioneer town in regard to cabling. The scale of that chaos was clearly not anticipated at the time by Bolton council or anyone else.

I think that my hon. Friend is already aware of some of my constituents' concerns, but I have files of correspondence from more than 40 of them who have been seriously inconvenienced by many problems—for instance, damage to tree roots. I have an advance copy of the November issue of *Gardening Which?*, which contains a major article on the way in which trenching affects tree roots. The magazine says in conclusion that it would like to offer to

"chair a forum of all concerned in order to avert what could too easily become an environmental disaster, as another 30,000 miles of trenches are left to be dug in this country".

We have had problems with losing services of various kinds. Water pipes have been cut in neighbouring constituencies, and telephone wires have also been cut. We have had warfare with British Telecom, on occasion, when telephone wires have been cut and Nynex's contractors refused to accept responsibility for them. Power supplies have been cut on numerous occasions—including that of my own secretary, a great mistake on the part of Nynex. Holes in the roads have been left unmarked; pavements have been left broken or badly reinstated. I have received a long letter from Alderman Ken McIvor, a former mayor, on this very point. Badly sited junction boxes are another of our continuing problems which get no better with time.

I want to dwell on two particular cases this evening. One concerns the house at 26 Thorns close in Astley Bridge, where my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Mulrooney found that the cable company, Nynex, refused to reposition a large junction box that had been plonked right in front of their sitting room window. I would be glad to

show the Minister photographs of it. The box has been put there in direct contravention of Nynex's own cabinet siting ground rules, a copy of which I have with me. Dated 13 January 1994, they run to 25 separate points. Rule 19 says:

"place the junction box in the most unobtrusive position possible, i.e., not in full view from the front window".

The junction box at Thorns close directly contravenes that rule.

Surprisingly, the battle to have the box removed has gone on for more than a year. In that time the Mulrooneys have been told, variously, that it is impossible to replace it, or that if it were replaced it would cost the company £6,000, and so on. Nynex wrote to the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who wrote on to me in July as follows:

"I understand Nynex are unable to relocate the cabinet".

It is remarkable, however, what can happen once a Member of Parliament secures an Adjournment debate. I am delighted to hear from the Mulrooneys that, in the past couple of days, Nynex and its contractors have indeed found it possible to relocate the junction box away from the Mulrooney's sitting room window. They have rung me to express their great delight. It is odd that one has to secure a debate in Parliament to demonstrate the problems that constituents can have before a proper remedy is found.

I arranged a site meeting to discuss the matter on 31 March, but not until now has anything been done about it. I am delighted, however, that progress has finally been made in this case.

The other case that I want to mention concerns my constituent Mr. Simon Pearce, of Lower House walk, Bromley Cross, and his mother Mrs. Joan Pearce who lives close by. Mr. Pearce had complained about the poor reinstatement of the pavements dug up near his house in the spring of last year and about the great danger that they presented to a number of elderly residents living nearby. He repeatedly called for inspections by Bolton council and Nynex. He arranged for four site visits by inspectors, and he was promised that all the necessary remedial work would be carried out by December 1994, long after the six-month statutory limit laid down by regulation.

Despite these four site inspections it was obvious that no proper records were kept or disciplines applied either by Bolton council or Nynex and its contractors. Mr. Pearce had to arrange for a further site inspection, on 7 February this year, with a senior Nynex supervisor, but Nynex continued to fail to carry out its statutory duties properly to reinstate the pavements. There is a sad and ironic twist to the tale, because sadly, on 8 April this year, Mr. Pearce's elderly mother tripped badly and suffered severely in a fall on one of these badly reinstated paving stones on Rose Hill drive. It was Mr. Pearce who found his mother seriously shocked, bleeding and needing immediate hospital treatment.

But even after that saga, Nynex has still failed to reinstate the pavements. Even today, my constituent informs me that the necessary work has still not been done. To remedy matters, I recommend to my hon. Friend that whatever his existing codes of practice may be they should be scrapped and totally rewritten. In May of last year, the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) wrote to me, saying:

"I am willing to strengthen the codes of practice and regulations."

I make the following eight points for incorporation in a much-toughened and strengthened code of practice. I am grateful to Mr. Pearce for putting these points to me.

First, the cable company should publicise how the public can complain about street works by letter and freephone telephone number. Full publicity should be given in the press, regional television advertisements, on all the company's vehicles and at the site of street works.

Secondly, the company should satisfy the Department of Trade and Industry and the relevant local authority that it has such quality assurance standards and procedures in place internally, as well as keeping a log of written and telephone complaints received. Logs should be kept at local level and should record the remedial action taken, and the overall performance of areas properly monitored.

Thirdly, quality assurance procedures should require that inspectors make a written record of the location and nature of pavement reinstatement problems. The Minister will recall that an aggravating feature of Mrs. Pearce's injury was that her son did point out the problems to Nynex inspectors on numerous separate site inspections and none of the inspectors made a written record of the many problems that were shown to them. A closely related issue is whether Nynex has employed inspectors of a sufficient calibre to supervise contractors properly.

Fourthly, the code of practice should also require cable companies to ensure quality standards in their contractors. In the case of Rose Hill drive, skilled paving masons were required, not unskilled labourers. But skilled masons were not used until Mr. Pearce intervened. Quality standards should also mean that contractors do not mix mortar on the pavements and leave it to set hard as a permanent memorial to sloppy workmanship.

Fifthly, there should be more consistency in the use of inspectors. Mr. Pearce pointed out that he felt that Nynex had transferred or rotated its inspectors in my constituency more frequently than Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry.

Sixthly, reinstatement standards should be the same as those in the United States. My constituent, Mr. Pearce, has a neighbour who is very experienced in the construction industry and a frequent visitor to the United States. I learn that the standards for the reinstatement of pavements and roads are much higher there. Will the Minister consider whether we are perhaps a soft touch in Britain compared with the United States?

Seventhly, when a legal claim is made against Nynex for injury in connection with street works, I gather that the company feels that its responsibility is to refer the matter to the contractor, but Nynex is the designated utility under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and so, I believe, it has a primary responsibility. The proposed code of practice should require Nynex to accept full responsibility and to compensate without expensive legal action. There may be thousands of potential claimants in the country who do not proceed against cable companies because of the expense involved.

The eighth point in my proposed code of practice is that local authorities should have a duty to maintain a log of all complaints received about cable communications street works, and pursue each complaint vigorously rather than allow the companies to remedy problems in their own good time. My code of practice would set out financial penalties for poor reinstatement. Heavy fines

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

should follow where companies do not carry out reinstatements properly, despite constantly being asked to do so.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that at present, there seems to be too much discretion. I understand that Nynex was largely untroubled by local authority-imposed fines in the case of the very bad performance that we experienced in Bolton, yet Nynex has revealed to my constituents that Manchester city council is much more vigorous in imposing fines. My code of practice would reduce the likelihood of some local authorities, such as Bolton, becoming a soft touch.

Time does not allow me to expand on related points, such as full compensation for traders who suffer from street works by utility operators in general, discussion about the virtues of, for example, trenchless digging or digital broadcasting, which may make cables obsolete altogether. I am, however, grateful for this opportunity to raise the subject on the Adjournment and I look forward to my hon. Friend's assurances that other constituencies will be protected from the problems we have experienced in Bolton as one of the pioneers.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Richard Page): I commend and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on swinging into action so promptly after the resumption of Parliament and on raising a subject that has touched the postbag of many, if not quite all, hon. Members. His initiation of this debate will, I hope, be a clear message to the various Bolton councillors—who have been rather discourteous to him—that he has his constituents' interests at heart.

My hon. Friend will, I trust, appreciate that I shall leave alone the fact that the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the Leader of the Opposition, in his epic announcement of the BT deal at the Labour party conference, apparently overlooked all the work of the cable companies and the sheer size and scale of their operations—some £10 billion-worth. The point the companies make—that they are already linking up schools throughout the country—seems to have eluded the Labour party. Tempting as it is to go down those highways and byways, I know that my hon. Friend would rather that I addressed the point in front of us tonight. Constituents' complaints are, obviously, distressing and have to be investigated by any responsible Member of Parliament in the way that my hon. Friend did tonight. I pay tribute to his direction and enthusiasm.

On a more general point, I naturally appreciate the concerns that some residents may feel in areas where cable networks are being installed. The work, as we all know, can be noisy, dirty and seemingly interminable for those who are having their daily lives disrupted.

This is the problem of success. Cable is a huge venture for the 1990s. It brings benefits to all with, as I have said, £10 billion-worth of investment by the end of the decade and 26,000 jobs. The disruption the cable operators' street works causes is short-term. The benefits are real, of real benefit to residents themselves and long-term. In future, it will become a distinct selling factor in disposing of property to make the point that it is cabled. As I have said, the short-term disruption is a small price to pay for the substantial benefits which flow in the long term to residents themselves from the modern, high-capacity infrastructure being installed.

Looking in the long term, the key point is that, in addition to multi-channel television, cable networks are delivering competitive, modern telephone services. The growth in demand for cable telephony has been one of the most striking factors, with the number of cable telephone lines installed rising from some 2,000 lines at the beginning of 1991 to just over 1 million lines currently. Each month, cable operators are signing up some 50,000 new telephone customers who are attracted by low-cost calls.

Even those who choose not to take those services from cable operators will benefit indirectly from the competitive pressure that they represent in the local telephony market. Competition from cable operators is acting as a spur to BT to reduce prices and to improve services further.

In future, the companies will have the potential to deliver a huge range of additional innovative services such as remote education, home banking and home shopping. I know that my hon. Friend, with all his knowledge and experience of the subject, appreciates that much more than most.

However, that is in the future, and I shall now talk about the specific problems that my hon. Friend has put before the House. In installing cable, some disruption is inevitable, as we all know. Streets must be dug up, but it is vital for such disruption to be kept to a minimum. It is the scale of cable operators' street works that distinguishes them from those of other statutory undertakers: quite simply, they must build an entirely new network across almost all of urban Britain—a huge task, which dwarfs the maintenance of existing utility systems.

That is why, in addition to the statutory requirements of street works legislation, cable operators' licences include conditions designed to ensure that they carry out all aspects of their street works in a responsible manner. What my hon. Friend has said rings alarms bells and it raises concerns in my mind that in certain instances that may not have happened.

There is a common misconception—I certainly come across it in my postbag—that cable operators have carte blanche to do as they wish when installing their systems, and are not subject to the same controls as other statutory undertakers. That is not the case. All street works, whether carried out by water undertakers or cable operators, are governed by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

The Act imposes quite demanding conditions on street works and gives substantial powers to local highway authorities. Highway authorities may bring prosecutions for offences, including failure to reinstate, failure to comply with requirements as to reinstatement materials and workmanship standards, failure to sign, guard and light works as required and failure to co-operate with the highway authority.

As for the standard of reinstatement, the New Roads and Street Works Act requires that all reinstatements, temporary and permanent, conform to nationally specified standards. It gives the highway authority power to inspect undertakers' reinstatements, and to require defects to be

remedied by the undertaker within a stipulated time and at the undertaker's expense. Trenches have a minimum two-year guarantee from the date of final reinstatement.

However, the Act allows undertakers to reinstate only the width of the trench excavated. It aims to strike a balance between the legitimate interests of those undertaking street works, of residents and of other users of the street. As part of that balance, it was not considered reasonable to make the undertaker reinstate the full width of a footway where he had excavated only part of it. Instead, the code of practice requires footway reinstatements to match existing surfaces as far as practicable. Those powers are considerable, and as my hon. Friend has raised concerns, his local council should find out whether it has used fully and effectively the powers at its disposal.

My hon. Friend also raised the subject of the siting of street cabinets, which is an especially contentious issue. He is not alone in having had the subject brought before him. I have had the same experience, but in my constituency, although I have had four complaints, the cable operator there—Jones Cable, now a part of Bell Cable Media Ltd.—has dealt with all four of them efficiently and expeditiously, so I have not seen the suffering that my hon. Friend has seen.

There was an example in my constituency of street cabinets being incorrectly positioned, and I can well appreciate the excitement that that causes in constituents' minds. Although the number of complaints about cabinets is probably very small in proportion to the total number installed, I accept that a cabinet stuck outside someone's front window will cause some excitement. I hope that my hon. Friend's constituents, especially the Mulrooneys, will congratulate him and thank him for acting so expeditiously on their behalf.

Cable operators are required to place most of their apparatus—such as cables, and so on—underground. However, it is difficult to place cabinets in a similar position, because present technology does not yet allow them to be placed under the footpath. There is insufficient space in most urban footpaths to accommodate cable operators' equipment. Licence conditions are therefore framed to ensure that cabinets are sited as sensitively as possible.

Complaints monitoring is one aspect of the cable operators' activities that the DTI monitors particularly closely. The action we take is twofold. The individual complaints which come to our attention through correspondence with Ministers, officials or through local authorities are all invariably followed up in detail with the individual company concerned. Companies are encouraged to provide proper senior management guidance and supervision for staff employed to manage the street works and to respond to complaints. My hon. Friend commented on the rotation of the management looking at the issues, and that should be examined in due course.

At the same time, we monitor the overall trend of street works performance by looking in broad, often statistical, terms at the complaints reaching us and the Cable Communications Association, and by looking at local media coverage of the street works issues.

The statistical tools we use are intended to quickly identify worsening trends in street works performance which we raise very quickly with the companies concerned at senior level. Offending companies are monitored very closely, often being required frequently to report on, and account for, their performance at top management level.

I am pleased to say that the cable industry has been increasingly successful in managing its construction programme. The aggregate indicators we use suggest that the overall level of complaints, disruption and unacceptable impact caused by cable construction—taken across the UK as a whole—is falling. This is particularly pleasing, given that more construction is going on in 1995 than in any previous year. In the first six months of 1995, cable networks passed 795,000 homes as against 550,000 homes in the same period of 1994.

My hon. Friend raised the performance of Nynex in Bolton, which appears to be disappointing and at odds with some of the statistics we have received. The overall improvement in Nynex's performance has been particularly pleasing. We have been monitoring the firm particularly closely in view of concerns early in 1994 about the handling of its construction programme. In the Bolton franchise, the measures that Nynex has put in have brought about a reduction in the complaints per kilometre ratio from a peak of 3.25 complaints per kilometre built in the March to June period to 0.72 complaints per kilometre in 1995.

My hon. Friend has painted a serious picture, particularly of the Pearce family, whose case will be examined. He has made a number of specific recommendations to which I would prefer to respond once I have had an opportunity to draw them to the attention of Nynex, the Department of Transport and the Cable Communications Association.

When the DTI has had occasion to tackle Nynex over street works performance in the past, the company has made clear its commitment to implementing further changes as necessary to ensure closer management of its contractors and an overall high standard of its street works operations.

The Department of Transport, which has had a policy of responsibility for the New Roads and Street Works Act, is considering responses to its consultation earlier this year on possible changes to the codes and regulations under the Act. I understand from the Cable Communications Association that a cable industry construction code of practice is already in preparation. Some of my hon. Friend's recommendations may well be under consideration. He is going with the flow in this matter.

I thank my hon. Friend for raising this important issue. Either a ministerial colleague or I will be back in contact with him when we have the answers to the points raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL CROSSINGS BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 26 October at Seven o'clock.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [26 June].

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 26 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcohol-related Crime

1. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on alcohol-related crime. [36504]

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I am considering the report by the all-party group on alcohol misuse. Although the majority of alcohol consumption is trouble free, for some individuals there is clearly an association between offending, especially violence, and heavy alcohol abuse.

Mr. Milburn: Is the Minister aware that, according to the British Medical Association, two in three homicides and three in four stabbings are associated with alcohol misuse? Will he take this opportunity to endorse the message from the all-party group that, while people should be able to enjoy a drink without causing trouble for others, greater governmental action is needed to tackle the scale of alcohol-related crime? Will he ensure that, in future, equal priority is given to tackling alcohol-related crime as is currently given to the battle against drugs and crime?

Mr. Maclean: Action is being taken. I am considering the hon. Gentleman's report but I am loth to try to single out one category of alcohol-related crime. We must tackle alcohol abuse—various Departments are doing so—and crime. Action is being taken on those two fronts and the police are reducing crime, including violence, for the first time in 50 years. The message on sensible drinking is getting through, and these days young people drink less than their parents and older generations. Spending on beer and spirits has fallen considerably in the past 15 years. We shall keep up the action on all those fronts, including the education front. I commend to the hon. Gentleman a leaflet that I published when I was Minister responsible for food three years ago.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that police officers in Lichfield hold the view that much crime is caused by people leaving pubs all at the same time—at 11 o'clock on a Friday or Saturday night? Will his Department consider changing the licensing laws to allow staggered closing times so that some pubs could close after 11 pm and some before 11 pm?

Mr. Maclean: Those who stagger are less of a problem than those who do not. I commend to my hon. Friend or any police force concerned about that problem some of the research that has been carried out by the police research group in my Department, and some of the excellent experiments in the country. In Rhyl, the police, together with the licensing magistrate and the local authority, took on the problem and, by using their existing powers to stagger closing hours and deal with fast-food outlets on the highway, drastically reduced the level of incidents outside pubs and nightclubs. The evidence exists and it can be copied throughout the country without the need for primary legislation.

Teenage Prisoners

2. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time teenagers were kept in adult prisons whilst awaiting court cases in the last year for which figures are available. [36505]

The Minister of State, Home Office (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The average time spent in custody on remand in Prison Service establishments by defendants aged 15 to 19 who were awaiting trial was 44 days in 1994.

Mr. Gunnell: Is not seven weeks in an adult prison likely to have a detrimental effect on youngsters and teenagers who have not been tried? Is it not a scandal that we are proceeding so slowly on getting additional facilities? Is the Minister aware that in 1991 when I was chair of social services in Leeds, we agreed additional facilities—an extra nine places—which were to go ahead at some time, but that five years later that still has not happened and we are still waiting? Why has there been so little progress?

Miss Widdecombe: If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned that young people should not be held in adult prisons, why did he vote against the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which provided more local authority—[HON. MEMBERS: "He was not here in 1991."] Let me rephrase my question. Why did the hon. Gentleman vote against the 1994 Act and his party vote against the 1991 Act? If he does not want young people to be held in adult prisons, why did he vote against the provision of more secure places in local authority accommodation?

Mr. Brazier: Was not the real scandal the level of offending on bail? Although we want to provide as many alternative secure places as possible, the Government

were absolutely right to tighten bail conditions because that will ensure that, in future, youngsters on bail will commit fewer offences.

Miss Widdecombe: Absolutely. It is also true of course that the Opposition voted against all our improvements to bail arrangements as well. I do not think that they have any grounds for castigating us on that subject.

Mr. Michael: May I remind the Minister that we would not have had the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 were it not for the efforts of members of the Opposition Front Bench and the votes of the Opposition? Have Ministers forgotten that it is five years since the Government promised to end the scandal of young people of 15 and 16 years of age being held either in inappropriate adult prison accommodation or in secure local government accommodation? Will the Home Secretary now explain the Government's failure to keep that promise, or will he blame someone else?

Miss Widdecombe: We can justly blame the Opposition for all the difficulties that they gave us. We can justly say that we have plans for a new-build programme not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency. We have introduced measures to try to reduce the number of young people being held in adult prisons. As usual, the Opposition will not welcome any of that because they always want to hear bad news and they will never give credit where it is due. They simply will not accept what we have done.

Intergovernmental Conference

3. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government will seek at the 1996 intergovernmental conference to have the declaration on border controls in the Single Act changed to be a treaty clause; and if he will make a statement. [36506]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have repeatedly made clear that we will take whatever steps are necessary to maintain our frontier controls. We see no need to decide now to take action at the intergovernmental conference, but if at any stage we think that a desirable course to take, we shall not hesitate to do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As a senior Commission official has stated that the declaration was added simply because the British needed something to take home with them, and as I cannot find anyone outside the Government who thinks that it has any legal standing, will the Home Secretary state clearly what the position of Her Majesty's Government would be if the European Court determined that our remaining border controls within the European Union were contrary to article 7A?

Mr. Howard: I repeat to my hon. Friend what I said a moment ago: the Government will take whatever steps necessary to maintain our frontier controls. That applies as much in the hypothetical circumstance referred to by my hon. Friend as to any other circumstances that might arise.

Dr. Howells: Despite the Secretary of State's reply to the question by his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—I am not sure what on earth it meant—is it not a fact that when he and the rest of the Tory Government signed up to what is now article 7A of the treaty of Rome of 1986, they opted hook, line and sinker for a regime that means that we will be forced to give up our ability to control our frontiers? We will have to give up the means to combat drug runners, international criminals and the gangsters who control illegal immigration. Other than continue to display governmental indolence, what will the right hon. and learned Gentleman do to ensure that we continue to maintain our frontier controls as we should?

Mr. Howard: The short answer is, no that is not true. I am not aware that, at the time, the Labour party was opposed to that particular article. I do not recall that the Opposition expressed any concern about it. The hon. Gentleman's hypothesis is quite untrue. We will take whatever steps are necessary to maintain our frontier controls.

Mr. Gallie: Is it not the case that, in stating that the Government would do whatever is necessary, the Government committed themselves to ensuring that those border controls remain? Is it not also the case that the words from Opposition Members are totally out of standing, especially when they would commit to virtually every European policy that is thrust upon us?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is, of course, absolutely right. It may well be necessary, if we are to maintain our frontier controls, for us to be isolated in Europe, but that is the thing that the Labour party has said that it never would be. Labour Members never would be isolated in Europe. They never will exercise the veto. They will never stand up to defend our frontier controls. Only Conservative Members would be prepared to take the action that may be necessary to achieve that.

Probation Service, West Yorkshire

4. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to visit the West Yorkshire probation service to discuss probation services; and if he will make a statement. [36507]

Mr. Howard: My noble Friend the Minister of State visited West Yorkshire probation service on 19 May. I have no immediate plans to visit the West Yorkshire service myself.

Mr. O'Brien: Has the Home Secretary seen the performance report of the West Yorkshire probation service for the past year? That report reveals a 16 per cent. increase in demand from courts—a 16 per cent. increase in the work of the probation service. The reward from the Home Secretary for that this year is a 4.5 per cent. cut in its cash limits. Will he give me an assurance and a guarantee that, so that the West Yorkshire community may receive the service to which it is entitled from the probation service, there will be no cuts in the coming year, so that the services can be guaranteed?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman takes a slightly broader look at funding for the probation service in recent years, he will find that the picture is quite different. Specifically, if he considers the period between 1990 and 1994, he will notice a substantial increase in resources. It is no use the shadow Chancellor popping up on every

radio station and saying that the Labour party will be rigorous on public spending if Labour Back Benchers repeatedly pop up in the House and ask for more money to be spent in every category in the public expenditure survey.

Raghbir Singh Johal

5. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the case of Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal. [36508]

Mr. Howard: I am satisfied that Raghbir Singh Johal's deportation would be conducive to the public good for reasons of national security and would contribute to the fight against international terrorism. No action will be taken to remove him from the United Kingdom until the representations that he has made have been considered.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Home Secretary aware that my constituent, a lawful resident in Britain for many years, strenuously denies any involvement with terrorism? If there is any evidence relating to terrorism, why is my constituent not being charged, but has instead been held in prison since March on no charge whatsoever? Is his to be another case like that of the Sikh who has been held in prison for five years and who is bringing his case before the European Court? No charges have been made against that person either.

Mr. Howard: Because the exercise of the powers that I have referred to require me to take into account material that includes material which would not be admissible in a court of law. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the law should be changed so that that material could not be taken into account in such circumstances, perhaps he would say so.

Casinos

6. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the 48-hour rule for casinos. [36511]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Timothy Kirkhope): We have received representations from the casino industry and a number of hon. Members. We are currently reviewing the present controls on casinos as part of the Government's deregulation initiative.

Mr. Coombs: May I be the first to welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and to wish him every success in his new post? He will be well aware of the fact that the British casino industry is a substantial earner of foreign income for the country, but is subject to regulation that is outdated and outmoded. It would be very much in the country's interests if he were able to announce very soon the end of the Government's consultation period on the basis of the consultations that they have already had, and make proposals for the deregulation of that important industry.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I commend him for the work that he does on behalf of the tourism industry in the United Kingdom and in his constituency. We are very close to reaching conclusions, having received representations. We are looking not only at the 48-hour rule for casinos, but at the issue of the permitted areas where they may operate. I hope that when we come to our conclusions we will balance the needs of deregulation with the needs for continued protection for the public, about which I know many hon. Members are also concerned.

Mr. George Howarth: I also welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities.

There is considerable concern among groups such as the bingo industry, the pools industry and betting shops about the unfair competition that they have experienced as a result of the introduction of the national lottery. We are prepared to hold talks with the Minister and any of his ministerial colleagues to look at ways in which those anomalies can be put right so that the industries and, more importantly, the jobs that depend on them, exist on a level playing field and face fair, not unfair, competition.

Mr. Kirkhope: We are well aware of that and have already made some progress in deregulation. If it helps the hon. Gentleman I can say that I am certainly willing, as always, to meet any delegations on that basis. Our considerations at present include not only casinos, but bingo and bingo halls.

Mr. Robert Banks: I also welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and much appreciate what he has just said. Does he agree that towns, particularly conference towns such as Harrogate in my constituency, which he knows well, should be able to qualify for casino licences to save business visitors the necessity of travelling to Leeds for their entertainment?

Mr. Kirkhope: As the Member for Leeds, North-East, I have a slightly mixed view. My hon. Friend is right; our considerations, as I said before, include permitted areas. We shall certainly look at representations from towns such as Harrogate and, of course, Swindon.

Police Advisory Committee for London

7. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on which dates the police advisory committee for London has met since 1 January; and if he will place a copy of its minutes of proceedings in the Library. [36512]

Mr. Howard: The Metropolitan Police Committee met on 27 February, 21 March, 25 April, 25 May, 22 June, 19 July, 21 September and 6 October. Its sub-committees, on remuneration matters and performance indicators, have met separately on several occasions.

The duty of the Metropolitan Police Committee is to advise Ministers on policy and the minutes of its meetings are therefore confidential. I expect the chairman to produce an annual report and I shall place a copy of that in the Library in due course.

Mr. Spearing: Does not the Home Secretary think that non-publication of minutes is a hierarchical and undemocratic practice? Will he confirm that the principal duties that he has asked the Committee to perform relating to budgets and finance reflect the wrong attitude to public service, both in terms of the Government as a whole and his own particular style? Is not that specific quango,

which probably spends between £300,000 and £400,000 a year, an affront to the citizens of London, whatever their political view?

Mr. Howard: The answers to the three questions posed by the hon. Gentleman are no, no and no.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that the police advisory committee for London will have as much chance of success as the borough police consultative committees currently have, including wide representations in boroughs? Does my right hon. and learned Friend remember that the Labour party bitterly opposed the establishment of the borough consultative committees, particularly in Ealing and Hackney, and refused to serve on them for many years?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right. That is a part of the Labour party's record that it would prefer to forget, but many of us remember it. I am confident that the Metropolitan Police Committee will play an important part in improving the way in which policing in London can involve the community.

Private Security Industry

8. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce statutory regulation of the private security industry. [36513]

9. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce statutory regulation of the private security industry. [36514]

Mr. Maclean: The case for regulation is currently being considered. The Home Affairs Select Committee report on that issue made a number of very helpful recommendations and we shall respond to it as soon as possible.

Mr. Bennett: Given that the respectable part of the industry is keen to have proper regulation and given that it is now more than four months since the Home Affairs Select Committee gave its report and the Government are supposed to reply after two months, is it not high time that there were some proposals for proper regulation or is the Deputy Prime Minister vetoing that?

Mr. Maclean: The private security industry has grown up in the past 20 or 25 years and the bulk of the industry works perfectly well without any need for regulation. The Home Affairs Select Committee identified one sector with potential problems. In view of the time span of the growth of the industry, I think that it is quite legitimate for the Government to take the time that they have since the Home Affairs Select Committee reported to consider the matters carefully before rushing into implementing any proposals. Of course, we shall want to respond to the Select Committee as soon as we can and we shall want to give a detailed and considered reply to the main points in its recommendations.

Mr. Tony Banks: We all know that the Government have no standards whatsoever as to their normal conduct, but what about people's concerns about low wages, no regulation and no guarantee of public safety in the private security industry? Does the Minister rule out entirely any form of regulation in that industry?

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman were to read my evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, he would know the answer to that question. We are considering carefully all options for that sector.

As to the hon. Gentleman's jibe about standards, if he wants to root out criminals and fraudsters, perhaps he should go to Hackney council and sort out the corruption in its housing department. Perhaps he could then pop into Labour-controlled Islington, with its crazy policy of employing paedophiles, pimps and perverts to work with children.

Sir Peter Fry: There is concern about the issue on Conservative Benches as well as on Opposition Benches. I know of many examples of people having to work ridiculously long hours for exceedingly low pay, which raises many questions about how secure the security companies really are. When the Minister replies to the Select Committee's report, I hope that he will put forward some concrete proposals to strengthen the position and to drive the cowboys out of that very important industry.

Mr. Maclean: As someone who used to undertake such work 15 or 20 years ago, I am of course aware that part of the security industry is low paid. However, I think that my hon. Friend would be the first to acknowledge that self-regulation works perfectly well in the bulk of the security industry—particularly on the technological and electronic alarm sides. The Home Affairs Select Committee identified only one sector where there was a potential problem. Nevertheless, that sector deserves careful consideration and we are considering it at the moment.

Mr. Jenkin: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the difficulties that security companies face in trying to employ people without criminal records? Will he ensure that that issue is examined so that the security companies may be certain that their employees do not have criminal records?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to draw my attention to that aspect of the policy. In considering the Home Affairs Select Committee report, we must examine whether changes to the present rules for vetting potential employees are necessary. That requires careful consideration of the impact of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and we are looking at whether it will be possible to gather more information about prospective employees in order to prevent the employment of people with criminal records, without undermining the principles of the Act.

Mr. Beith: Until we have a proper system of regulation that will stop criminals moving into the industry—as some have done already—will the Minister give an assurance that neither the Home Office nor any of its agencies employ any security firms that do not belong to the industry's self-regulating organisation? But perhaps that is an operational detail of the kind that the Minister does not like to be involved in.

Mr. Maclean: No. It would be contrary to European regulations to exclude companies automatically on the basis that they do not belong to a trade organisation. Government Departments operate a quality threshold policy and if any company meets the quality standards of a contract, that company can be given the business, irrespective of whether it belongs to a trade union or a trade association.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware, not least from the concerns expressed by the hon. Members for

Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry) and for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), of the mounting concern that, in many parts of the country, the private security industry does indeed employ criminals, who are organised into companies to continue their criminal activities under the guise of providing private security? Is he aware that the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that there was a growing problem of totally unregistered private locally patrolling operations, often preying on the fears of vulnerable people? Given the intense concern on both sides of the House, does the Minister accept that he really should show much more than the complacency that he has demonstrated to the House today and move swiftly ahead with the proper regulation of that sector of the industry?

Mr. Maclean: We all know that when the Opposition study an opinion poll and find that people dislike noisy neighbours, they rush into promises of draconian legislation to deal with that week's problem. The private security industry is very important. It is also a large industry which is important to Britain's export needs. The first point to acknowledge is that the bulk of the industry has been given a clean bill of health. The fact that the Home Office and the Home Affairs Select Committee have been reviewing it means that we take the potential problem very seriously. When we have reached our conclusions, we shall announce them in due course.

Fire Service, Wales

11. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with local authorities concerning proposals for the reorganisation of the fire service in Wales. [36516]

Mr. Kirkhope: My right hon. and noble Friend met a deputation from the Assembly of Welsh Counties on 22 August. In the light of the recently completed consultation process on the proposed combined fire authorities, the Government have decided, after careful consideration, to introduce a three-brigade structure for the fire service in Wales from next April.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that the local authorities now consider that the original consultation process was flawed because of inaccurate information? They are now calling for further meetings with Lady Blatch to consider a proposal for a voluntary combination of the five new unitary authorities in Gwent to run the Gwent fire brigade which, incidentally, has the best response rate in the whole of the United Kingdom. Could we please now have some help and co-operation from the Government?

Mr. Kirkhope: An extremely thorough consultation took place. Indeed, the proposals to move to three brigades were first put forward as long ago as March 1993, since when there have been many more contributions to consultation. I do not think that anything substantive has occurred since we concluded the consultation process. Certainly I am always willing to talk to the hon. Gentleman about any matter, including this, but the announcement has been made with good evidence that it will improve the efficiency and good running of the service in Wales for the benefit of the Welsh people.

Carl Bridgewater Murder Case

12. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make an announcement about a referral of the case of the men convicted of the murder of Carl Bridgewater back to the Court of Appeal. [36517]

Mr. Kirkhope: We expect to complete our consideration of this case very soon.

Dr. Jones: That is good news as far as it goes. Three men have been in prison for 18 years for a crime that they did not commit and one man has died in gaol. Even the foreman of the jury says that they are innocent. It has been two and a half years since new evidence has been presented to the Home Office and I am glad that, at long last, a decision may be taken soon. Two and a half years is a long time. I know that the Home Secretary has had a lot on his mind, but if he had paid more attention to miscarriages of justice instead of interfering in the day-to-day running of prisons, perhaps he would not be in the mess he is in today.

Mr. Kirkhope: I am afraid that the hon. Lady seems to misunderstand the process of justice in Britain. We have had the matter examined extremely thoroughly. Although it has taken a long time, that is very important because of the matters that have been raised by many people. They have been considered most carefully. We want to see that justice is properly done and, as I said to the hon. Lady, we expect to complete the consideration and make an announcement very soon.

Asylum Seekers

13. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the number of asylum seekers. [36518]

Miss Widdecombe: The number of asylum applications in the United Kingdom rose from 22,400 in 1993 to 32,800 in 1994—an increase of 45 per cent. The figures are continuing to rise sharply and are expected to exceed 40,000 in 1995. Few applicants are genuine refugees. It is clear that further action is needed to strengthen our defences against exploitation of our asylum system. A statement about that will be made shortly.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that many so-called asylum seekers regard this country as a soft touch? Is it not the case that 80 per cent. of people who apply for asylum in this country eventually have to return home? Is not it the case also that some people who apply for asylum are illegal immigrants facing deportation from this country? Does not the whole country—with the exception of Opposition Front Benchers—welcome the Government's determination to clamp down on bogus asylum seekers, so that genuine cases can be dealt with much more quickly?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Only 5 per cent. of appeals against our refusals are upheld. Asylum is often used as a last resort by people who have exhausted every other possible method, including illegal entry. We are tired of being taken for a ride, and it is undeniably true that genuine applicants suffer from the activities of applicants who are not genuine. It is our firm intention to curtail their activities.

Race Relations

14. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about race relations in the United Kingdom. [36519]

Mr. Howard: I believe that the United Kingdom can be proud of its record on race relations, which is significantly better than that in most comparable countries. Of course there is always room for improvement, and the Government will continue their policy of promoting good race relations combined with firm but fair immigration control.

Mr. Bayley: Does the Home Secretary agree that it was most damaging to race relations when the chairman of the Conservative party used the televised platform of the Conservative party conference to pour scorn on the work of the Hopscotch Asian women's project in Camden? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman urge the right hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) to apologise to the Princess Royal, who has just visited that project because it is funded by the Save the Children Fund? Will he also apologise to his own Department, which last year gave the Hopscotch project a grant?

Mr. Howard: No, I will not do any of those things. I am happy to say that I am in frequent communication with my right hon. Friend and I know that he takes the cause of promoting good race relations as seriously as any Member of the House.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that good race relations depends to a great extent on firm immigration control? He is to be congratulated on his attitude to border controls. It is believed that, since 1984, a quarter of a million Sikhs have sought asylum in Germany. If there were not good border controls, there would be a strong chance that those Sikhs would join their many relatives in places such as Wolverhampton.

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of firm but fair immigration control, particularly in the context of the need to maintain our present system of frontier controls.

Violent Crime

15. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to revise Government policy on punishment for criminals who kill in the course of committing a crime. [36520]

Mr. Maclean: There are no plans to review existing policy.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of my constituents on the pledge given by the Home Secretary last week at the Conservative party conference that second offenders in violent crime will in future probably receive a life sentence? Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that persons who commit violent acts or murder while committing a crime should receive the death penalty?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend knows my personal views on capital punishment. We probably differ only at the drawing and quartering stage. She knows also, however, that it is not a matter for Government determination; capital punishment is one for the will of the House. The House has made its intentions clear over the years and the Government have no intention of attempting to change that policy.

Fire Authorities

16. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the reduction in services that fire authorities have to make as a result of expenditure shortfalls. [36521]

Mr. Kirkhope: Representations about the level of financial provision available to fire authorities have been received from a number of hon. Members and others. My right hon. and learned Friend's approval is required under section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947 before any reduction in the number of fire stations, fire appliances or firefighting posts in a brigade can be made, and is given only when he is satisfied that the normally recommended minimum levels of fire cover will be maintained. I understand that the West Midlands fire and civil defence authority is meeting all its statutory obligations.

Mr. Cunningham: Is the Minister aware that the West Midlands fire brigade pension fund is about £7 million in deficit? Does he realise that that could result in further cuts in the service? What does he propose to do?

Mr. Kirkhope: Those matters are mostly the concern of the fire authorities. The hon. Gentleman, however, and the people of his area have a safeguard because we shall not allow the standards of fire protection to fall. The service provided by the fire authorities will be protected for ordinary people. I invite the hon. Gentleman to join me in asking firemen on Merseyside to settle their dispute and return to work. Firemen who are on strike in that manner harm fire protection, as opposed to what the Government are doing.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the ways in which fire services are budgeted? Is it not illogical that the expenditure side is determined on risk analysis whereas the revenue side is determined on the previous three years' call-out rate?

Mr. Kirkhope: There are illogicalities, and I shall be happy to consider the matter that my hon. Friend has raised. I am satisfied, however, that the financing of fire authorities is satisfactory and adequate for the majority of them to meet the needs that they have above and beyond the need of fire protection.

Criminal Neighbours

17. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about procedures to deal with criminal neighbours. [36522]

Mr. Maclean: The investigation of criminal offences is an operational matter for chief officers of police. The Government encourage the police to work in partnership with local authorities and other organisations to tackle crime and prevent nuisance.

Mr. Mudie: The Minister will be aware of the great inconvenience that is caused to people who have anti-social neighbours. Is it good enough for the Minister to offer the same old excuse about operational matters?

When can we expect him to deliver some policies to help these individuals who are experiencing such trouble with anti-social neighbours?

Mr. Maclean: Serious anti-social behaviour such as racial harassment, witness intimidation, threatening behaviour and assault are already the subject of criminal offences. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 introduced new provisions to deal with witness intimidation and intentional harassment. Those were provisions that the Labour party thought about carefully before deciding to abstain. We have introduced policies and the Opposition have abstained.

Violent Crime

18. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to tackle violent crime. [36523]

19. **Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further action he intends to take to tackle violent crime. [36524]

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend announced last week our proposals for ensuring that the sentence served in prison should be the sentence passed by the court and that there should be a new mandatory life sentence for repetition of serious offences of sex or violence.

Mr. Hoon: If the Home Secretary truly believes in the need to abolish automatic remission, why did he and all his colleagues vote for the introduction of that system during consideration of what became the Criminal Justice Act 1991? Is he unable to make up his mind or is this another example of the Conservative party lurching to the right to appease reactionary representatives at the Tory party conference?

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman had bothered to study the 1991 Act and what had gone before, he would have found that that legislation led to a tightening of the rules. It is clear that he and his party have not thought through the sentencing policies that the people want. Perhaps that is why we are seeing a sideshow this afternoon.

Mr. Stephen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is an affront to the public when violent criminals then profit from their crime by selling their story to film makers and publishers? Will he look again at my proposed amendment to criminal justice legislation to make it illegal for anyone to pay a criminal for his story?

Mr. Maclean: Of course it is reprehensible for people to profit from those activities, but, as I have said to my hon. Friend, rather than create a new offence or invoke criminal law, I would much prefer to see responsibility by those who are exercising the cheque book, in whatever media outlets they may be in, so that they do not pay criminals for the details of their sordid crimes.

PRIME MINISTER

Lichfield (Anniversaries)

Q1. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to visit the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the completion of the present cathedral and the 500th anniversary of the King Edward VI school being held this year in the city of Lichfield. [36532]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I warmly congratulate the citizens of Lichfield on these anniversaries. Unfortunately, I shall not on this occasion be able to visit during them.

Mr. Fabricant: If my right hon. Friend is able to visit next year, not only could he join in the celebrations of the 801st anniversary of the cathedral but he could see our brand new anti-crime closed circuit television system in the centre of Lichfield and use the opportunity to speak to the people of the city of Lichfield, who will tell him that what we need is not do-gooders but more people like our Home Secretary, who are tough on crime and robust on punishment.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary richly deserves and gets my full support in his fight against crime. It is a fight in which he has engaged with great success without a great deal of support from Opposition Members.

Closed circuit television has had a dramatic effect in catching criminals and deterring crime, and over the next three years we anticipate installing a further 10,000 new cameras up and down the country.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36533]

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Clapham: Despite the Government's obsession with privatisation over the past 16 years, will the Prime Minister share the view of Dame Vera Lynn, the people of Dover and the Labour party and ensure that Dover and its white cliffs remain British for ever?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes a compelling case and, as we look at plans ahead, I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Mr. French: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the official solicitor is reported to have done a deal whereby the so-called memoirs of my late constituent, Mr. Fred West, are to be sold for £1 million? Does my right hon. Friend not find such a deal extremely distasteful? But, if it is to go ahead, does he agree that that sum should go not to members of the West family but to the families of the alleged victims?

The Prime Minister: When I saw some of the earlier reports on this matter in the media, there was an implication that the Government were involved in the sale of the rights to Mr. West's papers. That is, of course, emphatically not the case. The official solicitor who has made the sale is a lawyer independent of Government and he has made that decision on his judgment of what is right for the estate. Personally, I share my hon. Friend's feelings about this matter.

Mr. Blair: Can we have clear answers now to the two points of fact at the heart of the dispute between the Home

Secretary and Mr. Lewis? At the meeting of 10 January, first, did the Home Secretary say that the governor of Parkhurst prison should be suspended—a disciplinary matter—rather than merely transferred to other duties, and, secondly, was it the Home Secretary, not Mr. Lewis, who demanded that any action taken be taken that day immediately so that he could announce it to the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend will deal with these matters in detail this afternoon. But let me say further to the right hon. Gentleman that the leading questions that he put to me on Tuesday in an attempt to discredit my right hon. and learned Friend were wrong. I have now had the documentary evidence examined which shows conclusively that the decision to move the governor of Parkhurst prison was the director general's. My right hon. and learned Friend will be releasing that evidence later today. I hope, therefore, that before the Leader of the Opposition repeats unjust allegations, before he states new unjust allegations, he will withdraw the old unjust allegations and apologise for them. *[Interruption.]*

Dr. Spink: The right hon. Gentleman should withdraw his false questions.

Madam Speaker: Order. Dr. Spink will come to order.

Mr. Blair: We certainly do not withdraw those allegations and we shall make them good during the debate. What is more, I note that the Prime Minister did not answer either of the two points that I put to him. Let me make this clear to Conservative Members. This is not just Mr. Lewis's word against that of the Home Secretary, although let me point out that he was the senior civil servant. The Government appointed Mr. Lewis and renewed his contract. May I tell the Prime Minister— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time and we are to have a debate on the matter in a short time.

Mr. Blair: May I remind the Prime Minister that those now lined up against the Home Secretary on this issue are the chairman of the board of visitors of Parkhurst, the chairman of the Association of Members of Boards of Visitors, the chief inspector of prisons—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time and I insist that questions are put to the Prime Minister for reply.

Mr. Blair: Will the Prime Minister now release Philippa Drew, John Marriott and other civil servants connected with this matter from their obligations of confidentiality on this limited issue so that they can give their version of events and we can see who is telling the truth?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is very reckless with his facts and very fancy-free with his allegations. He was wrong on Tuesday and the House will notice that he did not apologise for his error. My right hon. and learned Friend will deal with all these matters this afternoon and I have every confidence that he will reveal Labour's smears for what they are. I have one further point for the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman is keen to lecture people on moral responsibility. Perhaps he should reflect that a high moral tone is inconsistent with peddling allegations that he knows are untrue.

Mr. Blair: If the Prime Minister says that they are untrue, will he allow those civil servants who know the truth directly to give evidence as to their version of events? Now, yes or no to that question?

The Prime Minister: I made the point in my first answer that my right hon. and learned Friend will be releasing the evidence this afternoon about the decision on Parkhurst prison. As to the other matters, my right hon. and learned Friend will make the matter crystal clear this afternoon. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to retain any credibility in the country, he should acknowledge that he is wrong and apologise for unjust allegations.

Mr. Waterson: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity during his busy week to consider the findings of the European Court, which has said that positive discrimination in employment is unlawful? Will he confirm that the full facilities of the Equal Opportunities Commission will be made available for the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an extremely intriguing point, and also touches on elections elsewhere that have been of interest to the House in the past day or so. I have no doubt that the departure of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the arrival of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) constitute a case of constructive dismissal and destructive appointment.

Mr. Ashdown: With the Home Secretary now facing his eighth appearance before the courts, how does the Prime Minister justify a policy of "two strikes and you're out" for a criminal? The Home Secretary has had seven strikes against him, and he is still in.

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman ought to understand that there is strong support in the country for the law and order policies of my right hon. and learned Friend. Time after time, my right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors have set out strong anti-criminal measures; time after time, the right hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition have voted for the soft option. They voted against raising the maximum sentences for serious crimes: they are against that. They were against giving the Attorney-General the right of appeal against lenient sentences: they want lenient sentences. They were against strengthening police powers to stop and search criminals, against giving the police more powers to deal with disorder on the streets and against making parents more responsible for their children. They do not like it, but that is their record on crime. The only message that the Liberal and Labour parties send to criminals is that they would be soft on them.

Mr. Wilshire: Turning to Northern Ireland, may I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm that it remains the Government's policy to exclude from all-party talks all those who retain guns and explosives?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that there has been absolutely no change in the Government's position. That

will be clear to anyone who studies the full text of the remarks made the other day by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Q3. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36534]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Prime Minister recall the occasion on which a man was found in the Queen's bedroom? Does he also recall—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Speaker: Order. We have a very full day today. Come on, get on with it.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Prime Minister also recall that the then Home Secretary, Lord Whitelaw—who I think we can all agree was a gentleman of the old school—immediately offered his resignation? Was Lord Whitelaw wrong? Should he have said that it was an operational matter, and none of his business?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman were familiar with the framework document under which Mr. Lewis was working, he would see the clear distinction between policy and operational matters.

Q4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36535]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend aware that grant-maintained schools are proving more and more popular with parents—so much so that a school in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition is now balloting for grant-maintained status?

The Prime Minister: I did not know that, but I congratulate the parents of Sedgefield on considering it, and I very much hope that they will vote in favour. I hope that, if they do, the Labour leader will have the chance to tell his constituents about the benefits of grant-maintained schools, which he so obviously values. When he does so, perhaps he can explain why Labour's education policy is to enjoy those advantages—quite rightly—for its own children, but to deprive other people's children of the same opportunity.

Q5. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36536]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Miss Hoey: Does the Prime Minister share my concern at the failure of training and enterprise councils across the country to meet their targets for special needs? Does he realise that, in the meantime, projects such as Roots and Shoots in Kennington in my constituency are facing closure from underfunding, despite having a wonderful success rate in terms of employment? What action will he take on that?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me notice of the detailed question that she proposed to ask. I understand that she had a useful meeting this morning with the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). I understand that Roots and Shoots has signed a contract with the Central London TEC. My hon. Friend has made it clear that the TEC is willing to discuss the terms of the contract and the costs involved by Roots and Shoots in an effort to ensure that provision is continued. As I am sure the hon. Lady is also aware, my hon. Friend has written to every TEC to urge it to pass on the substantial premium that the Government pay to special needs training. My hon. Friend will of course pursue that vigorously.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House for details of future business?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 23 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC documents Nos. 7596/95, 7465/95 and 8817/95 relating to the common fisheries policy control system. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (19th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Current Environmental Concerns in Scotland" on a motion in the name of the Scottish National party. Followed by a debate entitled "The Plight of Pensioners in Wales" on a motion in the name of Plaid Cymru.

WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER—Until 2.30 pm, there will be debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Opposition Day (20th allotted day). There will be a debate on the national lottery on an Opposition motion.

THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on an order relating to the salaries of Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Whips in each House, and the Officers of both Houses.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock.

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER—Debate on sport on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 30 OCTOBER—Consideration of Lords amendments which may be received to the Disability Discrimination Bill.

Remaining stages of the Law Reform (Succession) Bill *[Lords]*, the Private International Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill *[Lords]* and the Civil Evidence Bill *[Lords]*.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet as follows:

Tuesday 24 October at 10.30 am: EC document No. 6591/94 relating to comparative advertising.

Wednesday 25 October at 10.30 am: EC document No. 6871/95 and the supplementary explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of National Heritage on 5 July 1995 relating to tourism.

I am sorry that at present I am not able to be as forthcoming as I would normally wish about business after Monday 30 October, but I think hon. Members will understand some of the difficulties at this time of year. I should tell them—it would certainly be for the convenience of the House—that Government business will be taken in the week beginning 30 October and will also be taken in the week beginning 6 November for some time in that week, subject to the progress of business in another place.

[Monday 23 October—European Community documents: (a) 7465/95, Fisheries enforcement: financial provision; (b) 7596/95, Common fisheries policy control system; (c) 8817/95, Fisheries: log book records. Relevant European Legislation Committee reports: (a) HC 70-xxi (1994-95); (b) HC 70-xxi (1994-95); (c) HC 70-xxv (1994-95).

Tuesday 24 October—European Standing Committee B. European Community document: 6591/94, Comparative advertising. Relevant European Legislation Committee reports: HC 48-xxi (1993-94), HC 70-xii (1994-95).

Wednesday 25 October—European Standing Committee B. European Community document: 6871/95, Tourism. Relevant European Legislation Committee reports: HC 70-xix (1994-95) and HC 70-xxiii (1994-95).]

Monday 23 October
Reports Session 1993–94

No.	*Report title*	*HC No.*	*Date of publication*
40	Property Services in the English Occupied Royal Palaces	316	7 September
42	The Renewable Energy Research, Development and Demonstration Programme	387	8 September
43	The Industrial Injuries Scheme	368	21 September
44	British Army in Germany—Drawdown of Equipment and Stores	408	17 November
45	Export Credits Guarantee Department Appropriation Accounts 1992–93: Irregular Payments to Exporters	406	2 November
46	Registers of Scotland: Service to the Public	394	3 November
47	The British Film Institute	491	23 November
48	Management and Sale of Houses in Borders Region	303	24 November
49	National Health Service: Hospital Catering in England	427	1 December
50	National Insurance Fund Account 1992–93	419	7 December
51	Auditing Clinical Care in Scotland	375	8 December

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No.	*Report title*	*HC No.*	*Date of publication*
1	Ministry of Defence: The Major Projects Report (1993)	42	14 December
2	The Sports Council: Initiatives to Improve Financial Management and Control and Value for Money	93	11 January
3	Merseyside Development Corporation: Grand Regatta Columbus and Fanfare for a New World Concert	94	12 January

Reports Session 1994–95

No.	*Report title*	*HC No.*	*Date of publication*
4	Inland Revenue: Getting Tax Right First Time and Dealing with More Complex Postal Queries	105	19 January
5	Council Tax Valuations in England and Wales	137	8 February
6	Wolds Remand Prison	138	9 February
7	Excess Votes	280	14 March
8	NI Excess Votes	281	14 March
9	Improving Social Security Services in London: The Provision of Services to Customers	145	3 May
10	Appropriation Matters 1993–94	215	4 May
11	English Nature: Protecting SSIs	375	10 May
12	Property Holdings Leaseholds	106	11 May
13	Management in NHS Trusts in England	155	17 May
14	MOD: Management of Telephones	188	18 May
15	Resource Accounting and Budgeting	407	24 May
16	The Privatisation of NI Electricity	24	25 May
17	Department of Agriculture NI Science Service—Research and Development	25	25 May
18	NHS Day Hospitals for Elderly People in England	95	7 June
19	Fraud on the Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme	200	8 June
20	Appropriation Account Matters 1993–94	207	14 June
21	Financial Health of Higher Education in England	139	15 June
22	Management of Intellectual Property	237	21 June
23	Value for Money at Grant Maintained Schools: A Review of Performance	225	22 June
24	Dtp: Land and Property for Road Building	43	28 June
25	Administration of the Crown Courts	173	29 June
26	Management of the Trident Works Programme	486	5 July

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No.	*Report title*	*HC No.*	*Date of publication*
27	General Practitioner—Fundholding in England	264	6 July
28	Severance Package for the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield	242	12 July
29	Welsh Development Agency	376	13 July
30	Home Office: Entry in the United Kingdom	355	19 July
31	Scottish Courts: Administration of Scottish Courts	301	20 July
32	ODA: Management of Programme Aid	337	26 July
33	FCO Irregularities	330	27 July
34	Green Form Legal Aid Frauds	282	2 August
35	Administration of Retirement Pensions	415	3 August
36	VEM at Colleges in the Further Education Sector	309	9 August
37	NAO Estimate 1995–96	53	10 August
38	NAO Estimate 1995–96	52	10 August
39	Sale of Forward Civil Service—Catering	344	16 August
40	Suspension of Dr. O'Connell	322	17 August

Mrs. Taylor: I thank the Leader of the House for that information, and accept his point that, at this time of the parliamentary year, there must be some uncertainty in future planning. Will the Leader of the House ensure that, during the debate on Wednesday 25 October on the national lottery, the Secretary of State for National Heritage is able to resolve the inconsistency between her junior Minister's answer to a parliamentary question on 27 June this year, and the statement earlier this week by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury? Perhaps the Leader of the House will tell us whether the Government regard lottery funds as public money, as seems to be the case from what the Chief Secretary was saying.

As for the business after next week, will the Leader of the House assure us that time will be found before the end of the Session to debate the Procedure Committee's report on our trial of the Jopling proposals on the management of parliamentary time? Will he ensure that there will be time for a debate and decisions on the report which is expected from the Select Committee on Standards in Public Life? I know that he is anxious that that Committee should report as soon as possible. Will he guarantee that time will be found for such a debate?

On related matters, will the Leader of the House tell us when he will be tabling the appropriate resolution to establish the new Select Committee on Standards and Privileges to which the House has agreed in principle? Will he also give an assurance that the Select Committee on Employment will continue?

[Mrs. Taylor]

Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the position on Question Time involving the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? Will he confirm that hon. Members tabling questions to that Minister before the recess were told that such questions should be addressed not to the Deputy Prime Minister but to the First Secretary of State, but that, when he himself found out that that was the case, and despite the fact that questions appeared on the Order Paper addressed to the First Secretary of State, the Order Paper was changed, so that the questions were addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister? As the Deputy Prime Minister then declined to answer the first question to the Deputy Prime Minister, is that not a case of his making a mockery of the House's proceedings, and should not the Leader of the House be stopping that?

Mr. Newton: My gratitude to the hon. Lady for the generosity of her acknowledgement of the difficulties, expressed in the early part of her comments, was rather dissipated by her later remarks. My right hon. Friend is Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State.

The National Lottery etc. Act 1993 makes it clear that lottery funds are ultimately under the control and management of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage. I am advised that, because it is ultimately under ministerial control, lottery money must be classified as public money under internationally recognised standards for national accounts, but I shall of course bring the hon. Lady's apparent confusion to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

As for Jopling, the hon. Lady has good cause to know that I am undertaking the usual consultations, with her among others, with a view to bringing appropriate resolutions before the House during what we call the spillover.

As for Nolan—again, the hon. Lady has good cause to know this because we are spending a great deal of time in Committee on the subject at the moment—the aim is to bring forward proposals and give the House the opportunity to debate them before Prorogation. All of us on the Committee are working hard to that end. I also hope to make progress with the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges. I am more than willing to listen to representations, but I should have thought that the convenient time to deal with it would be when we debate the matters to which I have just referred. I have not, however, made a definite decision about that.

As for the Select Committee on Employment, the hon. Lady knows that I am currently consulting, as is appropriate on new arrangements. However, I find it difficult to see a reason for departing from the long-established practice of matching Select Committees to Government Departments, and changing them when there are changes in the structure of Government Departments.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Friend may be aware of the mounting criticism in certain organs of the press about the amount of legislation going through the House under statutory instrument powers. I wonder whether he shares my concern that too much legislation is going through under such powers and is not receiving sufficient scrutiny by the House, and that the matter should be debated. Or does he have news for the House that the Government are already considering the problem?

Mr. Newton: I cannot quite answer my hon. Friend in the terms which he would no doubt like because, if we are to have the debate on procedural matters that I am hoping for, he may be able to advert to that matter. On his general point, he will know that the Government are working very hard to reduce the amount of regulation.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the Leader of the House make time for an urgent debate on the rise in teenage smoking which has just been announced? It is particularly important in the light of the new survey that links tobacco advertising and teenage smoking.

Mr. Newton: I cannot arrange for an urgent debate—certainly not during the spillover period—but I shall of course draw the hon. Lady's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): Will my right hon. Friend consider whether the House should debate VE and VJ day, not only because it would be right in itself in this particular year, but because there is a risk that many thousands of people will feel that the House has not adequately honoured them?

The case of a constituent of mine in Finchley illustrates the point that I would urge on the Leader of the House. A lady who lives there was bombed in her house in 1944. She was blinded at the time, and has lived and is still living in the same house. Many thousands of people lived blameless and supportive lives way behind the soldiers' ranks, and feel that they too played an important part, which we could recognise in the House.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the whole House would want to join in paying tribute to, and indeed expressing respect for, my hon. Friend's constituent and many others who no doubt have similar experiences. On the question of recognition of these events, I thought that the rather splendid ceremony in Westminster Hall at the time of VE day—but very much recognising VJ day as well—was a proper and fitting tribute from the House.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The Leader of the House will recall that I wrote to him many weeks ago as chairman of the managing trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund about the independent review body's recommendations in relation to the fund. Word has reached me—it is a welcome word—that the Leader of the House is proceeding with all speed to give effect to the decision of this House of 17 July. In anticipation of an early statement from him, can I thank him for the work that he is doing?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If he has not had a reply, I apologise for that. The work that has been required in relation to translating the thoughts of the House and the Senior Salaries Review Body into regulation form has proved extremely complex.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there are approach and departure flight paths from Manchester airport over my constituency. He will therefore be aware that aircraft noise is a constant problem for many of my constituents. Currently, airports do not have the statutory power to fine aircraft which stray from

designated corridors without the permission of traffic control. Manchester airport, and indeed my constituents, would like that to be made a statutory right, so that the fines may provide some meaningful control over such aircraft movements. My talks with the Department of Transport suggest that it accepts that such action is necessary, and would require primary legislation. Will there be any opportunity at an early date for such legislation to be implemented?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will appreciate that, by tradition, I cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech. Nor, at a time when there are many demands, would I want to excite his hopes too much, even having said that. I shall bring his question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Leader of the House has always been careful about the duties and support of the House of Commons. He will be aware that, when he is thinking about the Jopling report and the reforms that he will bring forward, a number of hon. Members will want to say that they are not overly impressed with some of the changes that have taken place, which have enabled the Government to escape proper scrutiny. I hope that he will not rush forward just on the basis of a fashionable change in hours, without thinking of the implications for legislation.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady was kind enough to use the words that she did at the beginning of her question, and I hope that I have shown that I do not seek to ride roughshod over people's reservations. However, there appears to be wide, and probably overwhelming, support in the House for changes along the lines of those with which the House has experimented this year.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Notwithstanding the narrow debate scheduled for later today, may we have a debate next week on the prison building programme? That would give me an opportunity to recognise the decision by all parties on Salford city council to reject the Prison Service's proposal to build a prison next door to my constituency, and to ask the Prison Service to think again about that disastrous proposal.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will note that question but, for my part, I cannot promise another debate on prisons in the near future.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement to the House on Lord Donaldson's assessment of the sinking of the Derbyshire? The House and the families of the Derbyshire bereaved should hear from the Secretary of State what Lord Donaldson had to say.

Mr. Newton: As ever, I shall remind my right hon. Friend of the hon. Gentleman's long-standing concern about that matter. I suppose that I could claim that I have arranged for the Secretary of State to be here to answer questions on Monday, but I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman would regard that as an adequate opportunity.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is the Leader of the House willing to postpone the three fishing orders next Monday for a week? As he knows, the Fisheries Council will meet next week to see whether it is possible to change those ridiculous control measures, which would oblige our fishermen to make 170,000 individual reports, costing them £1.2 million, which would cost the average fishing vessel up to £5,000. How can we debate the orders next Monday without knowing the outcome of the review until about Thursday? Could we not simply delay the debate for a week? What is the problem?

Mr. Newton: I am mildly puzzled by that question, because the suggestion usually made to me is that the House should have opportunities for debate before a Fisheries Council. That is the purpose of that debate.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement and debate on the repair and replacement of system-built schools? My constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) have a number of Derwent schools, which have been given a limited life, but we have never been able to get out of the Government a programme to fund their replacement. Birley Spa school in my constituency has been given only a two-year life, but the Government will still not commit themselves to funding a replacement for it, thereby blighting the lives of hundreds of children in my constituency. May we have a statement on precise Government policy in that regard?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a statement, but it is classically a question that I should want to draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate on local government finance, so that we can consider the decision of Ealing's Labour council to cut £6 million off Ealing's budget, sack 100 people and virtually eliminate adult education, which it has a statutory duty to provide? It has done so in a totally careless way, blaming next year's grant settlement, which has not even been made.

Mr. Newton: I am always keen to satisfy my hon. Friend's appetite for revealing the iniquities of his local authority. I cannot assuage it at the moment, but in five or six weeks' time, there will be a statement on local authority expenditure.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): The Leader of the House will be aware that, for the past six months, the Government have said that only one person, Nick Leeson, was responsible for the collapse of Barings. This week we have received an authoritative report from Singapore detailing collusion and a cover-up at the London end. We also now know that Barings gave £900,000 to Tory party funds in recent years. May we have a debate soon on the collusion and cover-up in London, above all to restore some confidence that the regulation and supervision of overseas trading banks in the City of London is now in safe hands?

Mr. Newton: We will obviously study the report of the Singapore Ministry of Finance carefully. It appears to me to confirm the main conclusions of the report published in London in July by the Board of Banking Supervision.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early opportunity to debate the governance of Scotland? He will be aware that the Labour party, the Liberals and others have come forward with their crackpot proposals for Edinburgh. With four

[Mr. Bill Walker]

Scottish-based Scots in the Cabinet and the possibility of many more Scots in any future Labour Cabinet, including a Chief Whip, is it not about time in this Parliament that we got down to the serious business of finding out how well Scotland is governed?

Mr. Newton: We will be short of time in the next week or two even to debate such important subjects. I do not know whether there is any chance that my hon. Friend might manage to weave that subject into the debate next Tuesday on environmental concerns in Scotland, but he might have a try.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In view of what happened yesterday, when several hundred carers came to lobby their Members of Parliament, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made about what use can be made of Westminster Hall?

Those people were unable to go into the Grand Committee Room, because a private Bill was being considered. They assembled in Westminster Hall, but were then told that they could not use the microphones because of reasons that the establishment had made clear on other occasions. Given that the VE day celebrations took place in Westminster Hall—in fact, it was a meeting which made use of microphone facilities and everything else—why is it that disabled people, many of them in wheelchairs, were not allowed to use microphones there to have a meeting with their Members of Parliament? Can we sort this out?

Mr. Newton: A number of my constituents were also here yesterday, so I am aware of some of the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I am not responsible for the arrangements in Westminster Hall, although many people sometimes think I am, but I will bring the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of those very elevated people who are responsible for them.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the operation of the European Standing Committees? As I understand it, it was originally intended that there should be far more of those Committees, and that far more people with specialised interests should be involved in considering the various directives that are passed by the House under delegated legislation. I served on one of those Committees for four years and I enjoyed it greatly, but the difficulty now is that those Committee sittings clash with the sittings of Select Committees and other meetings. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the way in which those Committees are arranged, or would he reconsider the way in which they are constituted and operate?

Mr. Newton: I am always willing to consider constructive suggestions, but my hon. Friend has put his finger on one of the problems: quite apart from the great demands on Members of Parliament created by those Committees, it is a fact that the more Committees one sets up, the more likely they are to clash with other Committees. It is a question of trying to find the right balance.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I should like to add my voice to the concerns expressed already by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I urge that something be done to resolve the long and continuing vexed issue of access by and the treatment of people with disabilities in this place. What happened yesterday was even worse than my hon. Friend made out, because efforts were made to send many of those people in wheelchairs to a Committee Room upstairs, access to which is virtually non-existent.

Why on earth is there unwillingness to allow meetings to be addressed in Westminster Hall, when Heads of State from all over the world have addressed both Houses in it? In fact, Parliament sat in that hall for a long time. It appears that petty tinpot bureaucracy is standing in the way, and means that, yesterday, many people went home feeling extremely disappointed at being unable to lobby their Member of Parliament whom they had come to meet. Why on earth can something not be done to ensure that in future when people with disabilities come to lobby their Members they are offered the use of Westminster Hall, microphones and other facilities to enable them to do so?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has raised two separate points. On the main point, in support of Bolsover, if I may put it like that, I shall not attempt to add to what I said. On the earlier point, which is about facilities for disabled people in the Palace generally, the hon. Gentleman knows that a substantial programme of work is under way to bring about modifications to help solve that problem.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Is my right hon. Friend willing to arrange in the near future a debate on the middle east peace process, so that I might mention yet again in the House the plight of Ron Arad, who was captured many years ago in the Lebanon and whose family have been denied access to him or letters from him for at least eight years?

Mr. Newton: I assure my hon. Friend that we want the release of Ron Arad, and indeed all those people in that part of the world who are held outside the due process of law. We continue to mention the matter to everyone who might be able to help, whenever we have the chance to do so.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Further to the question asked by the shadow Leader of the House about the tabling of questions to the Deputy Prime Minister, will the Leader of the House investigate why a question that I tabled before the recess, which was accepted by the Table Office, was removed on Monday from the Order Paper? In my opinion, it was a legitimate question to the Deputy Prime Minister. It asked him what proposals he had to promote equal treatment for men and women. I should have thought that, as one of his responsibilities is the working of government, that is a question that he should have answered.

Mr. Newton: I will look into that, but, as it happens, I am Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues. The question may have been transferred to me but, if so, it has not yet reached me.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will my right hon. Friend consider an opportunity for an early debate on the assisted places scheme, so that we may explore the Government's plans to extend that scheme, and so that we may give the Opposition an opportunity to explain to my constituents—especially parents and pupils of the King's school and indeed the Queen's school, which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) attended—why

they should be denied the opportunity of an outstanding education at two outstanding schools in the city of Chester?

Mr. Newton: That really is a very good idea.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As we shall be treading parliamentary water for a little while, would it be possible to hold a debate on the future of the BBC world service? There is enormous support on both sides of the House for the world service yet somehow, apparently, it continues to be confronted with cuts all the time.

The BBC world television service may be one of the few national institutions that has an international reputation, but it is a belt and braces show. Surely we should give further financial support to both those services. Perhaps, if the Government listen to the overwhelming opinion of both sides of the House, they might be persuaded of the case.

Mr. Newton: We all hold the work of the BBC world service in high regard, but not even that enables me to promise an early debate.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Leader of the House will be aware that the Scottish Grand Committee will meet in Aberdeen on Monday. Does he accept that meetings of that Committee in different parts of Scotland are little more than an expensive charade, as the Secretary of State for Scotland is not accountable to Members elected in Scotland? Does he accept that what people in Scotland require, and what they will have, is an elected parliament to control their Government within the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: The very fact that the Scottish Grand Committee is to meet in what I believe have been widely welcomed arrangements in Aberdeen in Scotland is a measure of the importance that we attach to those matters. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman will be there, but perhaps he can make his speech there.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I welcome what the Leader of the House said about holding an early debate on the national lottery. However, will he ensure that, by the time that the debate is held, the confusion between the Welsh Office, the Department of National Heritage and the Treasury about double funding is cleared up?

I say that in the light of the conflict between the current guidance note from the Welsh Office, which has led to the Wales tourist board withdrawing a grant already offered to the Brecon jazz festival because it has now been successful in obtaining money from the national lottery, and the answer that was given by the junior Minister at the Department of National Heritage to my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), which said:

"Applicants are required to provide an element of partnership funding which can come from a variety of sources, including public funding."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1995; Vol. 262, c. *598.*]

Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that, once and for all, the three Departments get their act together and do not issue totally contradictory instructions to innocent applicants for Government funding and national lottery funding?

Mr. Newton: Taking together the original points of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and those made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), I repeat my assurance that I shall bring to the attention of those participating in the debate the fact that there is confusion in the minds of Opposition Members.

Prescription Charges (Exemptions)

4 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): With the permission of the House, I wish to make a statement on prescription rate exemption arrangements in the light of the European Court of Justice judgment on the Richardson case which we received earlier today.

Mr. Cyril Richardson is a married man who, in 1993, when aged 64, was required to pay a prescription charge of £4.75. His wife aged 62 had been exempt from charges on age grounds from age 60—whereas men are not exempt until they are age 65. Mr. Richardson contended that, as a result, he suffered discrimination contrary to directive 79/7/EEC, which provides for equal treatment of men and women in matters of social security. In December 1993, he sought leave to apply for judicial review, and in May 1994 the High Court referred the case to the European Court of Justice for a ruling.

Our position has always been that the directive, which is based on article 235 of the treaty of Rome and was therefore approved unanimously by member states in 1978, did not apply to the United Kingdom's prescription charge exemption arrangements; or, if it did, those arrangements were covered by the derogation for state pension age. We have argued that the directive applies to statutory schemes against risks such as sickness or old age and to social assistance in so far as it is intended to supplement those schemes. Our case was that exemption from prescription charges is a health not a social security statutory scheme; nor is it social assistance.

Alternatively, if those arguments were not to be accepted by the court, we argued that the clear link between our exemption arrangements for prescription charges and state pension age should mean that the derogation from the directive for state pension age would enable us to operate different age exemptions for men and women, as we now operate different state pension ages.

However, as many Members of the House will be aware, the court has found in Mr. Richardson's favour. The ECJ has ruled today that our arrangements fall within the scope of the directive, and that the derogation does not apply. That means that the existing clause in the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Regulations, which provides for men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over to receive free prescriptions, is not consistent with European Community law.

It is open to us, within the terms of the judgment, to equalise the age exemption arrangements in a number of different ways—for example, at age 65 for both men and women. But equalising at 60 is, I believe, the right approach, because it protects the rights of those women aged 60 and over who currently receive free prescriptions. The Government accept the court's findings, and will comply fully.

The purpose of my statement today is to make clear to the House and to the public the arrangements that we are making, which will come into effect from tomorrow, for men aged 60 to 64 to obtain prescriptions without charge and, where appropriate, for them to obtain reimbursement of charges.

I have accordingly today made amending regulations to equalise from tomorrow, 20 October, the age exemption arrangements for men and women at the retirement age for women. That means that more than 1 million men in England and Wales aged 60 to 64 will from tomorrow be entitled to free prescriptions on age grounds. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have today made similar amending regulations.

I shall clarify the position on retrospection, about which there has been ill reporting in the media. Although the judgment was not limited in retrospective effect, it recognised that national procedural rules, such as time limits, will apply. Our regulations specify a maximum period of three months for retrospective claims, and that is the period for which claims will normally be allowed.

The existing regulations also make provision for reimbursement of charges paid by people who were exempt at the time of supply. We shall operate a simple procedure allowing men aged 60 to 64 at the time of supply initially to register a claim for a refund. Details of how those who may have a claim for a refund can register their interest will be published in national newspapers tomorrow, Friday 20 October 1995, and during next week.

We will also be distributing posters and coupons to national health service contractors in the next week or so. Claims for reimbursement should be registered within three months of the date on which the drug or appliance was supplied. The judgment explicitly recognises that national procedural rules, such as time limits, will still apply, although the judgement itself was not limited in retrospective effect.

I shall make a further announcement when the arrangements for inviting claims for refunds are finalised. I am sure that hon. Members will understand why I am not in a position to bring the arrangements to the House today at such short notice. We will at that time take steps to ensure that information is widely available about how to complete the detailed claim form—including what supporting information will be required.

Letters are being sent today to all hon. Members giving information about the case, the Government's response to it, the arrangements for informing the public and the national health service about revised exemption arrangements, and the procedure for registering an interest in claiming a refund. The letter includes details of the freepost address to which eligible claimants may wish to write and which will be in newspapers tomorrow.

In addition to the announcements in the national press, officials have written today to all health authorities, community pharmacists and other interests advising them of the change. A simple black and white notice is included for local display. The information explains that, until a revised print of the prescription form is available, patients should make manuscript alterations to the declaration of exemption on the reverse of existing forms.

As I have already said, I shall make a further announcement when the detailed arrangements for claiming refunds are finalised.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Minister's message today to Cyril Richardson is surely: "Who dares, wins."

I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he confirm that the Government were first aware that their prescription exemptions were not consistent with European law regarding equal treatment for men and women as long ago as 1985, and that the Government

relied on a derogation dealing with pensions and social security benefits? Will the Minister confirm that, although the judgment is retrospective to 1979, today's announcement effectively confines retrospective reimbursement to prescriptions supplied in the last three months?

The Minister told us that the judgment explicitly recognises that national rules, such as time limits, will still apply. What existing national procedural rules is he relying on in order to restrict retrospection to a three-month period? Given that he is accepting the principle of retrospection, albeit in a very circumscribed form, will he inform the House what implications that acceptance will have for other cases that are currently before the court?

What is the cost of equalising the exemption at the age of 60 in a full financial year? Will the Minister estimate the cost of the retrospective element in his announcement today, and will he tell the House whether the money that is to pay for it is new money, or will it be diverted from resources at present allocated to other areas of patient care in the national health service?

Finally, will the Minister confirm that, when the directive was introduced, prescription charges were 20p, and that, if they had been indexed in line with inflation, today they would stand at 53p? Surely that tenfold increase in real terms exacerbates the unfairness of the situation with which the Minister has dealt today.

Mr. Malone: I will not be tempted to respond to the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman that are slightly wider than my statement today. I can confirm that the Government understood that this course of action was a possibility under regulations and a directive that were agreed to by a Labour Government in 1978 and under a policy of paying at differential ages of 60 and 65, which was also introduced by a Labour Government.

As to retrospection, the answer is very simple: yes, it is for a three-month period only. I am not in a position today to inform the House about other cases. I am sure that hon. Members will understand that, on a busy day, I wish to deal with only this matter.

The cost will be £40 million in a full year, and we estimate that the retrospective element will be about £10 million for the three-month period. I am delighted to confirm for the hon. Gentleman that those costs will not affect money that has already been allocated to direct patient care.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the European Union is a half-formed federal structure which has no means of enforcing its judgments against Britain? Does he agree that the time is rapidly approaching when the only honourable and sensible thing to say in response to the gross interference in our domestic affairs is that we will not obey the orders of the European Court?

Mr. Malone: No, I cannot say that. My hon. Friend knows full well that it is Government policy to comply with decisions of all courts when they cannot be appealed further—if the Government were to wish to appeal. That has always been the position, and it is well understood by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Will the Minister undertake not to recoup the charges by extra charges on the rest of the prescriptions?

Mr. Malone: I have already told the House that the funds allocated to patient care will not be affected. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the allocation of health service funds through the year involves decisions being taken at the proper time.

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): Is not the ruling another argument for a wholesale review of prescription charges? Is it not absurd that, four weeks ago, Mr. Allan Sharpe, a pharmacist, should be fined for dispensing a prescription privately when it was cheaper for him to do so? Has the time not come to restrict exemption categories to those who genuinely cannot afford to pay, and to use the money saved to bring down the overall level of the prescription charge?

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend will be well aware that we reviewed prescription charges in 1993. There is no intention of carrying out a further fundamental review.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I welcome the Government's announcement. Having regard to the other options available to them in terms of age of equalisation, it was wholly right that they should act quickly to end any uncertainty. However, I was puzzled as to why the Minister selected three months for the retrospective element. As I understand the judgment, there was no time limit. He suggested that he was founding on some regulations to establish that time limit. I would be interested to hear exactly why he chose to implement those particular regulations.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support for the way in which the Government have dealt with the matter. Our main purpose was to deal with it quickly, to end uncertainty and to put in hand arrangements so that people affected can take action as quickly as possible. The rules for applying for a refund of prescription charges have a time limit of a three-month period.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I compliment my hon. Friend on the brisk efficiency with which he has made his statement, but it is a humiliating and demeaning experience to see one of Her Majesty's Ministers changing a settled policy simply because the Government have been told to do so by the European Court. If it was not possible on this occasion to pause and reflect a moment about whether that is a suitable position for the Government, at the very least will steps now be taken within the Government to consider how much longer we can be kicked around by the European Court?

Mr. Malone: I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that I am here today to deal with the effects of this judgment. I am sure that others will have heard what he said on the wider matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Leaving aside the xenophobia that we have just heard from the Tory Benches, is the Minister aware that many people—

[Mr. David Winnick]

although not himself, apparently—will warmly congratulate Mr. Cyril Richardson, who lives in my borough? Is this not a demonstration of a single British citizen fighting for justice, be it in the British courts or the European courts? It is a fine British tradition. Many people will warmly congratulate Mr. Richardson and many will benefit from what he has achieved.

Mr. Malone: It is certainly a case of a private individual taking determined action against a policy which had been settled in terms of equality of payment by the Government and the Opposition for quite some time. I do not for one second accept that what has happened is good. We have to comply with the finding of the court, but I believe that the settled policy was right, and the Government were right to oppose the action by Mr. Richardson until today's conclusion.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend agree that, even before the judgment, the rebate system in Britain was the most generous in Europe, with 80 per cent. prescription charges being remitted compared with only 60 per cent. when Labour was in office?

Mr. Malone: I agree with that. Of course, the funds from prescription charges—some £310 million—are devoted towards patient care. That is also to be welcomed.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the Minister assure the House that those who have prepayment certificates for prescriptions will be dealt with adequately in any refund arrangements that are made?

Mr. Malone: That will be the case. If they fall partially across the three-month period, there will be a proportional rebate.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I would welcome my hon. Friend's assurance that the decision will not affect patient care. Can he confirm that prescription charges represent only two thirds of the average value of medicine dispensed?

Mr. Malone: I confirm that that is so—so they are extremely good value.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Although I welcome the statement in general, I shall press the Minister further on the way in which the change will be funded. Already, 74 out of the top 100 prescribed items cost less than £5.25. There is already dual taxation on the privilege of being ill if one is working. Will the Minister ensure that that gap will not widen as a result of his statement?

Mr. Malone: I have told the House of the general principles on which the change will be funded, which will be from general budgets. It will not directly affect patient care.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): Will my hon. Friend confirm that European Council directive 79/7/EEC, which is being applied in this case, was passed unanimously during the time of the last Labour Government, and therefore with their support? Despite that, neither the Labour party nor the Government ever thought that that directive would have such an effect, until today's astonishing decision.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There was a consensus until the challenge. I find the European Court's judgment somewhat surprising, but that does not mean that we can do anything other than comply.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the Minister clarify his answer to the hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale), when he said that prescription charges were last reviewed in 1993? The previous Secretary of State, in her response to the Health Select Committee's report on the NHS drug budget, promised to review a series of anomalies. I will put one of them to the Minister.

Chronic diabetics are exempt from prescription charges but a new drug, Navopen, has been introduced in such a way that the Government are insisting that chronic diabetics must buy their own needles, which should surely be included in prescriptions. It is inconsistent to provide the drug free of charge, but not the means of administering it. Today, I wrote to the Secretary of State on behalf of a constituent who is a student, who finds it extremely difficult to buy needles to enable her to administer that drug.

Mr. Malone: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on reinforcing the point of his letter to my right hon. Friend by raising it in the context of my statement. I was referring to the wholesale review of prescription charges in 1993. No such review is in prospect.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why did the Government choose to implement this humiliating decision today, rather than put a proposition to the House to decide whether to implement it in this age or in some other age? What is the European requirement to implement the judgment immediately? Was it the Government's choice to do so, without seeking the advice of the House and approval for the expenditure?

As the European Court is becoming a superior, non-elected Government, should not the British Government think terribly carefully before agreeing to further concessions of our freedom and liberty—as they have before, despite clear warnings by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Malone: I have no doubt that colleagues responsible for wider matters will have heard my hon. Friend's remarks, not for the first time. The Government came to the House quickly, simply because of fairness, not compulsion. If the public must claim within a three-month period, it is important to make the arrangements as clear as possible, so that proper claims can be registered.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not the truth that the Government—faced with the judgment, and having calculated that it will cost £40 million in a full year and £10 million for retrospection—have already begun to devise ideas for clawing that money back in further prescription charges, with the result that the people will not benefit at all? That money will not come from the Exchequer. If prescription charges rise above the official

cost of living index next time, millions of people will know that they have been conned again by this lousy, rotten Tory Government.

Mr. Malone: That will not happen.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Can my hon. Friend make it clear that the regulations concerning three months' retrospection for claims have been in place a long time? They were implemented not because anybody anticipated the decision in the Richardson case, and the European Court was well aware of the existence of those regulations when it gave its decision.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is right. The fact of the existence of the regulations was before the court and was known to it when it came to its conclusions.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister has confirmed that decisions taken by the supreme European Court cannot be challenged. How confident is he that retrospection of three months cannot be challenged in courts in England or Scotland? Is it not the case that about two years ago the European Court of Justice, in relation to the equality directive, made a decision in a Dutch case involving the Dutch Government that retrospective payments in social security cases could be made up to 1 April 1992? How confident is the Minister that his decision on three months is unchallengeable?

Mr. Malone: I am very confident.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I have, as I am sure the House has, a great deal of sympathy for my hon. Friend in the predicament in which he finds himself. Will he tell the House when Britain decided that decisions as to who should and should not pay for their prescriptions should be made by a bunch of foreign judges, who do not have to find the money, rather than a democratically accountable Government, who do? Were the British people aware that such a decision was taken? If they were not, is it not a constitutional necessity that our powers should be regained?

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend knows that I do not intend to wander down the tempting path that he and other of my hon. Friends have offered me. I am restricting myself to the statement. I have no doubt that he will make his views known in his persistent and regular way to others within the Government.

Orders of the Day

Home Secretary (Prison Service)

4.21 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Prime Minister's Question Time the Prime Minister said that in the debate that is about to take place the Home Secretary would be producing comprehensive evidence to dispel the allegations that have been made against him in relation to the Prison Service. If the Home Secretary is to refer extensively to documents, are you aware of any preparations having been made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman to enable all Members to obtain copies at the Vote Office at the earliest opportunity? If not, hon. Members will be at a severe disadvantage if we do not have access to the full documentation.

Madam Speaker: The House must wait to see how the debate proceeds. I am sure that the Home Secretary will be as helpful as possible to the entire House.

I have selected the amendment that stands in the name of the Prime Minister. I understand that there is some uncertainty about the application of the sub judice rule in today's debate following the taking out of a writ against the Home Secretary. That is a civil case which has not yet been set down for trial. If hon. Members refer to page 378 of "Erskine May", they will find that in these circumstances the sub judice rule does not come into force. That said, I do not believe that it would be right for the debate to concentrate on whether the recent dismissal of the chief executive of the Prison Service was fair or unfair. I am glad to note that the issue is not mentioned in either the Opposition's motion or the Government's amendment.

As so many Members wish to contribute to the debate, I have had to introduce a 10-minute limit. Members will be lucky to be called today, given the short time that is available for the debate.

4.22 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the unwillingness of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to accept responsibility for serious operational failures of the Prison Service.

The Home Secretary has vested in him by section 1 of the Prisons Act 1952 all powers and jurisdictions in relation to prisons and prisoners in England and Wales. He is responsible to the House for the exercise of those powers and jurisdictions. The Act makes no distinction between his responsibility for the policy of the Prison Service and the operation of that policy. We say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is following a constitutional fiction in seeking wholly to separate the two. He says that he is responsible only for his policy towards prisons but not for operational matters, for which he is accountable but not responsible. Responsibility for the operation of the Prison Service, says the Secretary of State, is in the hands of the Director General of the Prison Service. In return for that operational responsibility, the director general has vested in him, by the agency framework document and other documents, power over operational matters, in which the Secretary of State says emphatically that he does not interfere.

[Mr. Jack Straw]

We say, however, that in practice the Secretary of State has on numerous occasions taken decisions and otherwise interfered with the operation of the Prison Service, but because of the fiction that he is not involved in it or that he is not responsible for operational matters, he has at all times had to avoid any admission that he has been so involved. That has produced two results. First, in the damning words of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Judge Stephen Tumim,

"it means that the Home Secretary is not responsible for anything at all."

That means that the Home Secretary takes the credit but is free of any responsibility. In other words, he has exercised power without responsibility.

Secondly, we say that the Secretary of State has had to be so evasive as to his real involvement in operational matters that in respect of the fate of Mr. John Marriott, the former governor of Parkhurst prison, he gave explanations to the House and to the Home Affairs Select Committee which are uncorroborated and wholly at variance with other evidence that is now available.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): On the subject of veracity, I assume that the hon. Gentleman accepts that Mr. Derek Lewis is a man of impeccable veracity. Will he therefore support the evidence that Mr. Derek Lewis gave to the Home Affairs Select Committee, "The Frost Programme", the *Daily Mail* and the "Today" programme in mid-January 1995, when he said that it was he who made the decision on operational grounds to move Mr. Marriott, the governor?

Mr. Straw: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will bear with me, I shall deal with precisely those points.

Let me deal with each of the matters in turn. First, there is the distinction that the Secretary of State draws between policy and operations. In questions on the statement on the Prison Service on Tuesday 10 January 1995, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) put this to the Secretary of State when he said:

"but there is no proper control of security at the prisons. Is not that something for which he—"

the Home Secretary—

must take responsibility?"

The Secretary of State replied:

"With regard to operational policy, there has always been a division between policy matters and operational matters . . . I really do not see . . . how, whatever structure or framework is in place, one can avoid a sensible distinction between policy and operational matters."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1995; Vol. 252, c. 39-40.]

The problem for the Secretary of State is that he is the only one who believes that in practice such a sensible distinction can be made to the point of rigidity to which he takes it, for if ministerial responsibility means anything, it must mean that his policy is judged against the operation of that policy. How else can we judge a policy? Policy is not some intellectual abstract. It can be judged only by whether it has good or bad effect.

Judge Stephen Tumim said earlier this year that the Prison Service faced a crisis of confidence. That crisis has grown worse since he spoke those words. Is it any wonder that the service is in crisis when it has no effective leadership? The Secretary of State provides none. Indeed, he does not even pretend to provide any, because he says that he is not responsible for the operation of the service. The Director General of the Prison Service, who was personally appointed by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), and was complimented to the hilt by the Secretary of State in the House on 10 January, has now been dismissed without notice. There is only an acting successor, Mr. Richard Tilt, who on the day of his appointment was in open disagreement with the Secretary of State, telling a meeting of prison governors that in his view the removal of Mr. Lewis was "unnecessary".

Virtually everyone associated with the Prison Service—the governors, the staff, all six trade unions, Judge Tumim—have palpably lost confidence in the Secretary of State. As we heard on the radio this morning, that now includes the chairman of the Association of Members of Boards of Visitors, Mr. Julian Alliss, who called on the Secretary of State to resign.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will the hon. Gentleman make clear his view? Does he think that the Director General of the Prison Service should have been dismissed? Let us have an answer to that.

Mr. Straw: As the—*[Interruption.]* I am about to answer the question. As Madam Speaker made clear, perhaps before the hon. Gentleman came into the House, the issue before the House is not whether Mr. Derek Lewis should have been dismissed—*[Interruption.]* That is the subject of Mr. Lewis's legal action against—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman has the right to answer questions as he believes is appropriate.

Mr. Straw: The issue before the House is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for running the Prison Service.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has not Madam Speaker just ruled that the issue is not sub judice and therefore could be discussed if the House so wished?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to read out the ruling, other than to say that the matter is not sub judice. However, Madam Speaker drew the attention of the House to the fact that neither the motion nor the amendment referred to the issue and she therefore hoped that the debate would not be on that issue.

Mr. Straw: It is certainly the case that a great many of those with far greater knowledge of Mr. Derek Lewis's competence do not believe that he should have been summarily dismissed by the Secretary of State. That is why two non-executive directors, both with great experience outside the service, have now tendered their resignation in protest against the treatment of Derek Lewis. Mr. Geoff Keeys resigned yesterday and Mrs. Urmila Bannerjee, a senior director of British Telecom, resigned today.

For all that, the Secretary of State continues blithely to refuse to acknowledge any responsibility. When the Woodcock report into the Whitemoor escapes was published, he denied responsibility by claiming that the report contained "no recommendations to me".

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Surely the real question is not the one put to my hon. Friend by

the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), but the one answered by the Home Secretary on 10 January 1995. When I put it to him that Mr. Derek Lewis should be dismissed, the Home Secretary said:

"The Prison Service is clearly going through a difficult time. The director general is the best person to take it through that difficult time."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1995; Vol. 252, c. 40.]

What has changed since then other than the Home Secretary's need for a scapegoat?

Mr. Straw: For all the crisis which has now engulfed the Prison Service—I understand Conservative Members' unwillingness to consider the fact of the crisis over which the Secretary of State has presided, but that is the reality and it is known outside the House to everybody associated with the Prison Service—the Secretary of State continues blithely to refuse to acknowledge any responsibility for this crisis. He did so when the Woodcock report—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a relatively short debate and hon. Members should listen to the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Straw: As I have said, despite the extent of the crisis now engulfing the Prison Service, the Secretary of State refuses to acknowledge any responsibility for it.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I will give way later.

The Secretary of State evaded responsibility when the Woodcock report on the Whitemoor escapes was published, claiming that it contained "no recommendations to me" although it stated in terms:

"There exists at all levels within the Service some confusion as to the respective roles of Ministers, the Agency Headquarters and . . . Prison Governors. In particular, the Enquiry has identified the difficulty of determining what is an operational matter and what is policy, leading to confusion as to where responsibility lies."

The Secretary of State did the same on Monday, when he sought to avoid any responsibility for the matters which were the subject of the report by claiming that Learmont

"has not found that any policy decision of mine, directly or indirectly, caused the escape."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 31.]

No such words were used anywhere in Sir John's report. Moreover, the Learmont report is replete with criticism of political involvement by Ministers in the operation of the service. Paragraph 3.83 states:

"The Director General . . . needs minimum political involvement in the day-to-day operation of the Service",

and then charts how the reverse has been the case.

The report continues:

"Any organisation which boasts one Statement of Purpose, one Vision, five Values, six Goals, seven Strategic Priorities and eight KPIs"—

key performance indicators—

"without any clear correlation between them, is producing a recipe for total confusion and exasperation amongst those undertaking a most difficult and dangerous task on behalf of the general public."

Who is responsible for the "total confusion" identified by Learmont? Is it the Prison Service board, the director general or someone else? That "recipe for total confusion" is contained within the framework document itself. It is here that we find the

"one Statement of Purpose, one Vision, five Values, six Goals, seven Strategic Priorities and eight KPIs, without any clear correlation between them".

That document, drawn up by the former Secretary of State for the Home Department—now the Chancellor of the Exchequer—is explicitly endorsed by the current Secretary of State.

I wrote to the Secretary of State on Monday, asking him where the distinction between policy and operations was explained. His private secretary wrote back saying that the document

"explains the distinction between operations and policy."

The document, of course, does no such thing. What it does do—in Sir John Learmont's damning phrase—is to prescribe a recipe for the total confusion for which the Secretary of State is responsible.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred in an intervention to the question that he asked on 10 January. In that question, he described Mr. Lewis as "arrogant and incompetent". As so much of the charge that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is making relates to Mr. Lewis, will he now tell us whether he agrees with his right hon. Friend that the man was and is arrogant and incompetent?

Mr. Straw: The arrogance and incompetence are the Secretary of State's.

The Secretary of State will, I believe, seek to rely on the framework document for the Prison Service agency, or on that part of that document which states that

"the Secretary of State will expect to be consulted by the Director General on the handling of operational matters which could give rise to grave public or parliamentary concern."

However, the preceding sentence states:

"The Home Secretary will not normally become involved in the day-to-day management of the Prison Service."

We now know that the reverse has been the case. Mr. Lewis makes that claim in his statement of claim, and the Learmont report corroborates it. Mr. Lewis claims that, on average, he had to attend meetings lasting an hour every day with the Secretary of State and others. He claims that on occasion after occasion the Secretary of State questioned decisions that were plainly within the director general's remit of day-to-day management, including

"pressure brought to bear upon him in relation to internal disciplinary decisions taken by prison governors"—

relating to the disciplining of individual members of staff and prisoners—

"with a view to increasing the severity of the action to be taken".

There is overwhelming evidence in the Woodcock report, in the Learmont reports, in the now public documents produced by Mr. Lewis, and in the constant complaints made by prison governors, of day-to-day interference in the running of the service, which goes well beyond the right laid down in the framework document for the Secretary of State to be consulted in certain circumstances.

There is, however, no more compelling evidence than the Secretary of State's involvement in the decisions about the future of Mr. John Marriott, the former governor of Parkhurst, which were announced to the House on 10 January. The framework document and the code of discipline in the Prison Service make it clear that

[Mr. Straw]

decisions on the transfer and disciplining of staff are matters for the director general of the Prison Service and his managers, and not for the Secretary of State.

The code also crucially distinguishes between a transfer of a member of staff and his or her suspension from duty. It restricts suspension, saying that

"while suspension is not in itself a punishment or disciplinary penalty it may be seen as such, and that detached duty must be considered, where appropriate, as an alternative to suspension."

Mr. Garnier *rose—*

Mr. Straw: I have already given way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

It is also claimed that as the discretion—

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose—*

Mr. Straw: I will give way quickly to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow: Some time ago, the hon. Gentleman said that, if the policy is right, it will be all right. Is it not possible that the policy can be right, but that, because what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said was an "arrogant and incompetent" subordinate, is in place, the policy can fail? If that happens because of an arrogant and incompetent subordinate should not that arrogant and incompetent subordinate be fired? Would not the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) fire him in the same circumstances or is he concerned with seeking to smear the Government and not the slightest bit interested in the reform of the Prison Service?

Mr. Straw: What is perfectly apparent is that the people who are not the slightest bit interested in the facts of this situation are Conservative Members. The Secretary of State has continually sought to evade his responsibility for the proper running of the Prison Service. That should be the Secretary of State's overriding policy and it is that which he has evaded continually to this House and outside.

The code of staff discipline also makes it plain that, as discretion about staff transfer or suspension is vested in the director general and not in the Secretary of State, so too is the timing of such decisions. That is far from a trivial matter. If the confidence of staff in the management is to be sustained, staff generally must believe that their colleagues facing transfer or suspension are treated fairly and, where appropriate, without gratuitous humiliation. There is a world of difference between giving time—just a few days—to go with some dignity, and being peremptorily removed from one's office at a minute's notice.

It is common ground that the director general, after consultation with his senior managers, came to the conclusion late on Monday 9 January that Mr. Marriott should be moved from his post as governor of Parkhurst, should then stay on the Isle of Wight for a period to help with immediate investigations, and should then take up a desk job at Prison Service headquarters. The director general considered the question of whether Mr. Marriott should be suspended from duty, but, having regard to the code, decided that that would be wholly unjustified.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Following what the hon. Gentleman has just said, was he right when he wrote in *The Guardian* yesterday that Mr. Lewis was against the removal of Marriott?

Mr. Straw: Yes, Mr. Lewis was against the suspension of Mr. Marriott, as I will show. It has always been on the record—there has never been any doubt about it—that Mr. Lewis was in favour of and indeed decided on Mr. Marriott's transfer. I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman did not recognise that distinction.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): May I remind the hon. Gentleman of the precise words that he used in *The Guardian* yesterday? In precisely the words used by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), but not the words the hon. Gentleman has just used, he said in *The Guardian* yesterday:

"John Marriott was moved against the advice of Derek Lewis".

Does the hon. Gentleman now accept that that was a completely incorrect allegation?

Mr. Straw: If that was what *The Guardian* said, it was wrong because I—*[Interruption.]* The last thing I am responsible for is misprints in *The Guardian*.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Straw: That is the last intervention I am taking. There has never been the least doubt that Mr. Derek Lewis was responsible for the decision to move John Marriott. What is at issue is whether Mr. Lewis was responsible for seeking to suspend Mr. Marriott, which attempt was made by the Secretary of State and not Mr. Lewis.

It is also common ground that, at 4.10 pm on the next afternoon, 10 January, the Secretary of State told the House:

"The present governor"—

of Parkhurst—

"is today being removed from his duties at Parkhurst."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1995; Vol. 252, c. 33.]

[Interruption.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House should at least listen to every speech.

Mr. Straw: Where the House and the country are faced with two conflicting and different stories relates to what happened between the decision made by Mr. Lewis to move Mr. Marriott with his duties, and the statement that the Secretary of State made in the House on 10 January that Mr. Marriott was that day being removed from his duties as governor.

The Secretary of State told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that the decision to move Mr. Marriott was an operational decision made by the director general and not by him. The Secretary of State also said of that decision:

"it was there in black and white"—

in the disciplinary code—

"the director general is very familiar with it, there was no need therefore for me to talk to him."

More emphatically, the Secretary of State, in words that he will come to regret, answered an overall charge that I had put to him with the words:

"I reject absolutely the hon. Gentleman's allegations of interference".

The director general, however, charges that there was extreme interference by the Secretary of State in his decision to move but not to suspend Mr. Marriott, and about the time when that decision should take effect. In his statement of claim, he complains of

"the extreme and unjustified pressure exerted"—

by the Secretary of State—

"upon the Plaintiff . . . to suspend the former Governor of Parkhurst Prison, rather than (as the Plaintiff had decided to do on operational grounds) to move him to another non-operational post".

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Straw: I am not giving way. I will give way to the Secretary of State but not to hon. Members. I have given way six times already.

The statement of claim says that the

"pressure included a requirement for the Plaintiff to reconsider his decision by a specified deadline and the suggestion that he (the Defendant) would consider overruling the Plaintiff if he did not comply".

The former director general goes on to say:

"following the expiry of the deadline referred to . . . above"—

the defendant insisted—

"contrary to objections put forward by the Plaintiff on operational grounds, that the statement to be made by the defendant to the House of Commons later that day concerning the position of the said governor of Parkhurst Prison would include the word 'today' in reference to the steps to be taken (as indeed it subsequently did)".

I have spoken with Mr. Lewis at some length and he has confirmed to me the accuracy of the allegations in his statement of claim. He has also said that he is ready—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am quite capable of saying the appropriate word or words. I do not need help. The hon. Gentleman who is speaking from the Front Bench deserves to be heard by the whole House, and I mean the whole House. I hope that the House will now settle down and just listen to the hon. Gentleman. If he is giving way, he will give way. If not, I should be grateful if those seeking to intervene resumed their seats instead of continually standing up.

Mr. Straw: As I said before, I quite understand the reluctance of Conservative Members to listen to the facts of this case and the seriousness of the allegations made against the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lewis has said that he is ready to justify and corroborate what he said in his statement of claim to the Home Affairs Select Committee and is writing to the Chairman to confirm that. Mr. Lewis is adamant that he was put under intense pressure by the Secretary of State at a meeting on the morning of 10 January to suspend rather than to move Mr. Marriott. He said that it was an extremely heated meeting during which he was subjected to greater pressure to change a decision which was properly his than on any other occasion that he can recall.

Mr. Lewis then told me that he was directed by the Secretary of State to reconsider his decision and withdrew from the meeting to do so, although others remained. During that withdrawal, he decided to stand by his decision and informed the Secretary of State of that when the meeting resumed. As he went into the resumed meeting, he was shown the text of the Secretary of State's statement, which included the words used that the

"present governor is today being removed"—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1995; Vol. 252, c. 3.]

as governor of Parkhurst. Mr. Lewis says that he objected to the use of the word "today" as he had already decided that the precise timing of the move, within a framework of a few days, was a matter for his operational director, Philippa Drew, to determine at a meeting with Mr. Marriott at Parkhurst to which Miss Drew had travelled that morning.

Mr. Lewis says that the Secretary of State, in response to his objections, simply indicated that he would make his statement as drafted, including the word "today". The allegation is therefore—*[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State wishes to deny it, he can deny it now if he wishes. He has every chance to deny it. If he wants to deny it, he can deny it now.

Mr. Howard: May I remind the hon. Gentleman of what Mr. Lewis said to the Select Committee on 18 January? He said that

"it was essential for operational reasons that the change in governor took place immediately so that there was no distraction or confusion and there was clarity as to who was in charge."

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has not answered the question. Did the Secretary of State insert into his statement the word "today" against the advice of the director general—yes or no? Let me ask the Secretary of State the question again. Did he insert into his statement to the House, for which he was responsible, the word "today"—Mr. Marriott was to be removed "today"—against the advice of Mr. Lewis?

Mr. Howard: The director general answered that question himself in what he told the Select Committee on 18 January. Every decision that was made on that afternoon was a decision of the director general. It was the director general who decided exactly what happened, as he has told the Home Affairs Select Committee on more than one occasion.

Mr. Straw: The House has now heard the Secretary of State refuse to answer the question twice. It is of crucial importance. Here we have a major dispute as to the evidence between what Mr. Lewis says and the Secretary of State says. Mr. Lewis was not asked this question in the Home Affairs Select Committee; he was asked a different question. Let me ask the Secretary of State this question again. The public are watching. Did the Secretary of State himself insert the word "today" into his statement against the advice of the director general? I ask the Secretary of State to answer that question, yes or no.

As the Secretary of State will not answer, we shall instead let his civil servants give their evidence. I have here the minutes of the meeting which took place on the morning of 10 January. In a moment I shall ensure that the House knows that.

The allegation against the Secretary of State is that he interfered in two decisions of the director general and that, in respect of one of them—as to the timing of the move—he overrode a decision of an operational nature by the fait accompli of his statement to the House. The Secretary of State has sought to say that that version of events is untrue. A statement issued by the Home Office on Tuesday evening said that he

"did not tell Mr. Lewis that the Governor of Parkhurst should be suspended immediately. The Home Secretary did not threaten to instruct Mr. Lewis to suspend the governor of Parkhurst".

[Mr. Straw]

As we have just heard, the Secretary of State has refused on three occasions to deny a complete difference in testimony. Either Mr. Lewis is telling the truth or the Home Secretary is. Only one of them can be correct.

In briefing issued by the Home Office and Conservative central office, the Secretary of State has sought to rely on the evidence of the director general to the Home Affairs Select Committee, as we have just heard, that

"I and other members of the senior management team concluded . . . for operational reasons that it was vital we made a change in the . . . governor".

That, however, has never been in dispute.

In giving evidence to the Select Committee, Mr. Lewis was bound by the instructions of the Cabinet Office that

"Agency Chief Executives give evidence on behalf of the Minister to whom they are accountable and are subject to that Minister's instruction".

Mr. Howard: Rubbish.

Mr. Straw: It is not rubbish—it happens to be from paragraph 42 of Cabinet Office instructions to every agency chief executive. Is the Secretary of State suggesting that Mr. Lewis should have refused to accept the instructions of the Minister as to that particular?

Mr. Howard: I am suggesting that it is rubbish—and disgraceful rubbish—to suggest that anything in that guidance or any other guidance requires a civil servant to lie to Parliament, which is what the hon. Gentleman is now suggesting that the former director general did.

Mr. Straw: I am not suggesting that for a moment. The Secretary of State cannot rely on the use of the director general's adverb "immediately" to suggest that he personally was requiring that the governor of Parkhurst went "today". The Secretary of State has refused three times to answer the question.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If Mr. Lewis was under some constraint, according to that direction, at the Home Affairs Select Committee on 18 January, why did he say exactly the same thing when he was under no such constraint three days earlier on "The Frost Programme"?

Mr. Straw: He is still bound. In any event, those answers to that question in no sense elucidate whether the Secretary of State insisted, against the advice of his own director general, that the word "today" should be inserted into the statement. Three times the Secretary of State has refused to answer.

What is in dispute is what happened on 10 January between Mr. Lewis and the Secretary of State. We do not have to rely on the word of the Secretary of State alone. On the question of the decision to remove Mr. Marriott "today", there is ample corroboration.

We know that this part of the Secretary of State's statement was transmitted to Miss Drew in Parkhurst, first by phone and then by fax. She then realised that the discretion that she had been given, which is in no sense inconsistent with the word "immediately", to determine within a matter of a few days when Mr. Marriott should leave his desk, had been overridden by the Secretary of State. Having received a telephone call and fax, she had no alternative but to act immediately on that fait accompli and remove Mr. Marriott from his office that day.

That is confirmed by those present in Parkhurst, including the chairman of the board of visitors, Mr. Richard Gully, and is consistent with the letter that Mr. Lewis wrote to the Select Committee stating that Miss Drew

"informed me of (rather than suggested) the specific action that had been taken".

In other words, in that letter Mr. Lewis is making it clear that the decision about the timing of the removal of Mr. Marriott was one made not by him but by someone else, namely the Secretary of State. If there is any doubt about that, why does the Secretary of State not accept the proposal put by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister and allow Miss Drew and Mr. Marriott to give their own evidence on the matter?

Then there is the question of whether the Secretary of State sought the suspension of Mr. Marriott, not just his transfer, at a meeting on the morning of 10 January. It is well known, not least to the press, that the Secretary of State wanted Mr. Marriott's head and wanted to present it to the House that afternoon. He wanted to say that Mr. Marriott had been sacked, as a suspension would show. What is more, those briefing the press on the Secretary of State's behalf gave exactly that steer to the press before and after the Secretary of State's statement, which is why in virtually every newspaper the verbs "sacked" or "fired" were used. The *Daily Mail*, for example, said:

"Parkhurst Governor Fired Over Break Out".

Time and again the Secretary of State has denied the charge which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made on Tuesday that he asked the director general to suspend Mr. Marriott. He effectively denied it in his evidence to the Select Committee when he said that

"there was no need to talk to"

the director general about such matters. He evaded the question when he was asked on "Newsnight" and he explicitly denied it, as we have heard, in his statement—

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Straw: I will go to the minutes first and then I shall give way. The Home Secretary explicitly denied in his statement issued on Tuesday evening that he told Mr. Lewis that the governor should be suspended immediately.

I have here, as I have told the House, the minutes of the meeting—

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Straw: In a moment.

Mr. Howard: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No. I have the minutes of the meeting which took place on the morning of 10 January, drawn up by the Home Secretary's private secretary, Miss McNaughton. The note is couched in the usual—

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Straw: I will give way in a moment. [*Interruption.*].

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Unless the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor clearly gives way, every hon. Member must resume his seat. Mr. Straw, are you giving way?

Mr. Straw: In a moment, when I have read these minutes out. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] It is too late.

I gave the Secretary of State three occasions on which to answer the question earlier, but he was not interested in answering it. What the minutes first show—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way, you coward."]—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know who said the word "coward"—*[Interruption.]* Order. It is not a parliamentary word and I should be grateful if those who feel inclined to use it would go outside the Chamber.

Mr. Straw: This minute is in the form of a note addressed to Mr. Lewis. It said:

"You explained that it was proposed to move the Governor to other duties, pending the outcome of the disciplinary investigation. The Home Secretary asked why this action was being taken, and you explained there were several grounds"—

which were then set out.

"The Home Secretary said that these were serious charges at any time, but following the extra emphasis which Governors had been instructed to give to security post-Whitemoor they could scarcely be over-stated. The Home Secretary said that he entirely agreed with your analysis that Mr. Marriott could not stay as Governor of Parkhurst".

The note goes on to show, in my judgment, that the Secretary of State—[*Interruption.*]. It shows that he was the first to raise this matter. It went on:

"but he wondered whether it was right for Mr. Marriott to be moved to other duties as distinct from being suspended from duty. You explained that the Code required consideration to be given to whether there were other duties available for somebody whose position in their current post was untenable . . . Moreover, you wished Mr. Marriott to be available to advise the incoming governor (when he was appointed) and to give assistance to the Learmont Inquiry, pending his being allocated to non-operational duties. The Home Secretary pointed out that this would almost inevitably be seen as a fudge, designed to enable Mr. Marriott not to be suspended. The tasks you had mentioned could scarcely be described as another post."

What those minutes show—[*Interruption.*] For all the bluster of Conservative Members, what the minutes show is that the Secretary of State himself raised the issue of suspension.

Mr. Howard: I was entitled to.

Mr. Straw: The Home Secretary says that he was entitled to. He complained about the decision. The minutes are also entirely consistent with Mr. Lewis's allegation, and that of my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party, that the Secretary of State told Mr. Lewis that he wanted Mr. Marriott to be suspended.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I shall deal with the point that he is making—which is entirely without substance—in the course of my speech, but I want to put a question to him on an allegation that he made just a few moments ago. It is necessary for me to remind the House of what he was saying because I want to make it quite clear that I am now specifically accusing the hon. Gentleman of misleading the House this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman—[*Interruption.*].

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is a very senior member of the Government. He must know that he cannot charge another hon. Member across the Dispatch Box with misleading the House. I suggest that he rephrases whatever it is that he wishes to accuse the hon. Gentleman of.

Mr. Howard: I shall certainly rephrase that remark. I accuse the hon. Gentleman of a fundamental inaccuracy in what he told the House a few minutes ago. He suggested on "Today" yesterday morning that an answer that I gave to the Select Committee indicated that the accounts which I have given of what took place on 10 January were wrong.

The answer that I gave to the Select Committee on that day was an answer that I gave to a question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). My hon. Friend is at present on his sick bed, but he took the trouble to write to the hon. Gentleman yesterday from his sick bed pointing out that the hon. Gentleman had completely misrepresented the nature of his question, and that his question was directed to something entirely different—to general policy matters and not to specific events of 10 January—and he ended his letter with the following words:

"I would be grateful if you would use your speech tomorrow to correct the untrue allegation you made this morning. Regrettably I shall not be in the House because I am at home recovering from a recent operation."

Mr. Straw: I have not received the letter—[*Interruption.*]—and I do not intend to look at a copy now. I certainly do not withdraw the matter—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman on the Back Bench wishes to do gymnastics, I suggest that he does so elsewhere.

Mr. Straw: I have the minutes here, I have looked through them very carefully and I have seen the full transcripts of the Secretary of State's evidence. He moved from the particular to the general and said that there was no need therefore for him to talk to Mr. Lewis about the matters. In one answer after another—we are not just relying on that—the Secretary of State has denied that he sought to interfere in respect of two operational decisions made by Mr. Derek Lewis.

The first operational decision with which the Home Secretary said that he did not interfere was whether Mr. Lewis should, instead of moving Mr. Marriott, suspend him. The second operational decision with which he said that he did not interfere was as to the timing of those decisions. We say that he interfered in both.

Let me return to the minutes. Do the minutes not show beyond any doubt that the Secretary of State did indeed seek to interfere with that decision, that he raised it, that he sought to have Mr. Marriott suspended—and not transferred instead—from his duty? I offer the Secretary of State the opportunity to answer that question. Do the minutes not show beyond any question of doubt that the Secretary of State did indeed raise the matter—that he told Mr. Lewis that he wanted Mr. Marriott suspended and not transferred? The Home Secretary must deal with the matter now. Did he or did he not seek to change Mr. Lewis's mind? Again, the Home Secretary refuses to answer the questions that we have put and to accept the truth of this matter, which is that he sought the suspension of Mr. Marriott—contrary to the statement that he issued, which I draw to his attention again, that he did not tell Mr. Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst should be suspended immediately.

The minutes should corroborate Mr. Lewis's evidence if there is any question of doubt that the Home Secretary did indeed tell Mr. Lewis. If that is not so, will the Secretary of State—

Sir Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Straw: No, I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]*

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be most grateful if the hon. Gentleman—whoever it was—would volunteer for the Chairmen's Panel.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is making an important speech and he deserves to be heard. I should be grateful if hon. Members would now stop their tittering and listen to the speech.

Mr. Straw: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition put it to the Prime Minister on Tuesday that the Home Secretary personally told Mr. Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst prison should be suspended immediately. We believe—there is no question because the minutes confirm it, which the Secretary of State has refused to accept until now—that he raised the issue of suspension and told the director general that. If that is not the case, he must explain why he has refused on every occasion to admit that he even raised the issue of suspension.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend said that when Mr. Lewis objected that it was an operational matter, the Home Secretary threatened to instruct him to do it. Does the Secretary of State deny that? Does he deny that he sought advice from his other officials in order to do that and that he gave Mr. Derek Lewis a deadline by which he had to come back and change his mind? The Secretary of State does not deny it.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that we issued a statement on Tuesday, which rebutted one by one the unfounded allegations made by the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday. I deny each and every one of the allegations made by the Leader of the Opposition. They were unfounded, wrong and without substance.

Mr. Straw: But the statement issued by the Secretary of State in no sense acted as a complete rebuttal, and he knows it. Does he deny that he sought advice on that?

The third issue is that the Home Secretary told the operational director of the Prison Service by fax that he would announce in the House of Commons that day—and he duly announced it in his statement to the House—that the former governor of Parkhurst prison was to be removed that day. That is true. The Secretary of State—not Mr. Derek Lewis—decided that the governor of Parkhurst prison, Mr. Marriott, should be removed that day.

The question before the House today goes way beyond the employment of one man, the former governor of Parkhurst prison. It goes to the heart of whether this country should be governed by Ministers who are ready to tell the truth, and the whole truth, in the conduct of their high office, and whether they are properly to hold themselves responsible for the decisions in which they are involved. The distinction that the Secretary of State has sought to make between policy thought and the operation of the Prison Service is, in the words of the Chief Inspector of Prisons, "bogus".

The Secretary of State has been involved in operational decisions day by day and month by month. He has evaded his responsibilities to this House. He has not been frank with this House. In our judgment, he must go.

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the Home Secretary is and should be accountable to this House for all matters concerning the Prison Service; believes that he is and should be accountable and responsible for all policy decisions relating to the Service; believes that the Director General of the Prison Service is and should be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service; and utterly rejects the very serious allegations made about the Home Secretary's conduct towards the former Governor of Parkhurst, Mr. John Marriott."

What we have seen this afternoon and the whole of this week is a cheap and tawdry attempt to make petty party political capital out of the difficulties of the Prison Service. I shall deal in due course, closely and with relish, with each of the allegations put by the Labour party.

On Monday, I made a statement to the House about the independent report by General Sir John Learmont on one of the most wide-ranging reviews of prison security that has ever been conducted. The report followed two of the most serious operational failures in the history of the Prison Service. It is a devastating report, which severely criticises Parkhurst and its management. It says that the security manual of the Prison Service was disregarded at Parkhurst and that the most basic security procedures were not observed. It also makes the most trenchant criticisms of the management of the Prison Service generally and concludes with the following words:

"There is an abundance of excellent people within the Prison Service whose most fervent wish is to do a good and worthwhile job. They are yearning to be led to better things. Although much has been done to improve the corporate planning within the Service, this inquiry has starkly illustrated the need to address urgently shortcomings in leadership, operations and security".

I said on Monday that I had to be able to assure the House, and through it the people of this country, that the grave weaknesses in the service that have been disclosed would be put right. General Sir John Learmont said that responsibilities reached prisons board level and that the criticism stopped there. [HON. MEMBERS: "That includes you."] I am not a member of the prisons board.

It was impossible for me to overlook the serious criticisms contained in that report. Of course, I took into account the lengthy submissions that the former director general put to me, which he has now made public, including his criticisms of the independent Learmont report. I had to choose between the view of the former director general and the independent views of General Learmont. I concluded that a change of leadership was required at the top of the Prison Service to address what General Learmont described as

"the shortcomings in leadership, operations and security".

So I decided that the director general's appointment should be terminated.

The material on which I made that decision is before the House—the Learmont report is a published document. The shadow Home Secretary, who has made such a fuss over all this, has complete access to that document but does not have a view on that central question. He was

unable to answer the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). That is the smack of firm opposition that we see from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and the Labour party.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I think that the Home Secretary can take it that we know that he sacked Mr. Lewis: that is on the record. He has, however, refused to answer specifically the question with which today's motions are concerned. He has refused to answer that question seven times, although he has promised to do so. He can dismiss one of the allegations simply by answering no at the Dispatch Box to the following question. At the meeting on 10 January did he insist that the governor of Parkhurst be removed that very day? Will he answer no, in which case one allegation will be dealt with? Did he insist, that very day, that the governor be removed—yes or no?

Mr. Howard: All the decisions—

Dr. Reid: Yes or no?

Mr. Howard: I did not. The answer is no because all the decisions that were made that day were made by the Director General of the Prison Service.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Home Secretary has said that he had to choose between what Mr. Lewis has said and the Learmont report. Why, therefore, does he ignore paragraph 3.83 of the report, which says:

"The Director General also needs minimum political involvement in the day-to-day operation of the Service."?

The paragraph sets out what Sir John Learmont clearly considers to be too much political involvement in the day-to-day running of the service. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot accept one part of the report but ignore that paragraph.

Mr. Howard: The report goes on to indicate that it is for the director general to balance the various parts of his responsibilities and effectively to find a way of responding to reasonable ministerial requests and of dealing with operational matters. I shall refer to that function in some detail during the course of my speech, so I urge the right hon. Gentleman to restrain himself and to have a little patience.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I must make some progress, but I will give way in due course.

As to the question of accountability and my personal responsibilities as Home Secretary, my position, and that of all previous Home Secretaries, is perfectly consistent and clear. I am personally accountable to the House for all matters concerning the Prison Service. I am accountable and responsible for all policy decisions relating to the service. The director general is responsible for day-to-day operations.

That distinction between policy and operations is—

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Howard: Yes, I will.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the Home Secretary. When I wrote to him in July, putting it to him that the policy of securing women prisoners in handcuffs or chains—for example when visiting their children or attending for medical treatment outside prison—was degrading and shaming, neither he nor any Minister replied to me. Eventually I received a reply from Mr. Richard Tilt, who was then director of security in the Prison Service. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman really consider that keeping women prisoners in chains is not a matter of policy but merely an operational matter to be determined at discretion by staff in the Prison Service? If he means what he says about his accountability to Parliament, will he now accept that he, as Home Secretary, should personally have replied to me as a Member of Parliament about this?

Mr. Howard: I am enormously grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that question. I will deal with it in some detail, which will take a little time, because it will demonstrate to the whole world the quality of judgment of the latest recruit to the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman made that accusation first when he appeared on "Breakfast with Frost". He said that he had written to me about what he described as the degrading practice of keeping women prisoners in chains. I was somewhat taken aback by his allegations, so I caused inquiries to be made. I discovered that up until April this year the escape rate of women prisoners under escort, being taken from one prison to another or from prison to court, was twice that of male prisoners. As an operational matter, the Prison Service looked into it to see what differences there were between the way in which women prisoners and male prisoners were escorted. It discovered that male prisoners were handcuffed while under escort, not put in chains, and women prisoners were not. So the Prison Service itself decided, as an operational matter, and without reference to me, that, after April, in order to reduce the escape rate women prisoners would be handcuffed while under escort. That is the step it took and that is what the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), the newest recruit to the Labour party, describes as keeping women prisoners in chains. That is the nature of his judgment. That change was made by the Prison Service in April and I am happy to tell the House that as a result the escape rate of women prisoners has substantially been reduced.

Mr. Howarth: Mr. Tilt's letter makes it clear that in certain circumstances women prisoners are secured in chains.

Mr. Howard: I have given the hon. Gentleman and the House the full explanation that I received when I caused inquiries to be made into the hon. Gentleman's question. I would be interested to know—perhaps the hon. Gentleman can tell us—whether it is the policy of the Labour party that the escape rate should be increased. Perhaps the hon. Member for Blackburn, who is so keen to establish his party's credentials on law and order, will tell us that he would countermand that operational decision of the Prison Service. He would say, "No. We can't have these women prisoners handcuffed while they are being taken from one prison to another." Would the hon. Gentleman like to respond?

Mr. Straw *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howard: The distinction to which I referred, before I was so happily interrupted by the hon. Member

[Mr. Howard]

for Stratford-on-Avon, between policy and operations is nothing new. During my statement on Sir John Woodcock's inquiry on 19 December 1994, I reminded the House of what my noble Friend, Lord Prior, had said following the escape of a number of terrorist prisoners from the Maze prison in Northern Ireland. He said:

"If I had felt that ministerial responsibility was such that in this case I should have resigned, I certainly should have done so. It would be a matter for resignation if the . . . inquiry showed that what happened was the result of some act of policy that was my responsibility, or that I failed to implement something that I had been asked to implement, or should have implemented. In that case, I should resign."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 23-4.]

The distinction between policy and operations is also reflected in the framework document that established the Prison Service as an executive agency. It says that the Director General of the Prison Service is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Prison Service. It also says that the director general is accountable directly to me for the Prison Service's performance and operations, and that, although the Home Secretary will not normally become involved in the day-to-day management of the Prison Service, he will expect to be consulted on the handling of operational matters that could give rise to grave public or parliamentary concern. I do not imagine that any hon. Member would argue that the Parkhurst escape was not in that category.

When I received Sir John's report, I studied it very carefully. If the criticisms in it had been made of me, I should not be standing at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer the two questions that arose out of the questions that I posed to him in January before the Select Committee on Home Affairs? There is a complete difference between the evidence of the Home Secretary as to what happened and what Mr. Lewis is saying. They cannot both be right. Would he release Philippa Drew, Marriott and all the other civil servants from their duty of confidentiality so that the whole story can be known? We can then know where the truth really lies.

Mr. Howard: Since neither of the people concerned was at the meeting that is the subject, apparently, of this great dispute, it is laughable to suggest that their evidence could help to resolve it.

I now turn specifically and directly to the many inconsistent and unfounded allegations that have been made this week about my conduct. Many people will think it extraordinary that, the day after the publication of such a devastating report on the security of our prisons, the Leader of the Opposition chose to concentrate, not on security, not on escapes, but on allegations about the treatment of the former governor of Parkhurst.

Let me remind the House of what General Learmont said about Parkhurst under Mr. Marriott's governorship. I shall use only a few examples. Hon. Members will find many more, if they need them, in paragraphs 2.56, 2.124, 2.062, 2.07 and 2.08. General Learmont had quite a lot to say about Mr. Marriott's regime. In paragraph 2.256 he says that Mr. Marriott decided not to undertake rub-down searches. In paragraph 2.124 he says that Parkhurst ignored an instruction that the duty governor should be in the prison when it was unlocked and when category A inmates were associating with others.

In paragraph 2.228 General Learmont says that there was

"a lack of visible leadership on the Wings and elsewhere at Parkhurst."

In paragraph 2.261, he pinpoints a

"multitude of security lapses and unacceptable practices"

and concludes that there was

"little to commend in the way things were done".

Those are the words of a man whose independent assessment is beyond doubt.

Given those stringent and damning criticisms, I find it hard to understand how anyone could question the decision to remove Mr. Marriott from his duties at Parkhurst without delay, or to suggest that he has been used as a scapegoat. That is the man on whose behalf the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to take up the cudgels.

The opinion of the former director general about that was perfectly clear.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I am not giving way at the moment.

As the former director general stated to the Home Affairs Select Committee during his appearance on 18 January:

"it was essential for operational reasons that the change in governor took place immediately so that there was no distraction or confusion and there was clarity as to who was in charge."

The former director general was asked by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who is a member of the Select Committee, whether I had forced the director general to remove Marriott that day. When asked by the hon. Gentleman:

"Did the Home Secretary tell you to make sure Mr. Marriott was off the premises by the afternoon?"

the former director general replied, "No he did not." [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] Those are not my words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the words of the former director general.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Mr. Lewis says that he was given a deadline by the right hon. and learned Gentleman by which to agree to the removal of Mr. Marriott, after which he would be overruled. Is that true?

Mr. Howard: There was no question of overruling the director general. He made the decisions that were made on that day.

I now come to the events of 10 January, which so utterly fascinate the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Blackburn. To clarify matters, I am taking the exceptional step of releasing the official note of the discussions that took place that morning. I have placed a copy in the Library.

We met that day so that the former director general could advise me of the preliminary conclusions reached by Mr. Richard Tilt, who was then director of security and who had undertaken an urgent review of the escapes from Parkhurst, and to discuss my statement to the House.

Mr. Lewis began by explaining that, in the light of the Tilt inquiry, he proposed to move the governor to other duties, pending the outcome of the disciplinary investigation. I asked why that action was being taken. Mr. Lewis explained that there were several grounds.

It appeared that the governor had condoned, and possibly approved, the absence of a duty governor during the time that the prison was unlocked; he appeared not to be aware of the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the emergency control room, for which he had to bear a substantial, if not the main, responsibility; and there was confusion about whether he had fully implemented the recommendations made following Judge Tumim's inspection of the prison, on which assurances had been given to the director general and to Ministers.

The note goes on to record that I considered those to be serious charges and that I agreed with Mr. Lewis's analysis that Mr. Marriott could not stay as governor of Parkhurst. I asked, as I was perfectly entitled to, if it was right for him to be moved to other duties as distinct from being suspended from duty. Mr. Lewis explained why he thought that that would not be appropriate, and reaffirmed his decision not to suspend Mr. Marriott but to move him to another job elsewhere in the Prison Service.

I was entitled to be consulted by Mr. Lewis about that important matter, and I was. I was entitled to discuss the action that it was proposed to take, and I did. I was not entitled to give instructions: I did not. It was the director general who decided that the governor should be moved: he was.

The note that I have described, and which I have placed in the Library today, was addressed to Mr. Lewis. He had every opportunity to question, challenge or correct it; he did not do so. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that he accepted it as a fair record of the meeting.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. The minute, however, goes on to say that which the Home Secretary did not read out:

"The Home Secretary pointed out that this"

decision to move but not to suspend Mr. Marriott

"would almost inevitably be seen as a fudge, designed to enable Mr. Marriott not to be suspended."

Is not the truth of the matter that the Home Secretary disagreed with the decision of Mr. Lewis to move but not to suspend Mr. Marriott and that he sought to tell Mr. Lewis that Mr. Marriott should indeed be suspended, and is not that entirely consistent with those minutes?

Mr. Howard: I was entitled to be consulted, as I have repeatedly said, and I was. I was entitled, in the course of that consultation, to explore alternatives, as I did. But the decision was for the director general. He made it. He has made that clear time after time.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State now explain—which is admitted by the minute because it goes on to speak about later discussions—why Mr. Lewis left the meeting, albeit while it was still going on? Is it not a fact that he left the meeting to consider the deadline that the Secretary of State had set him to reconsider his decision?

Mr. Howard: I have no idea, at this distance in time, why he left the meeting—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".]—but of course it is true that there was a deadline. I was making a statement to the House. There was nothing sinister about that. I had a duty to account to the House for what had happened. I took that duty seriously and, if I was to discharge that duty, it obviously had to be agreed what was going to be done in relation to Parkhurst.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): May I press the Home Secretary further on that point? He is obviously a very busy man. He cannot even bother to respond to a letter from me dated 29 August on a very serious issue, about why he has applied for public interest immunity certificates—but that is another matter.

On this case, will the Home Secretary think back, and ask himself, why did that adjournment take place? Why did it go on for so long? If he is so busy, in this difficult time that he is experiencing, why did he allow that adjournment to go on for so long? Is it not the case that he set a deadline?

Mr. Howard: I have just told the House that I had to make a statement to the House that afternoon, so of course there had to be a deadline by which it was agreed what would happen at Parkhurst and what I would say in my statement. Anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with government will know that, if one is to make a statement to the House, there comes a time when one has to agree what is to be contained in it. It is not an astonishingly difficult proposition, even for Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to grasp.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I give way to the hon. Member for Blackburn.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State, whose—

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have all heard a dreadful speech from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). Three times in the past two minutes, he has been asked by the Leader of the Opposition to ask questions. Is not it in order for the Leader of the Opposition to ask his own questions rather than have to put up a stooge to do it for him?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Howard: For the avoidance of doubt, may I—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that this is not an addition to the ruling that I have just given.

Mr. Howard: I would not dream of doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For the avoidance of doubt, may I make it perfectly plain that I would be delighted to give way to the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Straw: The question—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understood that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) was registered handicapped. I should be grateful if he would give his good arm a rest.

Mr. Straw: I shall ask the Secretary of State the question that he refused three times to answer during the course of my speech: did he insert the word "today" in that statement against the advice of Mr. Lewis? May we at long last have a straight answer to that?

Mr. Howard: I shall answer that question, but I want to go through the events of the day.

[Mr. Howard]

I have given the House the evidence that the former director general put to the Home Affairs Select Committee on 18 January. In an interview on 15 January, Mr. Lewis was asked by Sir David Frost whose idea it was to remove Mr. Marriott from his post of governor of Parkhurst. Mr. Lewis replied:

"That was entirely a decision that was taken for operational reasons within the Prison Service by me and by other members of the line management team".

When asked by Sir David Frost whether he had discussed the matter with me, Mr. Lewis replied:

"Of course I briefed him on it, yes. But it was an operational decision taken within the Prison Service."

Those are not my words, but the words of the former director general.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on the question of duty of confidentiality, the Home Secretary said that the two civil servants referred to were not at the meeting. As it is believed by many that those two civil servants, if released from their duty of confidentiality, would enable us to know exactly what happened, will the Home Secretary release them now? If he is not prepared to release them, will he explain why he is rejecting that as a proposition? Will he release them?

Mr. Howard: That is absolutely laughable. I have repeatedly made it clear that the two civil servants to whom the hon. Gentleman referred were not at the meeting, the minutes of which I have in my hand and are the detailed official account. Those minutes have been placed in the Library and were sent to Mr. Lewis, who had every opportunity to correct them. I am doing my best to give the House a full account and for that reason I have taken the very unusual step of putting the minutes in the Library.

The hon. Member for Blackburn asked whether I inserted a word in the form of words I used in the House. I did not produce the form of words that I used in the House. It was produced not by me, but by someone else at the meeting; it was agreed by me and the director general. Of course, as I have said more than once, and as the former director general has said more than once, the decision that was taken was taken by him.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I have given way already.

Yesterday, the former director general issued a writ that made a number of allegations about my level of involvement with the Prison Service. I utterly and completely reject each and every one of those allegations. I have already dealt with the ones relating to the former governor of Parkhurst. The others either relate to discussions on matters on which I was entitled to be consulted under the framework document or were policy proposals for me to decide. Some of them were staffing matters that were outside the scope of the director general's authority. It has been suggested that the then director general was required to attend, on average, one meeting every day with me and others. Our records show that he attended, on average, about one meeting with me a week.

Let me give a little more detail of what we are discussing. I shall first take the allegation in the former director general's writ about the appointment of a new personnel director, which he says I delayed. That was not a decision for the director general to take. His proposal was that the individual to be appointed as personnel director of the Prison Service should be paid a salary of £100,000 a year plus a 20 per cent. performance bonus. I thought that that was excessive and I make no apology for becoming involved in proposals like that.

The next allegation contained in the writ was that I refused to allow the Prison Service to proceed with a decision to reduce the number of prisons holding category A prisoners. After the Parkhurst escape, that issue was clearly a matter of grave concern. The then director general's proposals were submitted to me on 18 July. I knew then that I was going to receive General Learmont's report within a matter of weeks. It would have been completely wrong to pre-empt his conclusions. The recommendation on the subject in General Learmont's independent report differs significantly from the proposal put to me by the then director general. I was right to wait to have the benefit of General Learmont's independent assessment.

It has been alleged that I failed to provide sufficient resources to implement the Woodcock report. I was advised by the former director general just a few days ago that we are making good progress on implementing the Woodcock recommendations in accordance with the timetable that I have laid before the House.

On Tuesday, the Leader of the Opposition made three allegations: that I personally told Mr. Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst should be suspended immediately; that when Mr. Lewis objected as it was an operational matter, I threatened to instruct him to do it; that when Mr. Lewis further objected, I told the operational director of the Prison Service, by fax, that I would announce it in the House of Commons that day. Each and every one of the allegations is untrue. I have rebutted them all. Neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the hon. Member for Blackburn has made any serious attempt to contradict that rebuttal. The allegations are untrue.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Let us deal with each allegation in turn. The first is that the Home Secretary told the director general that he wanted the governor suspended. That is clear from the minutes—the Home Secretary raised it; it is absolutely clear from the minutes. The second is that the Home Secretary threatened to instruct Mr. Lewis. That is clear from the adjournment of the meeting, when he was asked, as has been admitted, to come back and answer. The third is that it was the Home Secretary who said that it had to be done immediately. The Home Secretary has totally failed on every occasion to answer that. Let me put two questions to him: first, was the idea that he should be removed that day— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Where is it in the minutes? Where is it in the minutes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is being excessive—one question is enough.

Mr. Blair: First, is it true that the suggestion that the governor be removed that day came not from the director general, but from the Home Secretary? Secondly, why

does not the Home Secretary allow those who received the instruction—Miss Philippa Drew and Mr. Marriott—to give evidence on what they were told by the Home Office and allow the civil servants at the meeting of 10 January to give evidence?

Mr. Howard: I am bound to say that that intervention by the Leader of the Opposition casts the most serious questions on his judgment. I believe that it is an intervention that he will come to regret. It is most significant that, before the right hon. Gentleman got to his feet, I was making a detailed rebuttal of the three allegations that he made in the House on Tuesday. When he got to his feet today he did not seek to sustain or substantiate those allegations; he asked three completely different questions, unrelated to the allegations, which I have answered already in the course of this afternoon's debate. If there were any evidence required that the Labour party is unfit to govern, we have seen it in the actions of the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon.

Mr. Blair: This is the seventh time that the Home Secretary has been asked this question: did the suggestion that the governor be removed that day come from the Home Secretary rather than Mr. Lewis—yes or no?

Mr. Howard: Here we go again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will come to that point. Throughout this week, the right hon. Gentleman has adopted the same pattern of conduct: he makes some allegations and they are rebutted so he abandons them and makes some fresh allegations, only to abandon them too.

Let me make it perfectly clear: I was entitled to be consulted, I was consulted and I expressed my view. I did not insert the word "today" in the statement that was made and we have the director general's word that he took the view that, for operational reasons, it was necessary to remove the governor immediately.

I shall now deal with the allegations that the hon. Member for Blackburn made yesterday. I had intended to begin with what he told *The Guardian*, but we are told that that is inoperative: there was a misprint in *The Guardian*, so we do not need to worry about those comments. The hon. Gentleman was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying that John Marriott was moved against the advice of Derek Lewis and that I had intimidated Mr. Lewis into taking that action. He said:

"Not only had Mr. Howard talked about it but he intimidated Mr. Lewis into doing it".

A few hours later the hon. Gentleman popped up on the "Today" programme. He said:

"Let me make this clear. What actually happened to Mr. Marriott was that he was transferred, that was an administrative matter. And that decision was certainly made by Mr. Lewis, not by Mr. Howard".

At last he was quite correct. However, those two statements—like most of the things that the hon. Gentleman says—were completely at odds with each other.

The problems in our prisons are deep-rooted and hon. Members will differ as to how they should be dealt with. I am clear about my prescription: I have always believed that prisoners should be treated decently and that every effort should be made, through work and training, to rehabilitate them. But I have no doubt that the good intentions of the reformers have been corrupted over the years.

Decency has become an excuse for pampering, laxity and even for licence. Ever since I became Home Secretary I have been determined to change that. I have been accused of intervening—yes, I have intervened and I make no apologies for that. I intervened to cut home leave by 50 per cent. and as a direct result home leave failures have fallen by 80 per cent. I intervened to cut drug abuse in our prisons and we are now seeing the introduction of mandatory drug testing. I also intervened to introduce a system of rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for bad behaviour in order to help prison governors maintain good order in their prisons.

I never forget—as many Labour Members seem to—that people are in prison because they have committed crimes, often serious crimes. They should not expect luxury, unearned privileges, or endless excursions back into the community against which they have offended. They should expect firm management, they should expect to be punished for bad behaviour and they should expect to have to earn any privileges that they receive. Those are my policies for our prisons and I believe that they command widespread support. As General Learmont said in his report:

"There is an abundance of excellent people within the Prison Service whose most fervent wish is to do a good and worthwhile job."

Our task is to encourage and enable them to do so. That fact is wholly ignored by the motion that the Opposition have invited the House to debate this afternoon.

I have comprehensively rebutted the various allegations made against me this week. They have been shown to have no substance, but that is far from the end of the matter. The conduct of the Leader of the Opposition has given rise to fundamental questions about his judgment. On Tuesday, and again today, he demeaned his office by allowing it to be used as a vehicle for the spleen of a bitter man. He has shown himself to be utterly unfit for office and he and his sidekick, the hon. Member for Blackburn, have shown themselves to be utterly unfit for government. I invite the House to reject them and their motion with the utter contempt they deserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Speeches are now restricted to 10 minutes.

5.55 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Home Secretary has painted a picture of fearful errors in the Prison Service, which he claims to have put right. Every error that he described occurred under his jurisdiction and that of former Conservative Home Secretaries. Therefore, he is saying that conditions were appalling under the Conservative Government but that he has now ameliorated them. He confirms entirely the recent remarks of Judge Tumim, who said:

"If you are dividing policy and operations it means the Home Secretary is not responsible for anything at all.

That means the Home Secretary takes credit"—

as he sought to do in his speech today—

"but is free of responsibility. I'm saying it's a bogus distinction".

The issue this afternoon is not the trivial one concerning whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is fit to hold the office that he demeans; the issue is whether the House of Commons has authority in matters relating to the Prison Service.

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

The Government are undermining the House of Commons by seeking to mislead it over crucial matters, such as the Westland issue. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is present in the Chamber. His letter was misused by Sir Bernard Ingham in order to deceive the House of Commons. The Government sought to mislead the House of Commons over the conspiracy to break their own embargo on selling armaments to Iraq. The Government are now using the next steps agencies to destroy any system of parliamentary accountability based upon the totally bogus argument—which was controverted by Judge Tumim—that there is a difference between accountability and responsibility. On Monday, the Home Secretary said:

"It is essential, if I am to be properly accountable to this House and to the country, that I am properly and fully informed about what happens in our prisons".—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 35.]

On 10 January, when making his statement about Parkhurst, the Home Secretary said:

"I am accountable to Parliament for all matters that are relevant to the Prison Service. I am responsible to Parliament for policy".

This afternoon, the Home Secretary again sought to draw a distinction between accountability and responsibility. It is about time he told the House of Commons the difference between accountability and responsibility. If one looks up the word "accountable" in the Oxford English Dictionary, one finds that it means liable to be called to account and responsible to or for. If one looks up the word "responsible" in the Oxford English Dictionary, one finds that it means answerable, accountable and liable to be called to account.

The Home Secretary is twisting words to avoid the fact that he ought to be held to account for the mess that he made in the prisons. What is more, he completely accepts the responsibility because it was he, not my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who said that Mr. Derek Lewis was the man to deal with all the dreadful things that he claimed were going on in the Prison Service. When I said that Mr. Derek Lewis should be sacked and that he was not fit to run a fish and chip shop—I received many hostile letters from people who ran fish and chip shops—the Home Secretary said:

"Since the director general became head of the agency, a great deal of progress has been made, not least in reducing the number of escapes".

He said it again this afternoon in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). Apparently, Mr. Lewis achieved the miracle about which the right hon. and learned Gentleman boasts. The Home Secretary said:

"a great deal of progress has been made, not least in reducing the number of escapes, which has fallen by about a third during his period of office . . . The Prison Service is clearly going through a difficult time. The director general is the best person to take it through that difficult time."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1995; Vol. 252, c. 39–40.]

He was talking about Parkhurst—the very matter on which he has sacked the director general.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman is simply playing with words. What he is doing was quoted in "Alice in Wonderland" when the March Hare said to Alice,

"Then you should say what you mean,"

and Alice replied,

"I do . . . at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."

We are not dealing with words; we are not dealing with the right hon. and learned Gentleman twisting words to wriggle out of a situation for which he is responsible. We are dealing with the fact that the House of Commons has the right to call the right hon. and learned Gentleman to account. What we heard this afternoon was a shyster lawyer defending a shifty client with the Home Secretary being the shyster lawyer and the shifty client. What we have here is a system of scapegoats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If he was referring to the Home Secretary as a shyster lawyer—

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Spot on!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I would be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would withdraw the word "shyster" and think of something that he felt was appropriate.

Mr. Kaufman: I shall simply allow you to overrule me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and apologise to you.

The Government created the Child Support Agency and a mess was made of that, so the chief executive went. They created the Prison Service and, when a mess was made there, they got rid of the governor of Parkhurst. They received a report showing that that was not enough, so now they have got rid of the Director General of the Prison Service. The rule of the Home Secretary is, "The buck stops anywhere but with me." That is what the Government are doing.

Last week, at the Conservative party conference, Minister after Minister said that Britain would not stand for parliamentary sovereignty being destroyed by Brussels. The sovereignty of the House of Commons is not being destroyed in Brussels; it is being destroyed in Whitehall, in the Home Office and at 10 Downing street. The Government will not accept responsibility to Parliament, but the day is coming when, even if they can get a complaisant, biddable majority in the House of Commons at the end of the debate, there will soon be a majority in the country who are not complaisant and biddable and who will throw that lot out.

6.4 pm

Sir Peter Lloyd (Fareham): The Opposition are making an oddly muddled attack on the Home Secretary. Not so very long ago, they were complaining that the Government were washing their hands of the Prison Service and leaving everything to the agency. Over the past few days, the charge has been that the Home Secretary is a compulsive meddler, constantly taking an interest in prisons when he should be confining himself to accepting responsibility when things go wrong.

Contrary to what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, the agency has not altered the accountability of Home Secretaries from what it was in practice when the constitutional fiction was that Home Secretaries knew everything and did everything in their Department. In practice, when Labour Home Secretaries were embarrassed by notorious escapes, like Conservative ones, they set up inquiries and sought to learn lessons. However, despite the theory, it was always

accepted that if escapes or other failures did not flow from ministerial orders or dereliction, there was no question of the Home Secretary assuming personal blame.

We now have the Learmont report, which deals thoroughly with the Parkhurst escapes. It was plain that they were the result of a gross failure of security at the prison. Proper rules and procedures were not followed. Obviously, the Home Secretary has no responsibility there, in the sense of personal blame for what went wrong. The position is exactly what it was under Home Secretaries before agency status.

The agency was set up to provide more freedom and scope for managers to manage effectively within the policies laid down by Ministers. The fiction that Ministers did everything or proved everything had stultified initiative and encouraged lethargy.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Lloyd: I shall not give way as I have quite a lot to say in a short time.

To put it mildly, it is not an easy relationship to manage, but, with all the difficulties, it is a huge improvement on what existed before, as the progress made in running prisons since the agency was set up demonstrates.

The second assault on the Home Secretary was the charge that he had misled the House over the removal of the governor. It seems to me that he comprehensively rebutted that in his speech this afternoon. In any case, of course it would have been perfectly proper if, on a matter of great importance and public interest, he had intervened and overridden the director general, had he found it necessary. The agency framework document makes that clear.

The catalogue of management and security lapses at Parkhurst that the Learmont report chronicles meant that the governor rightly lost his post. That is hard for a man who has real qualities—as the governor does—who had contributed much to the service and who had many extraneous problems, not least that the prison was being rebuilt around him, but the security manual simply was not being followed and the escapes occurred.

I take issue with the Home Secretary's conclusion that the Learmont report made the director general's position untenable. The report is thorough, detailed and convincing in respect of the escape itself. There it carries conviction and authority, but it reads quite differently when it deals with wider issues involving the Prison Service and its management.

In his statement earlier this week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary quoted the report, where it said:

"alarm bells should have been . . . ringing throughout the Prison Service"

because of Whitemoor, implying that they were not. Yet, later on, Learmont remarked approvingly of the system of security audits which started just before Parkhurst as the only thorough way of making sure that proper levels of security were maintained at all 130-plus establishments. Faxes and exhortations would not do; they would merely create more paper.

The report complained about the amount of paper that governors had to deal with, distracting them from more important concerns, and gave the impression that it was all from an over-bureaucratic, badly run head office, when, as it grudgingly admitted some time later, the prison headquarters had explained that only a small part of that paper came from headquarters, the bulk being generated elsewhere by the basic task of running prisons, receiving and transferring prisoners, answering parliamentary questions and a series of other day-to-day demands.

The report was unhappy that there were as yet no key performance indicators on drugs, but for such indicators to be worth anything, they must be accurate. Until Parliament made possible drug testing in prisons, the machinery could not be established to acquire the necessary figures. The report criticised the decision to rebuild Parkhurst by stages, while it held prisoners—as if the agency board were responsible. That decision was taken and work started long before the agency was established.

The report commented on security, and obviously its authors did not see it as their task, as they threw out the interesting general ideas—many sounding like those which I knew well and which were well known to the prisons board, which is presumably where they came from—to examine the state of the service when the agency took over, assess what could realistically have been achieved in the two and a half years since or identify what has been achieved in that time. As it was a report on security, it might have made more of the fact that, despite Whitemoor and Parkhurst, prison escapes have fallen by three quarters since the agency came into being.

I feel bound to stress those points, but there are many others. I read the report only once, but I marked and docketed a great number of other points. I was the Minister responsible for prisons when the agency was established and I worked with Derek Lewis and the board during their first year. They were set a tough job—to turn around what I know to be an ill-managed service. Clearly, that could not be done overnight. That would take years to do properly. As the Home Secretary said, the problems were deep-rooted. But the service was being turned around systematically and effectively—the only way that it could be turned around. The fact that the service consistently reached the Home Secretary's targets shows that.

I realise that the Home Secretary had a difficult decision to make. He is usually admirable in refusing to be guided by reports that are insufficiently cogently argued to the point in question. I am sorry that he did not show that same characteristic here. I believe that, to achieve the kind of efficient Prison Service that this country deserves, the Home Secretary should have backed the director general and his board.

6.12 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): At times, this debate seems far removed from the harsh world that prison officers have to face—the prison officers to whom we give a task that few of us would like to undertake, of confronting and dealing with some of the most dangerous people in society, who are contemptuous of authority, scheming, and extremely difficult to organise and control.

Sir John Learmont commented in his report that the catalogue of things that went wrong is not confined to the two prisons on which he was concentrating, but is symptomatic of wider problems in the Prison Service.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

There is a combination of the tremendous and courageous work done by prison officers, and serious failings in the way that the whole service has been conducted and some of its work undertaken.

The matter goes much wider than the issues on which part of the debate has concentrated. I like to believe that, if the Home Secretary had been shown specifically and in terms to have misled the House and the Select Committee, there would be no question but that he would resign. He believes that he did not mislead the House or the Committee on the specific matter of the time at which the governor of Parkhurst left. Obviously, Conservative Members have been convinced by his explanation. I say that is not the end of the story. Perhaps the most important issue is the attempt to draw a distinction between policy and operations, and to base on that distinction the belief that the Home Secretary cannot be held to account and be required to resign because of things that have gone wrong in the service.

The Minister of State provided us with a good illustration of the distinction between policy and operations at Question Time this afternoon. He said that criminal investigations are an operational matter for the chief constable. The Home Secretary understands. He would not seek to instruct the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis—who is answerable to the Home Secretary in other respects—as to how he should investigate a particular crime. The Secretary of State knows that, and his officials would advise him accordingly.

There is no such clarity in the distinction between operations and policy in the running of the Prison Service. The Home Secretary's answers and assertions this afternoon made it clear that he recognises no such distinction. He knows that some operational issues are extremely important, politically and in terms of public concern about prisons.

The Woodcock report—the original inquiry into the Whitemoor escape—made this clear:

> "There exists at all levels within the Service some confusion as to the respective roles of Ministers, the Agency Headquarters and individual Prison Governors. In particular, the Enquiry has identified the difficulty of determining what is an operational matter and what is policy, leading to confusion as to where responsibility lies."

The Home Secretary already has on his desk an authoritative report telling him that he cannot rely on such a distinction.

It is clear that the Home Secretary has frequently intervened in operational matters, for what he regards as compelling reasons—sometimes involving matters for which he has to answer to the House. There is also considerable pressure on decisions in which the Home Secretary has not intervened directly—the extent of the process of consultation, the questioning, the preparation of lines from which to defend decisions.

All that leads to a situation in which everybody in the Prison Service knows that they must refer upwards all the time. There is a feeling, inherited from old Home Office days, that, "You must watch the Minister's back all the time. If the Minister thinks that something should be done in a particular way, even if he does not tell you to do it that way, you had better take some notice." That contributes to an atmosphere of involvement and intervention.

The massive extent of ministerial involvement in the work of the director general and of those under him is detailed in the Learmont report. The Home Secretary cannot deny that it criticised the relationship between Ministers and the service. This week, he has sought to pretend that the report offers no criticism of Ministers. It does, and he ought to heed it carefully.

Frequent policy interventions by Ministers in a wide range of matters have a direct impact on the service's operational efficiency—by their sheer number and extent, if nothing else. If the service is constantly required to make changes, attention is diverted from security matters. The Everthorpe inquiry found that a substantial proportion of management time had, in the months prior to that incident, been directed at the establishment's inclusion in the market testing bid procedure. That caused uncertainty among staff and prisoners, and adversely affected staff morale. The extent of policy initiatives has a policy impact.

The Minister said that he was proud to intervene. We do not agree with all his policy initiatives, but we understand the political pressures that led the Minister with responsibility for prisons to intervene. However, he cannot then say that there is a clear distinction between policy and operations, and that he is responsible to the House only for policy.

That is why the Government amendment is so wrong and dangerous. It states that the Home Secretary is

> "accountable to this House for all matters concerning the Prison Service; believes that he is and should be accountable and responsible for all policy decisions".

The amendment seeks to draw a distinction where there is no real difference. It invents a dangerous constitutional doctrine to save the Secretary of State's skin. Even Conservative Members who have a higher opinion of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's stewardship as Home Secretary than I have will come to regret that they trooped through the Lobby in defence of the idea that there was a difference between matters for which the Home Secretary is responsible and those for which he is accountable.

Under another Minister or Government some day, Conservative Members will regret having changed the British constitution so that Ministers are no longer held responsible for matters in which they act, intervene or have considerable influence.

Mr. Gunnell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I must not, because there is considerable pressure on time.

Meanwhile, fundamental weaknesses in the Prison Service will harm its work and effectiveness, because the problem of control will remain unchanged.

After the debate, the problems involving Ministers and the service will remain unchanged. There will not be more effective definition. No one in the Prison Service will say tomorrow, "Now we know precisely where our responsibility lies. We know that the Home Secretary will not interfere in this area. We know now that we are in a Howard-free zone, and that we can exercise responsibility." No one in the Prison Service will respond in that way. The same old muddle and confusion will continue. No one in the service will know on what matter the Home Secretary will intervene.

We shall be leaving the Prison Service in the hands of a Minister who wants to increase the prison population by up to 25 per cent. That has been made clear by the various

measures that he has announced. The increased population will inevitably lead to greater damage to prison security. That is because it will mean more appeasement of the most troublesome inmates. The more overcrowded and overstressed a prison is, the more there is appeasement. That prevents the implementation of proper security.

We shall be leaving an overstretched Prison Service in the hands of a Minister who is always ready to pick up the phone, to issue a memo or to send a fax to the Prison Service. Unfortunately, he is never willing to carry the can for what he has done. We face a fundamental and dangerous change in the British constitution that will do no good to the effective running of the prisons, on which we depend.

6.20 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Most of the comments of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) would provide an interesting debate for another day. In fact, the debate is about the survival of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We have been told that many groups throughout the country are opposed to him. A sacked director general with a record of achievement in all other areas of the Prison Service will, of course, be bitter. A union leader of a sacked director general would not, in those circumstances, be worthy of membership if he or she did not fight for him. A prison governor who is fed up with having a quiet, cosy life disturbed by relentless changes will want to get rid of his tormentor.

The Labour party, facing a Government who have secured the largest fall in crime this century will, of course, be desperate to get rid of them before their success helps to win them the next general election. The media, of course, like whipping up a good row. They like "good" news that is lively and highly visible on television.

However, anyone who takes a reasonable, open-minded and objective view will think that it is too ridiculous for words that a Home Secretary should not be allowed to sack a prison chief who is responsible for two appallingly serious prison breaks and a devastating catalogue of security failures and inefficiency in the Prison Service. That was the simple issue: should Lewis have gone?

When the respected independent investigator and his assessors were asked to attach blame wherever it fell, and as high as it fell, they came to the conclusion that it rested with the prison board and its director. If my right hon. and learned Friend had left the director general in place, he surely would have been accused of a dereliction of duty by Opposition Members and the public. After all, the public are entitled to be protected against prisoners who escape with Semtex.

All else of this matter is secondary, a red herring or diversionary nonsense. Labour Members have revealed themselves at their most absurd. Let us take account of the issues that they have raised. They tell us that the Home Secretary should go as well. However, the Learmont report points no finger at the Home Secretary, although my right hon. and learned Friend invited him to do so. The report points no blame at him. Of course there is no need for my right hon. and learned Friend to go.

The Labour party says that my right hon. and learned Friend became involved in operational matters, and so should take the blame. The Learmont inquiry was not concerned about the distinction between operational matters and policy matters. Instead, it was asked to consider who was to blame.

Mr. Gunnell: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am sorry, but I do not have time to do that. I have only 10 minutes.

The Learmont inquiry responded by saying that Lewis was to blame, and that my right hon. and learned Friend was not. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend is ill advised to proceed so strongly on the distinction between operation and policy, but under the Prison Service framework document he is entitled to be involved. He must be kept informed of what is going on, so that he can answer questions in the House. Sadly, from time to time he must be involved in the minutiae of day-to-day operations to stop the wastage of public money.

That is all a thousand miles away from being directly and personally responsible for the failure to search visitors to prisons to ascertain whether they have Semtex, the failure to search cells, and the failure to ensure that governors are in place when they should be.

My right hon. and learned Friend is not responsible for the failure to stop prisoners doing whatever it was that they wanted to do. He is not responsible for a lack of leadership, or a failure to hear the alarm bell ringing. That is the indictment framed by Sir John Learmont, as set out in the report. The reasons for the appalling escapes are about a million miles away from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who, unlike the director general, who is concerned only with the Prison Service, is responsible for the security service, law and order, the immigration service, the fire service and much else. It is nonsense to say that the Home Secretary should shoulder the blame.

The Opposition say that my right hon. and learned Friend made the operational decision to move the Parkhurst governor. He has consistently said no. The Labour party said yes on Monday. Unfortunately, it forgot the proceedings during the meeting of 10 January, the transcript of which is now in the Library. It forgot what Lewis said on 15 January on "The Frost Programme". It forgot also what he said on 18 January before the Select Committee on Home Affairs. He settled the matter once and for all on "Newsnight" on 16 October. That was the end of the Labour party's absurd allegation.

So the Labour party changed tack, and said, "But Lewis was under pressure to say what he did." Unfortunately for Labour, Lewis said before the Select Committee on 18 January that he was under no pressure, and took the decision himself because it was operational. In marches the First Division Association, Liz Symons being its general secretary. It asserted that poor Mr. Lewis had to say what he did because a civil service directive told him to do so. It seems to have stated that Mr. Lewis had to obey instructions, even if that meant lying to the Select Committee.

No one has produced such a document. Why is that? The answer, of course, is that no such document exists. If such a document existed, and if it required a highly placed civil servant to lie to a Select Committee, why did Lewis lie three days earlier on "The Frost Programme", when he was under no such constraint? That is hardly consistency, given that the programme took place three days earlier. Again, the Labour party's accusation is seen to be absurd.

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

To maintain the smokescreen, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the Leader of the Opposition, while at the Dispatch Box, along with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), on every spot of green or place where there might be a camera, has made one stupid allegation after another.

We were told that Marriott was suspended. He was not. It was alleged that my right hon. and learned Friend lied to the Select Committee. He did not. The Labour party did not read the question properly. It was asserted that my right hon. and learned Friend had no right to interfere in operations. He did. We were told that he sent a fax over the head of his operations director, Miss Drew. He did not. It was said that Marriott was moved against the advice of Lewis. Lewis said that he was not. The hon. Member for Blackburn talked about a typing mistake in *The Guardian*. It seems that it was all down to typing.

Apparently Lewis wanted to move Marriott, but not immediately on the afternoon in question, but a couple of weeks later. Given that allegation, it is unfortunate for Labour that, on 18 January, my friend and colleague on the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), asked Mr. Lewis whether the Home Secretary had told him to make sure that Marriott was off the premises for the afternoon. Lewis said that he had not. He added that it was essential for operational reasons that the change in governor took place immediately, so that there was no distraction and there was clarity about who was in charge.

This morning, we woke up to the news that Labour had a startling new fax that would provide blinding new evidence that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary had lied, cheated and misled, was to be blamed and should be hanged. Where is the fax? It seems that the magician forgot the trick. All we have heard is that Miss Drew and others, who incidentally were not present on 10 January, may have broken their oaths under official secrets legislation and told the right hon. Member for Sedgefield something, but what, we have not been told.

The Opposition have suggested that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary wanted Marriott suspended rather than transferred. Does that not destroy the Opposition's case, for Marriott was transferred? He was not suspended. Whatever my right hon. and learned Friend said to the director general was not what happened. His diktat—if there was such a diktat, and we have heard that it was only a wondering—was not put into effect; the diktat of the director general was; so that is where the responsibility clearly lay, not with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Then, finally, we were told that the Home Secretary wanted the transfer to be taken that day, so that he could announce it to the House. That was denied by Mr. Lewis before the Home Affairs Committee on 18 January, at paragraph 49, and in paragraph 50 he gave the reason why he denied it.

Every single one of these absurd allegations has failed to be substantiated. It is even worse, because they were refuted before today, yet Opposition Members did not withdraw this absurd debate.

Where is the evidence that the Home Secretary lied? Where is the evidence that he took the decision to sack the governor? Where is the evidence that, even if he did intervene operationally from time to time, any such intervention was wrong, that it was unnecessary or that it led to the escape of six terrorists from Whitemoor, and three prisoners, two of them category A, from Parkhurst weeks later, and a number of security breaches and failures in the high-security prison—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

6.30 pm

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): In this century, only one Home Secretary has resigned—Reginald Maudling, in July 1972, over the Poulson affair. His letter of resignation said:

"I think I can reasonably claim a respite from the burdens of responsibility . . . which inevitably surround a Minister."

It is that question of responsibility around which the debate turns today.

When the then Prime Minister in February 1988 delivered a statement to the House on management in the civil service and announced the establishment of next steps agencies, she said:

"Each agency will be accountable to a Minister, who will in turn be accountable to Parliament for the agency's performance."

She went on to say:

"There will be no change in the arrangements for accountability. Ministers will continue to account to Parliament for all the work of their Departments, including the work of the agencies."

She continued:

"there has been too much splitting between the duties of those concerned with making policy and those concerned with management. We feel strongly that those concerned with making policy should know from experience how that policy is implemented".—[*Official Report*, 18 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 1149-52.]

The role of the Prison Service is set out in its framework document. When the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), the then Home Secretary, launched the Prison Service as a next steps agency, he said:

"The move to agency status presents the prison service with challenges and opportunities. The challenge is to find ways of improving the quality of service it provides—which means higher standards and better value for money."

The former Prison Commission was structurally not unlike an agency. Yet the Secretary of State was regarded as wholly responsible. When it was replaced by the Prisons Department, within the Home Office, there was a clear line of responsibility to the Secretary of State. The framework document, published when the Prison Service agency was established, on 1 April 1993, states unequivocally:

"The Home Secretary is the Minister responsible for the Prison Service."

Only this week, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Judge Stephen Tumim, insisted that the Home Secretary was responsible in law for prisons. He said:

"If you are dividing policy and operations it means the Home Secretary is not responsible for anything at all"

Professor Terence Morris of the London School of Economics, when questioned on BBC radio yesterday, described this notional division as

"a novel doctrine unknown before Mr. Michael Howard went to the Home Office."

The Secretary of State persistently refuses to take responsibility when things go wrong but is only too ready to claim the credit when things go right. He denies that he has any responsibility for operational matters, yet the statement of claim issued by Mr. Derek Lewis alleges a whole series of incidents in which it is claimed that the Home Secretary did exactly that. Mr. Lewis has also made it clear that he was dumped from his £125,000-a-year job because the Secretary of State needed a scapegoat for his own failings. The headline in *Today* newspaper could not have put it better when it said:

"Home Secretary Howard plays Get Out of Jail Free card by sacking prisons boss".

The Learmont report into the escape from Parkhurst disclosed a chapter of errors at every level and a naivety that defies belief. It revealed that the governor of Parkhurst was spending 50 hours a week dealing with a blizzard of paperwork, leaving him only two to three hours to spend time with staff and prisoners. It found that, in a four-month period, 1,000 documents and 137 submissions were required by Ministers. It said that there were no technical reasons why geophones could not have been installed; that prisoners were known to ring the victims of their crimes; that certain landings were essentially no-go areas; and that all this chaos was made much worse by

"rapid changes and developments dictated by the political agenda."

Mr. Gunnell: The Learmont report is saying very clearly that there should be an inquiry into the relationship between the Home Office and the Prison Service. It says:

"with a view to giving the Prison Service the greater operational independence that Agency status was meant to confer."

Does that not clearly imply that agency status was not working in the way in which Conservative Members have suggested, and might not General Learmont have been influenced by the fact that, during the time he was interviewing him, Mr. Lewis was interrupted and called to the telephone five times by the Home Office Minister responsible at that time for prisons?

Ms Anderson: I thank my hon. Friend for that well-timed intervention. He described yet another example of ministerial interference.

Once again the Prison Service finds itself reeling from the effects of the Home Secretary's speech to the Tory party conference, the policy implications of which are enormous. Yet I gather that even the Home Office press office had to wait until the Home Secretary rose to his feet in Blackpool to find out what he was going to say.

The head of security in the Prison Service, the short-term replacement for Derek Lewis, has now had to rush out a circular to staff and prisoners to forestall panic on the wings and landings of Britain's gaols.

Surely there can be no precedent for political interference at ministerial level on this scale. The Home Secretary's prison works doctrine has meant an increase of 12,000 in the prison population in the past 18 months alone. Instead of leaving Mr. Derek Lewis to get on with the job of dealing with that, we now know that the Home Secretary required him to turn up at the Home Office for meetings almost daily. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) pointed out, there was ministerial interference to ensure that the governor of Parkhurst was removed from his duties before the Home Secretary made his statement to the House on 10 January this year. Someone's head had to roll. In January, it was John Marriott's. This week it was Derek Lewis's.

Much has been made of various bits of evidence given to the Home Affairs Select Committee. I refer to some of Mr. Lewis's evidence, which is relevant. The Home Secretary said that, on average, he met Mr. Lewis once a week. In evidence to the Select Committee, Mr. Lewis said that, on the day of the Home Secretary's statement to the House on 10 January, he had

"several meetings with the Home Secretary during that day."

Moreover, he points out that he had had several telephone conversations with Miss Philippa Drew, who was at Parkhurst that same morning. Was not the reason for those meetings and telephone conversations that Mr. Lewis refused to accept the Home Secretary's insistence that the word "today" be inserted in his statement to the House?

6.39 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Never in the history of the House have so many bricks been made with so little straw. I have listened very carefully to the evidence that was given in these very serious accusations against my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. If the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) sets himself up as the keeper of constitutional rectitude in exposing new evidence today, he is about as plausible as Saddam Hussein's claim to have been democratically elected.

When I hear criticism of the Home Secretary about the way in which our prisons are run, I just recall the occasion when we were treated to the spectacle of an escaped prisoner on the roof of Strangeways prison, dictating his terms and grievances to the nation's television reporters and newspapers, and the fact that A and D wings at Parkhurst were left unused year after year.

People talk of security. I recall approaching my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) when she was the Minister responsible for prisons. I told her of the prison officer, newly recruited from the north of England, who had so many debts and was so far from home that he could not afford digs on the Isle of Wight, so he slept in his car in the prison car park.

To those in the press who talk sneeringly about publicity-seeking Members of Parliament, I ask why neither the House nor my constituents have ever seen the correspondence about the geophones and microphones in the walls of Parkhurst. That correspondence goes back a long way, long before John Marriott, right back to 1988. I have never made it public because it would have been completely irresponsible of me to have given the IRA a blueprint of the weaknesses at Parkhurst, particularly when the IRA had murdered our colleagues in the House, and Lord Mountbatten too, the author of the original report on maximum security prisons.

Of course, Parkhurst is an old prison. It opened in 1838. It was the first prison in the country for young offenders. For more than 125 years, Parkhurst prison has been dealing with the worst and most difficult offenders in our nation. That was recognised by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne when she visited the prison.

I hope that when we go to see my right hon. and learned Friend with a deputation he will listen to our claims because we are concerned about the downgrading of the prison, the number of job losses and the effect of that on the local economy.

[Mr. Barry Field]

Hon. Members will expect me to deal with the case of John Marriott. Throughout my life, I have made it a principle that when somebody apologises to me I accept that without revocation and I do not go back over the matter again. On 3 March I wrote to John Marriott saying:

"Dear John, Thank you for your letter of 28 February and your very kind apology which is accepted. I have always tried to make it a rule in my public and private life that an apology when given should be graciously accepted and put an absolute end to the matter."

The letter goes on.

I do not go back on that principle, not even for Home Secretaries, and I make it clear that the Home Secretary has not asked me to do so, and I am sure that he would not. That is the end of the matter, except to record the fact that, of his own volition, John Marriott left the service before the reports were published.

6.41 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The substance of the Opposition's charges against the Home Secretary are that since January last year and beyond, he has consistently maintained that there is a clear distinction between policy, which he quite properly maintains is his own territory, and operations, which he maintains are the responsibility of the Director General of the Prison Service.

Despite the mounting evidence that the Home Secretary and his ministerial colleagues have routinely and regularly interfered with operational matters, which are highlighted in all sorts of publications and documentation which we have and of which the Home Secretary is aware, he has again repeated this afternoon the distinction that he has tried to maintain over all this time.

On 17 October on the "Today" programme Judge Tumim said:

"the Home Secretary's defence, I use that word, it is maybe not the most appropriate word, the way the Home Secretary has defended himself in this whole business is to make that distinction which you said can't be made"—

that is, the distinction between policy and operations. There have been some difficulties between Judge Tumim and the Home Secretary, so the Home Secretary may not accept him as an authoritative source, although he is well respected throughout the Prison Service and the country.

But perhaps the Home Secretary could give some thought to what was said by his right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Sir P. Lloyd), who is in his place now and made a speech earlier, on 19 April 1993. In evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, when asked by the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) whether the director was accountable to Parliament through him, he said:

"Not through me. As I say, I am but an arm, leg or foot of the Home Secretary—a limb. It is the Home Secretary who is accountable to Parliament. If you like, there is no suitable analogy from outside, but I suppose you might say that the Prison Service is a wholly owned subsidiary."

The right hon. Gentleman, a previous Minister of State, clearly understood that matters relating to the Prison Service were the responsibility of the Home Secretary, who has sought ever since then to distance himself from that.

The Secretary of State, in seeking to destroy the credibility of Mr. Lewis and his recent allegations this afternoon, used selective extracts from Mr. Lewis's television interview with Sir David Frost on 15 January this year. But the transcript of that interview tells a different story. In that interview, Mr. Lewis conceded that it had been his opinion that Mr. Marriott, the former governor of Parkhurst, should be moved, but what he did not say, and nor was he asked to, was by what means he should be removed or over what time scale.

I shall return to that crucial point in a moment, but the heart of the Opposition's charge against the Home Secretary is that he used Mr. Marriott as a scapegoat on 10 January, which has triggered off a series of events which led to the scapegoating of Mr. Lewis earlier this week.

The Home Secretary made a speech that slipped and slid around the issues but failed concretely to address them. He has thrown no light on what took place on 9 and 10 January between him, his office, the Director General of the Prison Service and the Prison Service officials involved.

I have two questions for the Home Secretary which, so far today, he has signally failed to answer. First, by what route and in what form was the decision to "move" Mr. Marriott "today"—those were the Home Secretary's words—on 10 January communicated to Philippa Drew on that afternoon? Secondly, what instructions did Miss Drew have about the timing and manner of Mr. Marriott's departure when she set off for the Isle of Wight, and how and by whom were those original decisions changed? Will the Secretary of State enlighten us on that? I do not think that he is even bothering to listen. The fact of the matter is that he has refused repeatedly to cast any light on those issues. His slipping and sliding around today has cast no further light on it.

More crucially, we maintain that those issues and the truth of what occurred have not been rebutted. All the evidence is that these events have the Home Secretary's fingerprints all over them. If the Secretary of State has any honour left, surely he must accede to the request of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and allow all the relevant officials, whether from the Home Office or the Prison Service, openly to give evidence about what happened on those dates. Today and previously he has refused to do that. Until he does, there will remain a large area of doubt about his personal involvement in those events.

On seven occasions today, the Home Secretary was asked to confirm that it was he who insisted on the application of the word "today" in relation to Mr. Marriott's removal. We can establish the complete truth only if he allows all those officials to give evidence, free of any restraint. His failure to do so will tell all the story that we need to know about what took place between him and them on those occasions.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Particularly as the hon. Gentleman was not there.

Mr. Howarth: That is right. Is the Home Secretary saying that no officials were present at the meetings that took place between him and the director general? Is the Home Secretary trying to maintain that no Minister communicated with Philippa Drew while she was at Parkhurst? Is he saying that? If not, let those officials tell the story themselves.

The Secretary of State has repeatedly evaded any responsibility. He is always blaming somebody else and today he has cleared up nothing. As a result, the Prison Service is now rudderless, leaderless and in complete chaos. Far from being a focused service, clear on its objectives and in which direction it is going, it is a complete shambles.

Earlier today in a statement to me, a serving governor—we must remember that the governors are responsible people—said:

"I think governors have formed the view that Michael Howard's treatment of John Marriott was unprincipled, and set party political advantage above fairness and decency. Whether or not it was the Home Secretary or the Director General who decided that John Marriott should be immediately removed from Parkhurst, Michael Howard's use of the situation to draw back bench cheers was dishonourable, and I think governors were deeply offended by it."

That is the governors' opinion of the Home Secretary.

The Home Secretary may dodge and weave, but when the chips are down those employed in the Prison Service—the officials who must carry out that difficult work on behalf of society—receive no support. This is a discredited Home Secretary in a discredited Government, and he should go now.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Was ever a damper squib trailed as a blazing red rocket? Was any opportunity for the Labour party to demonstrate its real interest in the Prison Service so comprehensively wasted? The word "shambles" has been used frequently this evening. We have been told that Parkhurst is a shambles, that the Prison Service is a shambles—everything is a shambles, but the biggest single shambles is the Opposition's contribution to the debate.

I realise that it is very difficult for the Labour party to keep up with the dizzying changes in policy, but let me remind it that it has recently been parading itself as a party of law and order. It discovered law and order after four election defeats; sadly, however, it lost it again, and now endlessly votes against law-and-order measures. It is not very surprising that, when we come to discuss the role of Government and that of the Prison Service, the Opposition reduce the entire debate to irrelevant wrangles.

Do the Opposition want to debate the single biggest prison-building programme of the century? No—because the Conservatives introduced it. Do they even want to consider improvements in the prison system, such as the reduction in overcrowding? In 1987, 5,000 prisoners were living three to a cell; none is doing so today. No, the Opposition do not want to talk about that. Do they even want to mention the 75 per cent. reduction in the number of escapes over the past two and a half years? No. Do they want to talk about the improved value for money in our system? No, they do not even want to do that.

Mr. George Howarth: The hon. Lady is issuing a catalogue of praise for the former director general of the Prison Service. If the service was run so wonderfully, why was he sacked?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening. He was not around in 1987, the date that I just cited.

Mr. Howarth: I was.

Miss Widdecombe: I meant that the director general was not around in 1987. That is the second occasion this evening on which the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what is being said to him.

Rather than wanting to debate the issues that I have mentioned, the Opposition want to waste the House's time in arguing about the precise words used in a meeting 10 months ago to move an ineffectual prison governor from his post after one of the biggest security disasters in prison history. They dressed it up in grand phrases, however. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) decided that he was going to discuss parliamentary accountability: he said that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary had not defined his accountability. I can only say that he cannot have been listening to the debate, because my right hon. and learned Friend's statement was extremely clear about his accountability to Parliament. He does not dispute—

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister give way?

Miss Widdecombe: Presently.

Mr. Kaufman *rose—*

Miss Widdecombe: Presently. Presently. Sit down.

Mr. Kaufman *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that if the Minister does not give way he must resume his seat.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. and learned Friend does not dispute—

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have also been here long enough to know that when a Minister refers to a Member, that Minister should in honour give way to him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Miss Widdecombe: I think that the whole House heard me say that I would give way presently. The right hon. Gentleman, however, was too indisciplined and too disorderly to take that, so I now withdraw my promise.

My right hon. and learned Friend asserts that he is accountable and responsible to the House of Commons. He must give answers at the Dispatch Box, and he is personally responsible for policy. That is precisely why he is entitled to be consulted. That is why he is entitled to inquire and to raise questions that he may expect to be asked at the Dispatch Box. But perhaps the most incredible thing that we heard—

Mr. Kaufman *rose—*

Miss Widdecombe: The right hon. Gentleman was too indisciplined to take advantage of my promise to give way presently. He wasted my time, and he ain't going to waste any more of it.

[Miss Widdecombe]

We have heard that officials appearing before Select Committees must give the views of their political masters.

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Kaufman: I should like to hear your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. When a Minister promises to give way and then breaks the promise, does that constitute a breach of an order of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not responsible for what hon. Members may say to one another. The rule states that, if the hon. Member making a speech does not give way, the other must resume his seat. That is the only rule for the Chair.

Miss Widdecombe: I think we can deduce from the way in which the right hon. Gentleman seeks to waste the House's time that he does not want to hear the reply to his question.

We have been told that officials appearing before Select Committees are the slaves of their political masters. Paragraph 46 of the Cabinet guidance issued to officials attending Select Committees states:

"Officials appearing before Select Committees are responsible for ensuring that the evidence they give is accurate."

I think we may assume that the former director general made sure that the evidence he gave was accurate. It entirely ties in with my right hon. and learned Friend's version. I do not believe that there can be any further dispute about the validity of the evidence given by both my right hon. and learned Friend and the former Director General of the Prison Service.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Sir P. Lloyd) raised many issues that were, he said, to the credit of Derek Lewis. Let me tell him that my right hon. and learned Friend specifically paid tribute to those achievements in his statement on Monday, and that it nevertheless remains true that we received a seriously condemnatory report. My right hon. and learned Friend had a duty to the House to consider that report, to consider whether to accept it and, if he did so, to act on its conclusions.

Allegations of "scapegoating" have also been made in regard to the former governor of Parkhurst prison. The activities of this poor man who was apparently "scapegoated" were analysed extremely clearly in Sir John Learmont's report. As we have heard, he did not actually undertake rub-down searches. Why not? Well, he thought that the requirement was unrealistic: such searches were time-consuming, and a bit impractical in a prison that was undergoing major structural reorganisation.

The governor also decided to reduce the amount available on phone cards, because he discovered that they were being used to pay for cannabis, heroin and syringes—to finance drugs, gambling, trade and debts. Then he went and doubled the allowance. How does that make for a responsible governor? How can a man who could act like that be described as a scapegoat? Surely it was incumbent on both my right hon. and learned Friend and the director general to ensure that that man ceased to govern Parkhurst prison at the first possible opportunity, and that is what they did. They fulfilled their duty to the House. If the Opposition object to that, they should go and explain their objections to the electorate—and they will fail completely in that, as they have failed persistently in the past four general elections and will fail in the next.

And the right hon. Member for Gorton did not prevent me from answering the question!

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 280.

Division No. 219] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*

Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCartney, Robert
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Joe Benton.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartliss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Sir Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Bates and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House believes that the Home Secretary is and should be accountable to this House for all matters concerning the Prison Service; believes that he is and should be accountable and responsible for all policy decisions relating to the Service; believes that the Director General of the Prison Service is and should be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service; and utterly rejects the very serious allegations made about the Home Secretary's conduct towards the former Governor of Parkhurst, Mr. John Marriott.

Mr. Barry Field: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have just had a debate in which serious accusations were made. The issue was of great concern to my constituents, but I was given only one minute to speak. I hope that the Government will bring the important report on prisons before the House so that we can have a proper reasoned debate rather than the wild accusations that we have heard today. These are serious matters, but great progress has been made in our Prison Service under this Home Secretary.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair, but I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will find ingenious ways of raising such issues.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During the recess many hon. Members had their offices rewired. We now have a television system that enables us to see what is happening in the Chamber. We were told that the Division bell would ring, whichever channel one was watching. However, the one channel on which it does not ring is that which shows the Chamber. Will you draw it to the attention of the authorities that something is wrong with the system?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall ensure that the matter is raised with the relevant authorities.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Over the past two days, there has been a farrago of wildly inaccurate statements from the Opposition. We have been promised faxes that never arrived, and incorrect and unfair comments have been made about my right hon. and hon. Friends. Have you, Madam Deputy Speaker, yet received what you must surely receive: an apology from the Leader of the Opposition and a request from him to come to the House to put matters straight?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have no knowledge of any apology; nor do I think that it would be appropriate for it to come to me as a Deputy Speaker. However, I warn the House against seeking to continue a debate that has been concluded.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you allow me to remind the House that we are about to have a debate which is a tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on the important subject of disability which is not often debated? In the presence of the Prime Minister, may I say that hon. Members will be doing a disservice to 6.5 million disabled people in Britain if they continue with these bogus points of order?

Mr. Jenkin: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I, through you, thank Madam Speaker for a ruling given by letter on a matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher)? One point that he raised related to the interaction between what we allow in the House and the ruling of the European Court of Justice on Monday which abolished quotas for women. The Opposition Chief Whip is chosen from the shadow Cabinet which is elected through a quota system. In other words, an employee of the House is chosen through an illegal system which has been outlawed by the European Court of Justice. Will you please consider that point?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that Madam Speaker has already given a ruling. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he has another matter to raise—one not covered by that ruling—I advise him to write to her.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a national newspaper to misquote an hon. Member, thereby making it appear as if he has misled the House? The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was put in that position this afternoon. Will you entertain the idea of bringing the editor of *The Guardian* before us so that he can apologise to the House and to the hon. Gentleman for placing him in such a position?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have enough to do keeping order in this place without taking on board the editor of *The Guardian*.

Mr. David Shaw: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Some Home Office minutes were published today and they made very clear a conversation between the Home Secretary and Mr. Lewis earlier this year. The Leader of the Opposition then misquoted from those minutes and attempted to say that there were things in them that were not there. What sanctions do we have under the orders of the House to rectify that position?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That seems to be a debating point—no doubt a very important one in the hon. Member's eyes. The debate in which that point could have been raised has been concluded. If hon. Members want to raise such issues further, they will have to do so by means other than points of order.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I trust that it is a different point of order.

Mr. Marlow: Yes, a totally different point of order. In the past three or four days, the House has been subjected to a co-ordinated campaign of smear and innuendo, orchestrated by the leader of the Opposition—no doubt aided and abetted by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). It has been based on baseless foundations which have all been proved totally wrong today. In normal circumstances, any hon. Member who had done that and had been found wanting would have apologised before the House—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Marlow, would you kindly sit down? I have already indicated that the kinds of points of order that I am now receiving are an attempt to continue a debate which has already been concluded. Hon. Members know full well that there are usually ample opportunities at a later stage to deal with such issues.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): On an entirely fresh point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In a debate yesterday, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), then the shadow Secretary of State for Transport, suggested from the Dispatch Box that he, on behalf of the Labour party, wished to encourage leaks by civil servants and others in the field of transport. Have you received any indication from the new Opposition Front-Bench team that they wish to resile from the announcement yesterday of wishing to encourage leaks by Crown servants?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you are no doubt aware, there is a tremendous amount of interest—certainly among disabled people—in the subject that the House is due to debate next. Does it not occur to you that we are witnessing an orchestrated filibuster from Tory Members of Parliament who could not care less about the disabled and are trying to stop the debate being initiated? They are showing total contempt for the disabled.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I gather that it is a different point of order.

Mr. Nicholls: It is, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on the arrangements which have to be made to enable one to make a personal statement before the House. You will appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition will want an early opportunity to withdraw the baseless allegations made against the Home Secretary, which have been comprehensively answered today. What are the arrangements for the Leader of the Opposition to make such an approach and thus make a personal statement?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I expect hon. Members to find that out for themselves without wasting the time available in this Chamber.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Further to the points of order raised by the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), Madam Deputy Speaker. Is not it the case that the Leader of the Opposition could well have tabled a motion on disability which could have been debated rather than the useless, wasteful debate which we were forced into having this afternoon?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition certainly could not do that this evening because it is not Opposition time.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Clarke: In many ways we have seen the House at its worst, and I hope—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to be clear whether the hon. Member is seeking to raise a point of order or is trying to start the next debate.

Mr. Clarke: I am trying to start the next debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, some procedure has to be dealt with first.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 10th July, be approved.

That the draft Police (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 12th July, be approved.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Travellers' Reliefs (Fuel and Lubricants) Order 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1777), a copy of which was laid before this House on 13th July, be approved.—[*Mr. Streeter.*]

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

RELATIONS WITH JAPAN

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. COM (95) 73, relating to the European Union's relations with Japan, and of the conclusions reached by the Foreign Affairs Council on 29th May on this Communication.—[*Mr. Streeter.*]

Question agreed to.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Anniversary)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

7.24 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): What we have witnessed is an absolute disgrace. The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who intervened and who cannot now be seen, at least by me—[HON. MEMBERS: "He came back."] Yes, he came back because I had the courtesy to tell him that I was going to refer to him. Yet Conservative Members did not have the courtesy to tell Opposition Members, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People or my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who is a giant among pygmies when we discuss disability, that they were going to behave as appallingly as they have.

I regret that the Prime Minister, who appeared a few moments ago to be interested in disability, has suddenly lost that interest. I therefore trust that the Minister will convey to him the views expressed in what I believe will be an important and informative debate.

I welcome the Minister to his new and extremely important responsibilities. I can assure him that very often, in contrast to what he has just seen, he will see the House at its best as we discuss disability. I cannot give him an assurance that my hon. Friends the Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will be any less difficult on the football field than they have proved so far, but I welcome the Minister to his post.

I am delighted to open this debate as the first holder of this portfolio at shadow Cabinet level. There can be no clearer signal of the high priority that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, gives to the issue of disabled people's rights.

I am equally delighted to be joined on the Front Bench by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, whose appointment in 1974 as the first Minister responsible for disabled people in any country was also a milestone in the growing recognition of the importance of the subject by the Labour party, then led by Harold Wilson.

I also take this opportunity to recognise the tremendous contribution of so many hon. Members of all parties in the continuing battle for disabled people's rights—not least my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and, of course, for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way later.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and I have much in common. This evening we mark the 25th anniversary of the passing of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which was highly unusual in that it was a private Member's Bill which passed into law.

Mr. Duncan: To set his remarks in context, will the hon. Gentleman say exactly how much his party is

prepared to pledge as extra spending on the sick and disabled if it were to be in government in order to make the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) happy as a member of the party?

Mr. Clarke: I have not often heard the hon. Gentleman call—apparently—for increased expenditure, but he will be delighted to know that on this issue, in 1974, under the 1970 Act, the Labour Government went further than their manifesto commitments. I am very pleased with that achievement.

Next year we will mark the 10th anniversary of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I was privileged to pilot that measure through Parliament as a private Member's Bill and, like my right hon. Friend's Bill, it reached the statute book. The difference between our Bills was that, 25 years ago, my right hon. Friend received the support of the Labour Government who took on board the objectives that lay behind his proposals. In contrast, my experience of the Tory Government of 1986 was that they at first opposed my Bill but, when prevailed upon to make it into an Act, they then avoided implementing the new law in full. That has happened to a greater extent under the present Prime Minister than under his predecessor.

Those matters are relevant to us today because, as the House will know, there is once again a disability measure before Parliament, for which the Minister will shortly be seeking Royal Assent. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has monitored the Government's position and wriggling. He knows as we do how much progress we made in demanding from the Government, on behalf of organisations of and for disabled people, that which already exists elsewhere from America to Australia and New Zealand, and we demanded it from a most unwilling Government. Those matters will be relevant when we consider the Government's Bill once it returns from another place and the question of Royal Assent.

The Disability Discrimination Bill leaves a good deal of discretion to Ministers. The lesson of the past 25 years is that Labour Ministers can be trusted to carry through the wishes of Parliament in implementing disability legislation whereas Conservative Ministers simply cannot.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way so early in his speech. How does he square that statement with the fact that spending under the Conservative Government has been 75 per cent. higher for the long-term sick and disabled than under Labour? He will know that that statement is true because it was in the 1987 election manifesto of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

Mr. Clarke: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not recognise that there were more claimants for benefits introduced by the Labour Government. If I have time later in the debate, I might even discuss taxes, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman will intervene on that issue as well. Taxation is being discussed in another place and, as an expert, the hon. Gentleman may wish to catch your eye on that matter, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is instructive to look back at successful private Members' Bills on this issue for another reason. This year, we have seen once again a Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East and blocked by the Conservative party. It is clear that as long as the present Government are in power, private Members' Bills will remain the best available route for building on existing disability legislation. Labour Members recognise that fact.

Ministers should take note. I warned them that the greater the inadequacies of the disability discrimination measure when it completes its passage through Parliament, the more likely the Government are to have another private Member's Bill to deal with in the coming parliamentary Session. We would welcome that, as would 6.5 million people in Britain.

Even more effort will be made by hon. Members on both sides of the House and organisations of and for disabled people. Some of them came to the House yesterday and found great difficulties in gaining access to it. They were not even able to use loudspeaker equipment in the House. And we call this is the cradle of democracy. It is totally unacceptable. Given the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe to improving access to every building in Britain, we should make a good start by looking at the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Earlier today, I raised this matter with the Leader of the House. Yesterday, several hundred carers came here with lots of people in wheelchairs who were unable to use the Grand Committee Room. They went into Westminster Hall, but were prevented from using microphones. I pointed out that when celebrations are organised by the establishment, like the American Bar Association, VE day celebrations and various other activities, they use microphones in Westminster Hall for meeting purposes. If a real effort were made by the Government, particularly the new Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, we could sort that problem out so that when disabled people come to the House in future, instead of not being allowed to use those microphones, they can have a proper meeting with their Members of Parliament.

Mr. Clarke: Not only is my hon. Friend right, but he speaks with a record of great commitment. I have never known my hon. Friend to be absent from any debate in which I have participated on the important issue of disability, and I am sure that the people of Bolsover and Britain will note that.

Even more effort will be made by hon. Members on both sides of the House and by organisations of and for disabled people, such as those who were here this week, to ensure once again that a private Member's Bill will succeed even in the face of Conservative Government opposition at the eleventh or even twelfth hour.

All hon. Members will agree on one point: we have come a long way in the past 25 years. If we now argue about disabled people's rights and how to outlaw discrimination rather than debating whether disability discrimination exists, that is largely because of the achievements of the Act that we are debating today. For the first time, the 1970 Act recognised the right of disabled people to legislative action on their behalf. The Act of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe was the first legislation anywhere in the world to deal with disabled people's access to buildings. It created a requirement to provide such access, so far as it was reasonable and practicable to do so.

On that basis, further improvements have been made and more will be done as a result of this year's legislation. More importantly, the issue of access was put on the agenda for the first time. Those responsible for the design

[Mr. Clarke]

and construction of buildings of all kinds began to ask themselves what they could or should do to make buildings accessible.

The debate on that issue will continue, and rightly so. Before the 1970 Act, such discussion simply did not take place. Likewise, on mobility and transport, the 1970 Act broke the barrier and made future advances possible. The orange badge scheme, which arose directly from the Act, has given the benefit of parking concessions to more than 1.5 million disabled people in Britain. Mobility allowance and Motability have added to the freedom of movement that disabled people rightly enjoy. The concessions that we have won on accessible transport during the passage of the Disability Discrimination Bill would not have been possible without the foundations laid down 25 years ago at the behest of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I should first point out that the House wants to hear hon. Members on both sides and also my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, so this will be the last time I give way.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He rightly pays tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) for introducing the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. But does he agree that for 20 of the past 25 years there have been Conservative Governments, who have provided the resources to implement many of the measures under that Act and more recent Acts, and that this Government have brought in major changes to the benefit of the long-term chronically sick and disabled? Over the past 15 years, resources for the chronically sick and disabled have trebled in real terms.

Mr. Clarke: Not only do I not agree, but I challenge the hon. Gentleman to produce in the debate, or later, evidence from one single organisation of disabled people which shares his view. I may as well tell him that he will look in vain for such evidence.

As a result of the 1970 Act, the special needs of children affected by dyslexia and autism and those who are deaf and blind were recognised for the first time. That marked the beginning of the provision of special needs education, which remains on the agenda during debates on current legislation. The recognition of those needs broke new ground and liberated many disabled children and adults from the effects of ignorance and neglect.

Mr. Duncan: The hon. Gentleman cannot even read.

Mr. Clarke: Few people outside will find this issue as amusing as the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), nor will they share his joy at the fact that Conservative Members delayed the start of the debate for 25 minutes.

Mr. Couchman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I hope that it is not a bogus point of order.

Mr. Couchman: No. I should like to point out that I was not laughing at what the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) was saying. My colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) may have giggled, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that I was not laughing.

Mr. Clarke: I withdraw that charge unreservedly. I would not wish for one second to visit the reputation of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) on the hon. Member for Gillingham. I am sure that he, too, would not welcome that.

The 1970 Act was the first time that the term "dyslexia" entered into statute. The very existence of dyslexia had not been recognised before that. Because of the 1970 Act, education providers have taken responsibility for supporting children affected by dyslexia. A campaign is under way to gain greater support for dyslexic adults. The fact that there is now a Britain-wide association of people affected by dyslexia campaigning on the issue is a direct result of the changes made by the 1970 Act. There were notable pioneers campaigning on behalf of dyslexics before 1970, but the legitimacy conferred on that condition by the 1970 Act allowed them to take the campaign on to the national plain.

Local authority services and benefits for disabled people were entirely discretionary before 1970, and in many places they did not exist. The 1970 Act imposed new duties and hugely increased the scope of public support. More significant than anything, there was a change of attitude and outlook on the part of local authorities and of disabled people themselves.

Between 1972 and 1982, public expenditure on benefits and services for those covered by the 1970 Act increased tenfold. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe indeed did a tremendous job in addressing the issue of resources. In May *The Times* reported that the 1970 Act had been responsible for 12 million acts of assistance in England alone. The value of such acts of assistance to millions of disabled people cannot be overstated. In Scotland the 1970 Act has been responsible for nearly 2 million acts of assistance, which is equivalent to one act of assistance for every third person—man, woman or child—living in Scotland.

The 1970 Act affected 12 Departments of state. It imposed on them new duties and responsibilities across a broad range of Government activity. That Act also led to the amendment of 39 existing Acts of Parliament. It is because of that that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe became the world's first Minister for disabled people's rights. The late Lord Wilson had the imagination, vision and concern to see that the full implementation of the 1970 Act required the creation of a single ministerial post to co-ordinate the work of all Government Departments. It was to do that job that my right hon. Friend was appointed to government in 1974. His party and the House have been well served by him in 22 years of continuous service representing Labour in government and in opposition on behalf of disabled people's rights.

Of all the effects of the 1970 Act, none is more important than the change in standing of disabled people in society, in their own eyes and in those of the community as a whole. In the past 25 years, more than in any other period of human history, disabled people have been in a position to advance their own interests and aspirations to the point where the pressure for full civil rights has become unstoppable. There have been delays

and obstacles along the way, but a single continuous thread joins the 1970 Act to the civil rights campaigns of the past three years.

It is not only in this country that disabled people have benefited from the effects of the "Alf Morris" Act; other countries have taken a lead from that legislation and countries such as the United States have now left British law far behind. That is the scale of the debt owed to my right hon. Friend. We also owe it to him and to the 6.5 million disabled people of our country to continue to build on what has been achieved in the past 25 years.

We need first to ensure that local authorities are able to provide the services for which they are responsible under the 1970 Act and successive Acts. If Parliament says that certain services are mandatory for local government to provide, central Government must ensure that the necessary resources are made available. That was the impact of the report by Sir Roy Griffiths, but the Government do not seem to have acknowledged that. If it is a breach of law to withdraw a mandatory service where there has been no decline in need, the Government must act to ensure that the law is not broken. The Minister will be aware that that issue is before the High Court because the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation has seen the need to test the application of the law. We await the court's findings with interest.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will raise a number of other issues, should they catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, on which the Minister's view would be welcome. Many of those issues have been addressed in the civil rights legislation proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and my hon. Friends the Members for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) and for Derbyshire, North-East. Ministers have addressed some of those issues in the Disability Discrimination Bill, although not always to the extent that disabled people want. Ministers have not yet taken on board, however, that disabled people will not be satisfied with piecemeal concessions. It is that feeling, above all, that we owe to the 1970 Act, because it is because of it that disabled people demand equality as a right, not as a concession. It is because of that Act that disabled people will not allow themselves to be patronised or told what is good for them—even when they cannot be heard in parts of the Houses of Parliament. They insist that they should be involved in decisions about care and initiatives to improve their ability to play a full part in the life of the community.

On that basis, I ask the House to join in celebrating 25 years of growing recognition of the rights of disabled people. I ask hon. Members to join me in applauding the Act of Parliament that made that possible. I also ask hon. Members to consider the lessons of the past quarter of a century when they come to make decisions about current legislation in a few days' time. We should not neglect the opportunity to build yet greater achievements on the foundations laid 25 years ago. In this Session, if we have the opportunity, or in the next if we do not, we should make the celebration of the "Alf Morris" Act the launching pad for a further new chapter in the story of the emancipation of 6.5 million disabled people of this country, to stand for ever as a beacon to the rest of the world.

7.49 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Alistair Burt): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for giving the House an opportunity to mark the 25th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. I am equally grateful for the opportunity to take part, from my new perspective as Minister with responsibility for disabled people, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind and generous welcome. I look forward to working across the Floor of the House with him for some time to come.

I am also pleased to take the opportunity to pay a genuine tribute to the first holder of the office, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). It is not easy following the right hon. Gentleman around Manchester, as I do now on occasions in my role as sponsor Minister for that great and wonderful city. The right hon. Gentleman has a deserved reputation, built on his long-standing work for disabled people, and of course his pioneering work in relation to the 1970 Act. It is therefore a great pleasure to take the opportunity to say kind words about him and to wish him continuing success as he works wholeheartedly for disabled people.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As the parliamentary private secretary to the late Dick Crossman, who was the Secretary of State at the time of the legislation, I had at first hand a worm's eye view—but a very close one—of the work that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) did. Frankly, he persuaded people against their better judgment. I also pay tribute to several civil servants in the then Elephant and Castle.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: I see my right hon. Friend nodding. They were as good allies as a man wanting to do good could get. Tribute should be paid to those civil servants, led by the late Alan Marre.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman makes his own point. He also discreetly lifts a veil in relation to the way in which the then Labour Government regarded that legislation—a veil that was not lifted by the hon. Member for Monklands, West, for some reason. It is possible that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe may tell us more about that, and that may help the House to take a less partisan view of the way in which Governments have regarded disability legislation in the past. I shall say more about that later, but I also acknowledge, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned it, the work of civil servants, who have been devoted in their assistance to disabled people, serving all Governments over many years.

I pay tribute to my two immediate predecessors. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott) gave long and devoted service to disabled people from this Dispatch Box. Those who know the workings of government know how difficult it sometimes is to achieve one's aims, and my right hon. Friend worked hard and consistently for disabled people and achieved many successes, as I shall detail shortly. For his work he deserves to be well remembered by disabled people and all those people who have supported them.

I also pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, the present Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague). In his relatively short time as Minister with responsibility for

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disabled people, he guided the Disability Discrimination Bill through most of its stages with a decency and a respect for both sides of the House that no doubt was responsible for his elevation to his present position.

However, the country generally has been well served by Ministers for disabled people on both sides of the House. I shall say more later about the non-partisan way in which that subject might best be approached.

It is not an overstatement to say that the passage of the 1970 Act was an historic landmark in the progress of disabled people towards taking their full place in society. The vision and tenacity of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe rendered the country immense service—not only those among us with disabilities but all of us. The 1970 Act has been called a charter for chronically sick and disabled people, and so it was. In administrative terms, the Act placed on local authorities a duty in section 1 to establish the numbers of disabled people in their area needing help. Section 2 followed that up by describing and categorising the help to be provided.

The Act went further than simply making additional material provision for disabled people. It also provided the momentum for changing attitudes to disabled people among statutory authorities, the caring professions and the public at large.

I am indebted to the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe for his courtesy in informing me earlier this week of the book produced by RADAR in celebration of the 25 years of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. The book says that, when the right hon. Gentleman rose to move the Second Reading of his Bill on Friday 5 December 1969, among the things he said was that most disabled people wanted more than anything else to lessen their dependence on other people, to live their own lives as normally as possible in their own homes with their own families and to have the opportunity to contribute to industry and society as fully as their abilities allowed.

That determination to change attitudes towards disabled people has been as much at the cornerstone of so much work that has been done since the passing of that Act as any provisions in the Act. The recognition that attitudes had to change, and that full weight had to be given to those sentiments among disabled people, was the watershed on which so much has grown after that.

The process of change has continued and intensified in the intervening 25 years. I pay credit to the hon. Member for Monklands, West for the provision that he introduced in 1985-86, which he mentioned earlier, which built on the 1970 Act and blazed a trail for the empowerment of the most vulnerable people in society which is now a key feature of our community care policy.

Before the passage of the 1970 Act, the National Assistance Act 1948 was the first major piece of legislation empowering local authorities to promote the welfare of persons substantially handicapped as a result of illness, injury or congenital deformity. The Act was criticised by some people on account of its generality and the fact that it was founded in attitudes toward disabled people that were, often for the best motives, condescending, patronising and charitable.

The 1970 Act engendered in all of us a sense of what disabled people can achieve with appropriate opportunities and support. The promotion of independent living began with that Act and the process has continued through the health and community care reforms, about which the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), will say more.

Now, that process has been taken still further by means of a Government Bill designed to enshrine in legislation disabled people's right of access to things that we all take for granted—goods, services and employment and, through those rights, the right to be all that they can be, fulfilling aspirations and participating in and contributing to society at all levels.

At the time that the 1970 Act was passed, people with severe disabilities were often housebound and socially isolated. For example, it was far from commonplace to see wheelchairs in the streets. Aids and equipment for mobility and daily living were hard to come by. Appropriate housing was rarely available and, when it was, it tended to group disabled people together, increasing their sense of being somehow different and socially isolated.

The range of technical aids and equipment available for disabled people was beginning to be developed as new technology was applied, but the focus was often on basic utility rather than sophistication, customised designs and user acceptability. Expertise in designing effective and pleasing housing was in its infancy.

Confronted with all that, many people—sadly, many who were young, with hopes and ambitions for the future—had little option but to enter residential care. Those with high levels of dependency often ended up in hospital, with little opportunity for social contact with their peer group and few opportunities to develop their abilities and talents. Opportunities for leisure and sport were similarly constrained by lack of transport and access difficulties for those with mobility problems, sensory impairments or both.

Perhaps even more important, opportunities were constrained by public attitudes, which sought to exclude rather than include disabled people in the everyday use of facilities that the rest of us take for granted.

In employment, the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 was an important milestone for disabled people who wanted to work. It provided for vocational retraining, employment rehabilitation and sheltered employment for severely disabled people. Nevertheless, by today's standards, the range of employment opportunities available for disabled people was narrow. Occupations reserved for registered disabled people were in undemanding jobs such as lift and car park attendants. All too often, severely disabled people had to be satisfied with working in sheltered environments.

All that sounds depressing, and so it was. The 1970 Act was a watershed in helping to gear service provision to the needs of disabled people and in changing society's attitudes to them.

Until now, the analysis of what had happened and the significance of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act has been common ground between us. But the love of politics of the hon. Member for Monklands, West has helped to make him lose his grip on reality over what has happened in the care of disabled people since then. It is unfair to suggest to the House and the world at large that somehow, magically, all the compassion and care come from the Opposition while the Government are grudging and reluctant and nothing happens.

I have a list as long as my arm that I could read out detailing what the Government have done for disabled people. I could take the House through it, and I am tempted to do so after the hon. Gentleman's remarks, or I could give a briefer summary.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Burt: If the hon. Gentleman is rising to acknowledge what we have done, I am happy to give way.

Mr. Clarke: I am not rising to do that.

Mr. Burt: In that case, I shall read the list out.

Mr. Clarke: I was generous in giving way. The Minister was not doing too badly until that point. When he accuses me of making partisan points, he seems not to recall that I referred to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Will he explain why the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott)—I agree that there is great respect for him—was unable to win the battle, which was in due course won by someone who passed, like a ship in the night, and I think is now somewhere between here and Cardiff? Why, if the Government are now right, did they refuse to accept until two years ago that discrimination even existed?

Mr. Burt: I shall deal with some of the battles that have been won. If I remember correctly what I heard with my own ears, I venture to suggest that anyone who reads the debate and the hon. Gentleman's speech could be forgiven for believing that he was trying to portray a situation in which, by and large, the balance of good lay almost exclusively with the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* In that case, we shall have to beg to differ.

Mr. Clarke: Will the Minister give way? I gave way generously.

Mr. Burt: I shall rely on what people read into the hon. Gentleman's speech. I shall now seek to set the record straight. If the hon. Gentleman wants to be more generous towards my colleagues, I now give him the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Clarke: I think that it was Aneurin Bevan who asked: why look into a crystal ball when one can see it in the book? It can be seen in *Hansard*—time after time, Conservative Members have voted against the progress that we have advocated. There is one honourable exception to that, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who came into the Lobby with us to support a commission. Perhaps the Minister will give us the Government's current thinking on that.

Mr. Burt: I shall give the hon. Gentleman and the House the Government's current thinking in a little while. I shall now turn to the book rather than the crystal ball. I shall list the measures that the Government have introduced in relation to disabled people.

My hon. Friends have already made their points on overall expenditure. There has been a considerable increase in both benefits and personal social services under this Government. Between 1978-79 and the present date, there has been a 280 per cent. increase in spending in real terms on long-term sick and disabled people—a remarkable increase. Personal social services have increased by 60 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

Let us consider some of the Acts and regulations that have been introduced. I apologise to the House in advance as I may necessarily have to give a slightly longer list than I intended. The Education Act 1981 addressed many of the matters raised in the special educational needs report of the committee of inquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people. In that same year, the invalid care allowance was extended by the Government to cover non-relatives. The Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983 placed on local education authorities further requirements relating to assessment and statements for schoolchildren with special educational needs.

In 1983-84, the disablement advisory service was introduced by the Government. In 1984, the severe disablement allowance was introduced. In the same year, the code of good practice on the employment of people with disabilities—the first in Europe—was published by the Government. In 1985, the disabled persons transport committee was set up. The same year saw the introduction of the sheltered placement scheme and provisions were introduced in building regulations covering access for disabled people to non-domestic buildings.

In 1986, the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill was introduced. The Education Reform Act 1988 established the Secretary of State's duty to maintain certain schools. Governors also had to ensure that there were appropriate provisions for pupils with special educational needs. The Act also ensured that the national curriculum was made available to all children with special educational needs until the requirement was formally disapplied or modified.

Mr. Clarke: I thought that the Minister might have given credit to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) for his Act. The Minister referred to the 1986 Act—why was half that Act implemented by Lady Thatcher's Government but not one finger raised to implement the rest under the present Prime Minister?

Mr. Burt: As the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea, will say when he winds up the debate, that is largely because the community care provisions have taken the provisions of that Act a considerable distance.

In 1988, the disabled persons transport committee produced a recommended specification for buses used to operate local services—a further development for transport. The independent living fund was also introduced in 1988. In 1989, all new licensed taxis in London were required to be wheelchair accessible. The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 promoted development of domiciliary, day and respite services in an entirely novel way. In that same year, income-related benefits were increased above the inflation rate on premiums for the long-term sick and disabled and the child disablement premium more than doubled.

Mobility allowance was extended to deaf blind people in April 1990 and to amputees in April 1991. In the same year, a consultative document was produced on employment and training for people with disabilities. It took stock of current provision and informed further decisions into the 1990s.

In 1991-92, there was a reorganisation of specialist disability services in employment through locally based placing, assessment and counselling teams. The Further

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and Higher Education Act 1992 consolidated previous legislation and laid a specific duty on local education authorities and the Further Education Funding Council to have regard to the requirements of people with learning difficulties in securing further education provision. In April 1992, the disability living allowance was introduced to amalgamate help already available to people and extend help for the first time to 350,000 less severely disabled people who had previously been unable to qualify.

I could continue, but now the balance of my speech has been affected simply by listing those achievements. I did so solely to show that in the House, as a whole, there is a common determination to work for disabled people. The work of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe has been supplemented by that of many hon. Members from both sides of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) has done tireless work since he entered the House, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). Work on disability has been carried on by many hon. Members in the House.

I fully accept the achievements of previous Labour Governments and the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, when he was the first Minister for the Disabled. But Conservatives can stand proudly on our record for disabled people; we have done and are doing a great deal. I bow to no one in my admiration for what we have tried to do and the provision that we have made. I hope that, when the speeches are read in *Hansard*, proper tribute will be paid to the achievements of my colleagues. Perhaps I have given a slightly more balanced picture of what has been achieved over the years.

Since the 1970 Act, we can identify key engines of change. First, as I said earlier, the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe pioneered an acceptance of the view that disabled people do best away from institutionalised care and should be given the support that they need to sustain independent living in their own homes wherever possible. They should certainly be treated as integral and valued members of communities.

Secondly, the explosion of technology has assisted. Not only has it helped with the development of more sophisticated aids and equipment, housing adaptations and environmental controls, but such technological advance has opened up many more job opportunities for disabled people.

Thirdly, there has been a development of the political and economic influence of disabled people, and of organisations of and for them. Those developments have often been assisted by what the Government have been asking for in terms of consultation and listening to people. We have stimulated the creation of such groups, which we fully support.

Fourthly, advances in medical science have prevented disabling conditions occurring in the first place, ameliorated their effects and prolonged life. Rehabilitation techniques have been developed which aim to move people who are disabled through illness, accident or trauma through the health services and into independent living, education and employment. We should all pay tribute to those in the medical profession—doctors and those who care for patients after surgical treatment—for their tremendous work.

Lastly, we have seen the health and community care reforms, which evolved from long-standing trends in social care and which have encouraged fundamentally new ways of doing things. The reforms reinforced the historical movement away from institutionalised care towards supporting people in their own homes. They were further important points on the continuum of change from 1948 through 1970 to 1991 and beyond. They have strengthened the concept of needs assessment and better focusing of services and have given primacy to the needs and preferences of users and their carers.

A further major development of which the community care reforms are a manifestation is the acceptance—encapsulated in "The Health of the Nation" strategy—that health and welfare are no longer the narrowly defined provinces of the Departments of Health and of Social Security, nor are they only matters for health commissioners and providers and social services departments. Health and well-being are about addressing the holistic needs of disabled and vulnerable people.

The challenge is for agencies covering health, social care, housing, employment, education, leisure and a host of others to work together at the levels of central and local government and the community. The challenge is enormous and progress is critical to the continuing development of our policies and services. Again, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will wish to say more about that in the context of the recently announced community care development programme.

I should now turn briefly to what we believe is a further milestone on the road to full integration of disabled people: the Disability Discrimination Bill. I understand that there has been much debate about the Bill, and we shall return to it shortly when it returns from another place. Although we do not all agree on every detail of the Bill, I think there is wide acknowledgement that it will be a giant step towards ending discrimination against disabled people.

The Bill provides an armoury of weapons to tackle discrimination. For the first time, it will be unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person who is looking for a job; it will be unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in the provision of goods, facilities and services; and it will be unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person trying to buy or rent a house or let an office or a business.

There are extensive powers to set access standards for new buses, trains and taxis. Education providers will have to furnish more information about the access arrangements that they make for disabled pupils and students. Finally, the National Disability Council will be created as an independent voice for disabled people to ensure that the Government are kept informed of how well existing measures to end discrimination are working and to recommend further steps where necessary.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I am very grateful to the Minister for giving way, as he has done on several occasions. He has outlined the main objectives of the Disability Discrimination Bill and he will be aware that another place overturned the Government's view on the issue of definition. It would be very helpful if the Minister would explain the Government's thinking in that regard. We

would welcome the Government's acceptance of the view of the other place, which reflects the overwhelming opinion of organisations for disabled people.

Mr. Burt: Following the reverse in another place, the Government made it clear that we would be seeking a reversal of that decision here.

Mr. Clarke: Disgraceful.

Mr. Burt: It is not disgraceful. We believe that it would extend the definition far too widely. Next week, I am to meet hon. Members from both sides of the House to discuss the matter further, so I shall reserve my judgment until then. However, it would be wrong for me to suggest that our intention is any different from what I have said and from what the Government said at the time.

Mr. Dalyell: I feel rather like the bad fairy for making this intervention. The Minister referred to the legislation concerning taxis. I have caught many taxis in New Palace Yard and taxi drivers often ask me what we are doing introducing legislation that will make it much more expensive for them when they might be asked to provide disabled facilities only once or twice a year. I do not know whether that is true, but that is what I am told.

Taxi drivers also say that any disabled person who wishes to travel by taxi could telephone for a taxi and the facilities would be laid on. It does not seem very sensible to impose such facilities on every taxi in the city. I am interested to hear what the Government have to say about that.

Mr. Burt: I am tempted to let the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) deal with that intervention. Why should a disabled person be prevented from hailing a taxi on the street when a person in any other condition could hail the first taxi with a yellow light, climb in and travel to his or her destination? Why should disabled people believe that they cannot hail taxis like anyone else? We have drawn a distinction between the taxi and the private hire vehicle, but it goes to the concept of rights: that public facility is available for everyone else and a disabled person should not feel any different. It is important that disabled people should be able to hail taxis on the street and our legislation gives effect to that. I do not wish to pursue the matter further now and I think that the hon. Gentleman's colleagues would agree with my general sentiment.

Mr. Dalyell: Taxi drivers tell me that they are seldom hailed by disabled people.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Because they cannot get into the taxis.

Mr. Dalyell: That may be the answer, but I think that it is important to set the matter straight.

Mr. Burt: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman's intellectually honest intervention helps the House considerably. I take his point, but in a sense his colleagues have answered his question: disabled people will not hail a taxi if they believe that they will be rebuffed. They do not want to hear the bloke in the taxi say, "Can't take you, guv." The Government have introduced that provision to ensure that all people have equal rights.

In short, I believe that the Bill's provisions commit us all to the creation of a fair, open and accessible environment for disabled people. I wish to take up the brief intervention of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in relation to Parliament. The Bill will require Parliament to be subject to its provisions regarding access, whereas the civil rights legislation did not make that requirement. I sincerely hope that disabled facilities in the House will improve in the meantime. I listened to the hon. Gentleman's exchange this afternoon with my right hon. Friend the Lord President, who I know intends to take up the matter. The legislation will apply to Parliament and assist with rights of access there. I hope that that is good news.

Mr. Skinner: As the Minister is in a conciliatory mood—and because he might be able to do something—will he ensure that microphone facilities are available for meetings? That is another problem. There will be further meetings, and in November a large lobby of disabled people will come to Parliament. They have asked me by letter—I have forwarded the letter to the Minister and he will see it shortly—to ensure that a portakabin is provided, as there are no proper toilet facilities for disabled people outside Parliament, and the facilities are not too good inside either.

Mr. Burt: I heard the hon. Gentleman's exchange with my right hon. Friend the Lord President this afternoon and I know that he takes those matters extremely seriously. We shall both talk to the House authorities about the facilities available to see what improvements might be made in time for the November lobby. I suspect that the problem with microphones might have had something to do with the fact that the House was sitting at the time of the meeting, but I really do not know enough about the matter. It is not my position to answer those questions, but I take the hon. Gentleman's point. As Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, it is within my remit to ask questions and to try to do what I can, and I shall certainly do that.

Despite my short spell so far as Minister for disabled people, I have already met representatives of a large number of disability organisations. Whatever their justifiable position, they have all emphasised the importance of pressing ahead to implement the Bill once it has received the Royal Assent. I have been happy to reassure them that their hopes in that regard exactly match the Government's intention. I have been equally pleased to concur with their view that the successful implementation of the legislation will demand close co-operation between the Government, business and, above all, disabled people and their representatives.

Looking forward to the near future, my colleagues and I in government will be taking forward the objectives actively. The nuts and bolts of the legislation will be the detailed regulations, codes of practice and guidance. We shall begin before the end of the year by consulting widely on drafts of an employment code of practice and a guide explaining in practical terms what is meant by "disability" as defined in the Bill. The aim will be to complete the consultation and lay final versions of the code and the guide before Parliament in time for the employment rights to take effect by the end of 1996.

In the new year, I expect to have set up the National Disability Council. I shall be asking the council, as one of its first tasks, to prepare a draft code of practice on the first rights of access to goods and services that we plan to implement towards the end of 1996. Those rights will

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ensure that disabled people are not refused service or offered a lower standard of service because of their disability.

At the same time as the council publishes its draft code for consultation, I expect to consult on a draft timetable for implementing the remaining rights of access. Those rights will require reasonable changes to practices which make access impossible or unreasonably difficult, the provision of auxiliary aids to facilitate access and the removal of physical barriers where an inaccessible service cannot be provided by a reasonable alternative means.

That dual consultation exercise will be the first of what I expect to be many examples of a close relationship between the Government and the council.

Disabled people and business will require a lot of information about the legislation. I confirm that we shall set up at least a telephone information line to meet those needs. We plan to discuss with disabled people and business how best to design that service.

We shall also need mechanisms to resolve disputes. The services of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service will be available to help resolve disputes about the new employment rights. We have already announced our intention of creating a special support service to help sort out disputes arising under the rights of access to goods and services in the Bill.

We envisage a service that would provide expert assistance to existing local advice points. Again, discussions with service providers and disabled people will be necessary before we finalise the details. We have not been able to go as far as we would have liked by now, as a number of organisations were not in a position fully to discuss the matter with us. When the Bill is enacted—we hope that it will be soon—we will be able to take the matter further. I regard it as an important part of ensuring that the Bill has the effectiveness and the teeth that Conservative Members want it to have. Opposition Members believe that it can work only in a different way, but I am determined to secure it in this way.

Nobody knows what the future holds, but I am confident that the measures will lead to much greater awareness of the abilities and aspirations of disabled people. The Bill will help positively to change people's attitudes and actions and allow the nation to benefit from the skills and abilities that disabled people have previously been denied the opportunity to display.

I hope that the House will continue to serve disabled people well, and in that we shall remember the contribution for a long time made by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe.

8.21 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I, too, welcome the Minister to his new post. I also welcome the chance to debate the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which is a reminder of the progress that disabled people have made and of the work that remains to be done to secure full equal rights for them.

Looking back, it is almost unbelievable that politicians were so dismissive of disabled people. Between 1959 and 1964, there was not one debate in the House on disabled people. The 1951 Ministry of Health guidance to local authorities was not revised for the following 19 years. Before the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, many disabled people were treated not as second-class citizens but more as non-people without any rights. Before the Act, we did not really know how many disabled people there were in Britain. We are still a bit hazy about it, but at least we have a figure—6.5 million. The Minister for Education at the time even inquired why the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) wanted to help young people and children with dyslexia. He said that the condition simply did not exist.

Before the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was implemented there was no right to cash benefits for disabled people. Non-contributory benefits as a right were barely contemplated. Local authority services were discretionary and often non-existent. Against that background, the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe introduced his Bill, and I salute him for doing so. His measure challenged the arrogant and complacent people in the House who would not give disabled people their rights. It challenged the complacency of Richard Crossman, the then Labour Secretary of State for Social Services, who I understand tried to get the right hon. Gentleman to drop his Bill—thank goodness for independent Back Benchers who are willing to stand up to Ministers. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman again.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Lady is going over the top. I was the late Richard Crossman's PPS. It was not a question of complacency: there were real difficulties. I am not making a party point as the Conservative party at that time was represented by a man called Richard Wood who had a wooden leg. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House certainly did not regard the disabled as non-people. The hon. Lady should be careful about using extreme language. Of course there were matters that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) put right, but the hon. Lady should not condemn everybody at that time.

Ms Lynne: The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe fought to ensure that the Bill was enacted and, according to what I have read, Richard Crossman tried to get him to drop the Bill. It is on the record and, despite what the hon. Gentleman says, it is there in black and white.

Thank goodness for independent Back Benchers who fight against Ministers. That is what is happening now. Some Conservative Members are fighting Ministers to get more services for disabled people.

Mr. Dalyell: I cannot let this go. I was Crossman's PPS. If the hon. Lady is going to raise the subject, I have the right to put the record straight. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe was asked to drop the Bill, but on the assumption that the Government would introduce a Bill of their own. That Labour Government were not heartless.

Ms Lynne: That sounds exactly like what happened last year when the Government wanted hon. Members to drop the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill because they were introducing their own Disability Discrimination Bill. I cannot see any difference.

As the Liberal Democrat social security and disability spokesperson, I should like to express my admiration of the work of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and of his initial decision, his vision and his courage. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should respect him for introducing such a wide-ranging Bill, which, for the

first time, established rights for disabled people. He has continued to fight alongside members of all political parties for civil rights for disabled people and I certainly hope that we will succeed.

The Act is a reminder of what can be done. It imposed new duties on 12 Departments of state and amended 39 Acts of Parliament. One or more sections of it have been used by 12 million disabled people. It has also been an inspiration to other countries. In 1970 we led the world in disability legislation. In 1995, even after the implementation of the Government's Disability Discrimination Bill, we shall lag behind a number of countries.

Mention must be made of the implementation of the Act. Local councils have difficulty in meeting their statutory duties under the Act, especially since the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Act 1993, and it is not reaching the people for whom it was intended. We must fully implement the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act and provide full civil rights for disabled people. That is what we are seeking.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act awakened the aspirations of disabled people and now, 25 years later, we need to push the frontiers further to build on what has been achieved and carry on the just fight for equal rights for disabled people.

8.29 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): When I saw this debate on the Order Paper, it struck me that it would be one of those relatively rare occasions when there would be agreement in principle in all parts of the House—that although there would be a difference of emphasis, there would be a high degree of consensus, and that has emerged.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) took exception to what he viewed as filibustering by some of my hon. Friends. I can understand why he felt that way on entering the Chamber. As someone who had sat through the previous debate and tried to make a point of order, I must tell him that passions were running high. If he does not accept my judgment, when he reads *Hansard* in the morning he will see that passions were running high. My point of order was certainly not bogus, although it might have been a trifle optimistic. I assure him that there was no attempt to filibuster.

Although I do not profess to have the expertise of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) or of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), long before I entered the House I was aware that among its pioneers was the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. I was aware of him not only because of his own efforts but because my local Member of Parliament at that time was my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). There have probably been times beyond number when the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and my hon. Friend have acted in concert—very often in the same Lobby, while I was acting in concert in a different Lobby. Anyone who takes an interest in politics knows that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe has completely changed the nature of the debate, for the reasons mentioned tonight. If we disagree now, it is only over how far and how quickly one can go.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I have received a note from the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) saying that although he had hoped to speak in this debate, his flu and throat infection have grown worse and his voice is not up to it. As the hon. Gentleman said, the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) has worked long and hard, with great distinction, over many years.

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be happy to read those remarks. It was typical of the right hon. Gentleman that he made them.

Most Conservatives would say that the duty of the state is to look after people who cannot look after themselves, but to let everybody else get on with it. If ever there was a section of society that needs help, it is disabled people. It is said to be a moral issue, and it is. It is not so much about granting rights, which are integral, but about not withholding rights that our fellow citizens should have.

In my three years as a junior Employment Minister, I learnt that it is not only morally right to help disabled people to make the most of their potential in the workplace but that it makes good economic sense as well. For a relatively modest outlay, one can create the means for somebody to achieve their human potential and make an economic contribution as well. That was not my direct responsibility, but any hon. Member who has served in a Government will know that Ministers often double up for colleagues. I was constantly amazed that employers had not realised the amount of help available in the provision of facilities for the disabled, or had not put themselves in the position of others. What a difference that can make.

Although it makes good moral and economic sense to help disabled people, that sometimes involves massive expenditure. Some people might argue that one could not spend money on anything better, but anyone who has seen a Chief Secretary labour in a Government of either political complexion realises that it is not as easy as one might think. This year, the amount spent on helping disabled people will rise to £19.5 billion, which is a substantial sum, and money does not grow on trees.

My hon. Friend the Minister made the point that there is no monopoly on compassion on either side of the House. To do the best that can be done, the economy must be run in such a way that it generates the required tax revenues. I do not say this in a combative way, but it is of direct relevance to the prospects of disabled people to generate the sort of money required. Constituents often write to me saying that the Government have free access to money and have only to produce some new money.

People write to me every day saying that their demands are perfectly straightforward and can be delivered by the Government—decreased taxation for them but increased expenditure in the areas of their choice. The Government are required to square that circle. Every penny that we spend on any worthwhile endeavour ultimately comes from the pockets of, for the most part, ordinary working people. Their numbers, for reasons that we need not examine this evening, are decreasing. Even as we speak, there are about 3.8 workers—in the sense of taxpayers—for every pensioner. By 2010, that figure will have fallen to 2.4 workers. We must face and wrestle with the implications. Even under this Government, taxation is too high. Whichever party is in power as we move into the next century, the decreasing body of taxpayers will place a limit on how much they are prepared to spend.

Some people may argue that the way to square the circle and help the disabled is to soak the rich—a proposal usually advanced by people who will not be among the

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contributors. However, 89 per cent. of this country's tax revenues are generated by basic rate taxpayers. The hope that a crock of gold will be available from a future Government, to be tapped in a meaningful way to make a significant difference, will never materialise.

When I was in America in 1987, I spoke to a doctor about fibre-optic bypass. He told me that the technology was fast arriving to help people who fracture their spinal column—for example, in a riding accident. Provided the area of trauma is localised by applying dry ice or using other specialised techniques, it should be possible to introduce a fibre-optic bypass which, with a powerpack, should enable the injured person to function. I said to the doctor that such technology must be years ahead but he said it was only 10 to 15 years ahead. He said, "How will you function when you encounter a row of paraplegics in wheelchairs outside your constituency surgery? If your wife, son or daughter was in a wheelchair today, you would not say that you were sorry, but that public sector constraints are such that you cannot find the £10 million needed for the disabled." He was right. I would not say that to a member of my family.

That technology may not be with us yet, but when it comes it will put a great strain on the resources of the Government of the day. Some pretty hard choices will have to be made. Although cliches make people groan, their good feature is that they fulfil a useful task because they usually encapsulate a truth, the sight of which is all too easy to lose. Against that background, I say that it will be a question of balance. That will always be the position when it comes to determining the amount that we can afford to expend. We must also consider how far we can take the public with us.

In that sense I was much impressed by the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the hon. Gentleman is an honourable man who is capable of bringing us up with a jolt in ways that we do not expect. He referred to London taxis. I think that I am right in saying—this is the figure in my mind—that only three of 100,000 taxi rides in London are taken by disabled people. An argument quickly developed.

Those who take what might be considered to be a cynical attitude might have thought that the hon. Gentleman was a hard-hearted Tory and that my hon. Friend the Minister, in fulfilling a most unusual task for him, was a warm-hearted liberal. But the point was made. In effect, there were two debates. There was the human-right approach of saying, "I may want only to make the occasional trip in a taxi but why cannot I hail a cab like anyone else?" There was also the question of practicality. A London cab driver would have to have an extremely expensive piece of equipment. I am told that it would be the equivalent—taxi drivers talk a great deal when one rides in their cabs—of taking out a large mortgage on a house. We must examine the morality, if that it can be called, of forcing taxi drivers, for example, to kit up to such an extent when the facility may not be used.

I have in mind two examples that I am sure are mirrored in constituencies throughout the country. Two buildings in my constituency, to which the public have access, had to have a substantial lift for disabled people as a condition of planning permission. So far, so good. We can all agree with that provision because it sounds entirely right. However, the lifts have never been used. In one instance, for reasons that I shall not go into on the Floor, it would be inconceivable that a lift designed for use by disabled people would ever be used. In the other instance, there has been no call for the lift. That lift has not been hidden away. That can be said in both instances. Indeed, the owners of the premises, having spent the money on the lifts, say, "Would it not be a good thing if the lifts could be used?"

The attitude of the business men who had to install the lifts has not been affected. We should pause to reflect, however. Is there an argument that will have to be taken on board in due course? It is that there is a human right to use such a lift if a disabled person wants to do so. In the end, however, are we entitled to say that it does not matter whether the lift is used, or may never be used, because a point of principle is involved? Points of principle are easier to establish in the end if someone else is paying the bill.

What I am about to say might be judged as slightly opportunistic. If it is, perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will write. I received visits this week, as well as letters, from representatives of Mencap. They are drawing attention to the fact that they are about to be charged for the provision of day services by local authorities. Letters are outstanding from my hon. Friend the Minister on that subject. I do not at present understand the practicalities. It would be interesting to know more about the matter.

The idea that there is a monopoly of compassion in one area is one that ultimately would not attract support. When there is an almost empty Chamber, it is sometimes tempting to ask, "Who takes an interest in what we say?" I have sometimes been heartened and on other occasions warmed by the number of people who write to tell me that they have read my contributions to debates in *Hansard*. For those who take an interest in these matters, the reading of a *Hansard* debate will be as interesting if the Chamber is poorly attended or is full. There is no doubt about that. We must take into account the reputation of the House and the confidence of our constituents that we are fulfilling a useful function.

Although the debate has not been without humour and a degree of point scoring, that has not been the entirety. I speak from a Conservative perspective even though there is a high degree of consensus. I suppose that the best statement of what I regard as my position and of what might be achieved might read as follows:

> "In the field of social security the Conservatives can offer a decent prospect for the future because Conservatives have policies that will prevent inflation eating up social benefits and foster new prosperity to pay for better welfare. Conservatives are committed to a fair society and a caring society. Conservatives have greatly improved help for the most vulnerable people in our society. The poorest pensioners' incomes have risen 15 per cent. and 5 million pensions will receive cash increases of about 10 per cent."

Those are matters of fact and not of partisan point scoring in the sense that one is denying that others would have sufficient compassion. The statements that are contained within the quotation encapsulate two vital features. First, they accept that Conservatives are as committed as the members of any other party would be to do their best to care for people for whom they have a responsibility as fellow citizens. Secondly, we have enough confidence in our fiscal policies to think that we are generating taxable income.

It is often said that plagiarism is the sincerest form of flattery. I suppose that politicians are wont to raid one another's speeches to find elegant words to make particular points. I think that the words that I have quoted are magnificent. They stand as a fine testament and they are as valid now as when they were included in the previous two election addresses of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

8.47 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): First, I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on his Bill as it then was, which was 25 years ago, and on the 25 years of consistent work that he has since done. It is a delight to see him still slogging away at it. I congratulate the Minister on his new job and on escaping from his previous one. He looks extremely happy about that escape. In his absence, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his new post in the shadow Cabinet. It is a significant appointment, and a symbolic one.

The Minister was right to say that we, the Opposition, cannot claim all the credit. Not even my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe can do that. Equally, the Government cannot claim credit for all the advances that have been made in responding to the needs of disabled people in the past two decades.

The greatest credit should go to disabled people. They have been battling away, especially during the past few years, to find new ways of publicising what they are doing. They have been securing tremendous public support. The same can be said of carers. Disabled people and carers have been lobbying, writing letters and generally making sure that Members know what is going on and are aware of the pressures they face. They have also been chaining themselves to buses and been rescued by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

There is no doubt that advances have been made in upholding and extending the rights of disabled people. Unfortunately, many questions remain unanswered. I hope that they will be taken up by the next Labour Government. I have in mind the question that was put to me yesterday—not for the first time—in my constituency by Rene Harding, who attended a lobby at Parliament. Why should she, on becoming a pensioner at 60 years of age, have her carer's allowance removed? She looks after her adult daughter, who is severely disabled and a wheelchair user. Rene has to do everything for her daughter. When Rene is getting on in years and finding these tasks ever harder, she is deemed by the system not to need so much help. That is a farce and an insult. There are many quirks within the benefit system on which we must continue to concentrate with a view to ironing them out.

The lobby that Rene Harding attended focused on local authority charging policies for day care centres, and the failure of Government properly to fund care in the community. Those who attended were confronted by an illustration of what disabled people face. That has already been referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Monklands, West and for Bolsover. I shall mention it briefly, because I believe that it is a matter for Madam Speaker rather than the Minister.

A great deal of effort was made to assist the people attending the lobby. Although they could not use the Grand Committee Room, which they had booked, they managed to secure Westminster Hall, which was set up as a proper lobby, with Doorkeepers, a green card system, chairs, gas heaters to make the place vaguely habitable, and so on. The staff of the House did a great deal, as did hon. Members, to assist.

I witnessed the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), who managed more or less to make herself heard, unlike some others. Hon. Members had to bellow to make themselves heard to many people who were hard of hearing, among other problems. It was simply impossible to be heard. I believe that the ruling that a public address system cannot be used in Westminster Hall is a matter for the Speaker, and so I place it on record and hope that Madam Speaker will look at that and ensure that it does not happen again in future.

I want to make one rather specialist point: it is rather different from what has been raised before. My colleagues, and Conservative Members, have made the case on behalf of disabled people extremely cogently, but during the debates on the Disability Discrimination Bill and the private Member's Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), we returned again and again to discrimination against those who have the reputation of being disabled. In particular, it was of concern to many Labour Members that perfectly capable people could be discriminated against because of, say, genetic conditions—being HIV positive and many other reasons.

It was clear that employers and others can and do discriminate against such people on the grounds that they might at some stage in future be ill or require time off. That seemed to us not only unfair in itself, but something that prevents people from being productive. It prevents them from being independent individuals, and forces them into dependency. During Report stage of the Disability Discrimination Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) raised a new dimension when he pointed out that diabetes could be included in the argument.

That struck a strong chord with me, because I happen to be an insulin-dependent diabetic. Up until that point—at my advanced age—I had never thought of myself as disabled, although I must say that, shortly after being elected in 1992, I was contacted by the makers of a television programme, who said that they were making a feature programme on disabled Members of Parliament, and wanted me to participate on behalf of the Labour party. I was somewhat surprised, and declined, telling them that I was not disabled and that there must be some mistake. Since then, I have had cause to rethink the matter, partly thanks to my hon. Friend here.

There are many aspects of diabetes that do not properly fit into this debate, and I shall not weary the House with them. It is important, however, to remind the House that diabetes affects about 2 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom. There are 750,000 diagnosed, and an estimated 250,000 undiagnosed, diabetics. Some 18,000 of those diagnosed are under 20, and therefore have to live the remainder of their lives with the condition. Some 60,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Of all cases, about a quarter are insulin-dependent.

The difficulty of the condition, briefly, is that the diabetic has to balance an artificial intake of insulin with diet and exercise. Getting the balance wrong can lead to

[Mr. Colin Pickthall]

hypoglycaemia—a sudden reduction of blood sugar levels, which can affect brain and body co-ordination, sometimes quite badly. It can also lead to hyperglycaemia, which is less dangerous but can be very damaging over time. Obviously, these can be serious disabilities and can lead to terrible complications, such as kidney failure, amputations, heart disease and so on in the longer term.

The health service and many individuals put a great deal of time and care into ensuring that the correct balance is maintained and that these problems do not arise. The types of insulin and their method of delivery have been immensely improved over time, particularly in the past 20 years, and knowledge and expertise are much greater.

The key point is that a well-balanced diabetic has regular blood and eye checks, has a better diet, tends to take more sensible exercise—I do not include myself in all this, by the way—and is acutely aware—nor do I include myself in this—of his or her body, its failings and functions. In essence, he or she is likely to be, in almost every respect bar one, healthier and better tuned than fellow citizens without diabetes, yet the moment insulin-dependent diabetes is diagnosed, car insurance is usually increased, it becomes much more difficult to get a mortgage or life insurance, driving licences have to be applied for every three years, and many job application forms demand declaration of the condition.

Therefore, immediately, for thousands of people a year who become insulin-dependent diabetics and are struggling to adapt to quite a traumatic experience, many extra difficulties are flung at them by the system. In a sense, they are fortunate, but they are a microcosm of what happens to a large number of people with disabilities of all kinds.

The people who are most discriminated against are those whose employment is terminated and permanently denied by their becoming insulin-dependent diabetics. This, I believe, is a problem that has been neglected by all the debates and legislation on disability discrimination that have come before the House. Obviously, I accept a large share of blame for that.

For example, a constituent of mine, Thomas Wright, was a heavy goods vehicle driver from 1979 to 1984, when he contracted insulin-dependent diabetes. When his licence became due for renewal the following year, it was denied. He has been unable to work as an HGV driver ever since, even though his former employer is still, after all these years, active on his behalf to secure his licence again. Oddly, he is able to drive a minibus full of people should he so wish, but he cannot continue his career as an HGV driver.

There are many complications to Mr. Wright's story, with communications with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and so on, but the main point is that he has good control of his diabetes. He is well balanced and has a clean medical record from his doctor and specialist. The regulation that prevents him from pursuing his trade is, the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), who represents the Whips on the Conservative Benches, will be pleased to hear, a European one. It was passed in 1991. It is absolute, in that it takes no account of the individual's health record. In my view, it is wrong and discriminatory. There is a risk, certainly, in a diabetic driving any sort of vehicle, just as there is from people driving with hundreds of different medications, and people with heart disease and many other conditions.

Secondly, my friend, Mr. Tim Hoy, from Willesden, London, acquired insulin-dependent diabetes while a serving firefighter, a job which he loved, and he was instantly removed from active service. He was found another job in an office, but he has lost the career he enjoyed. He has written a book on the experience of diabetics in a variety of jobs and the difficulties that they face, which is shortly to be published.

Gary Cooper, of Christchurch, had a similar experience with the Dorset fire brigade, and his Member of Parliament has been active on his behalf. Mr. David Stevens, of Romsey in Hampshire, although insulin-dependent, was able to pass his medical to be a firefighter, but cannot be a firefighter because he cannot obtain a licence to drive a fire engine, which is a heavy goods vehicle.

All those men are physically fit, and even athletic. They control their diabetes well and have medical experts who are prepared to go into print to back them. However, all have been excluded from their careers. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) about the economic activity of disabled people; it is tremendously important, because there are many who, if it were not for discrimination, could be economically active, and therefore cease to be dependent and be more satisfied in their own life.

My last example is Ian Billsborough of Preston. He was a probationary police constable in the Lancashire force. He had done almost two years' probation when his career was terminated because he became an insulin-dependent diabetic. Despite his personal sympathy, the chief constable reported to me:

"All the medical officers have unanimously concluded that diabetes is a condition that bars any applicant from joining the constabulary."

That is nonsense. He continued:

"Mr. Billsborough could not, because of his condition, meet the requirement that he is fitted both physically and mentally to perform the duties of the office of constable."

That is despite the fact that there has been at least one insulin-dependent diabetic England international footballer.

Those are judgments by the EC, the Department of Transport, the fire brigade and the police service which are completely arbitrary and based on fear.

The inclusion of insulin-dependent diabetics in our anti-discrimination philosophy would mean that the individual medical case would be the prime matter for consideration. It would mean that discriminatory insurance premiums could be challenged. It would help to fulfil the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's avowed policy of getting as many individuals as possible driving again, including insulin-dependent diabetics and those suffering from conditions such as epilepsy or petit mal. Above all, it would mean that hundreds of men and women in key professions with essential expertise could continue to serve society, rather than rely on benefits.

I realise that I have pushed the parameters of the debate a little too far in one direction, but diabetes is a problem which is relatively neglected by the Department of Health—that is a subject for a different debate—and is being mishandled, piecemeal, by a variety of Departments. Its inclusion in a future Labour-led disabled people's rights Bill would correct many injustices and serve the country well.

9.1 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I join in the congratulations to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) in celebrating the 25th anniversary of his Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill, which became an Act in 1970.

In 1986, the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) also had the satisfaction of seeing a private Member's Bill go on to the statute book. No doubt he has marked his diary for the year 2011 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of that.

I had the satisfaction of getting a private Member's Bill on to the statute book this summer which I hope will help tenants of commercial premises, and I shall be marking my diary to make sure that that is appropriately celebrated in 25 years' time.

I had not realised until recently that it was the 1970 Act which led to the formation of the all-party parliamentary disablement group, which is one of the most active of the all-party groups. I very much welcome being a member of that group and an officer for some years now. It has brought together many common interests from both sides of the House. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) cannot be here, because I believe that he was a founder member of that group back in 1970, and has therefore served it for many years.

The Disability Discrimination Bill is currently going through Parliament. The all-party group can claim much credit for that, and although it does not have all the features which Opposition Members may have wanted, much credit is due to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), for the way in which he introduced it. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), all success in seeing that Bill through its final stages on to the statute book. It will make a big difference.

I particularly want to address my remarks tonight to the employment of disabled persons. It is right that we should be scrapping the quota, which never was a satisfactory approach. There are some 900,000 disabled persons in work, only perhaps 300,000 of whom are registered, and there are another 300,000 disabled people who are looking for work. We can do a great deal more to help those people to get into work.

I have recently been examining the workings of the supported employment scheme, which benefits some 21,500 disabled persons. They have been helped into jobs at a cost to the Exchequer that is put at £153 million a year, although I query that figure. I should certainly like the amount spent on the scheme to be increased—and, if we accept the figures that are tucked away at the back of the Remploy annual accounts, that would not involve any net cost to the Treasury.

If my hon. Friend the Minister cannot respond to my point this evening, perhaps he will find out whether I can be given written confirmation of the Government's full agreement to the method of calculation shown in the Remploy annual accounts. As the Government own the company, they presumably agree with that method of calculation.

Some interesting figures are tucked away in those accounts which I had not noticed until recently. I looked at the figures shown for five years and at the latest figure. The deficit—the excess of expenditure over income—is shown as £91 million in Remploy's most recent accounts, but under that figure is the company's estimate of the net cost after

"flowback and savings to the Exchequer".

That is shown as only £14 million; so somewhere there must be a detailed calculation showing that £77 million flows back to the Exchequer in what are described as net costs and savings.

I should like to know more about how the figure was calculated. It works out at £8,651 for each of the 8,900 disabled people employed by Remploy. If such benefits flow back to the Exchequer as a result of the employment of a disabled person who would not otherwise be employed, why do we not put more money into the supported employment scheme?

The voluntary placement aspect, which is illustrated very well in the work done by the Shaw Trust, costs only £4,500 per placement. Surely, if £4,500 can be spent to help a disabled person into work and if—according to the Remploy figures—that results in a saving of £8,600 to the Exchequer, the more we do the better, because an overall "profit" will result.

It seems that the more we spend the more we save. What is limiting the scheme? I should be very interested to know whether the Remploy figures are fully supported by the Treasury and other Government Departments, and, if so, exactly how they are calculated and whether the same calculation could be applied to people on the supported employment scheme. That strikes me as a good argument for taking the brakes off supported employment as a whole, which costs a total of some £153 million.

I commend the work done by the Shaw Trust, which now helps some 2,200 people into jobs at a cost of no more than £4,500 per person this year. Its £8.5 million grant is therefore very valuable, and questions are raised when that is compared with the cost of employing people through Remploy. Remploy has been expanding what is known as its "interwork scheme", for which the target this year is for 2,000 people to be employed. It seems that Remploy is acting in a similar way to the Shaw Trust, as a kind of job agency—at a similar cost of £4,500 per person per year.

There are, however, substantial costs for the factory workers who are employed in Remploy's 87 factories. The figures I have show that the cost of subsidising a job in those factories is now more than £12,000 a year for the 7,200 people who constitute this year's target. Those costs are substantially above those of the supported employment scheme—I would estimate, about £56 million this year. That would be enough to provide for 12,000 more jobs, at a cost of £4,500 each. If we take Remploy's calculations, that would give to the Treasury a total flowback of more than £100 million. If Remploy could operate more effectively and employ another 12,000 people on the same costings as, for instance, the Shaw Trust, the benefit to the Treasury would amount to more than £100 million.

One must ask: why is that not happening? I have been preparing a report, to be published by the Social Market Foundation on, I hope, 13 November, to explore ways in which Remploy could operate more effectively, so that more disabled people could be helped into jobs. Taking Remploy's own figures, it would not be at any greater cost to the Treasury; in fact, there might even be savings.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I would welcome having discussions with all interested parties. I know that the hon. Member for Monklands, West is interested in Remploy factories, and that he has visited factories in the north-west, and no doubt elsewhere. I would be interested in having discussions with him and with trade union representatives.

Only a few weeks ago, I had a useful and helpful meeting with Mr. David Martin of the National Union of Knitwear, Footwear and Apparel Trades, together with three employees of the Bolton Remploy factory: Mr. Bill Hardman, Ms Marlene Lockley and Mr. Trevor Wilson. I should be pleased to have further meetings with employees and with trade union representatives to discuss ways in which Remploy could operate more effectively.

The arguments that I am advancing in my report are along the lines that we could consider Remploy as an employee-owned trust, moving it out of the Government's direct control as a publicly owned business. It would be better for the employees, and for other disabled people who could also benefit if Remploy were more effective, to make it into an employee-owned trust, with a responsibility for entering into partnership agreements with other organisations. That would effectively help the management of the businesses to make Remploy run more effectively, bringing in the full resources of the private sector, and perhaps other organisations if they could help to partner existing factories.

Remploy has some 87 factories. One or two have closed recently and a danger exists that there could be more factory closures unless Remploy is run much more effectively. I should like those factories' future to be secured by Remploy entering into partnership arrangements with other organisations.

I am not in any way suggesting that I do not want Remploy to succeed and prosper: it is for that very reason that I am preparing the pamphlet. Many more disabled people could be helped into jobs if Remploy were able to use its substantial subsidy, which comes to some £94 million a year. It is a massive subsidy for an organisation whose turnover is only about £140 million a year. The subsidy is greater than the wages bill for the disabled employees, which raises questions about how Remploy could need such a massive subsidy.

I therefore would not argue that less money should be spent in helping disabled people into work. As I said, I should like more money spent on that, but it should be spent more effectively than it is now, so that the flowback savings to the Exchequer, if those figures can be substantiated, would be even greater.

That was the gist of what I wanted to concentrate on. This has been an interesting debate. We have been able to look back. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), in her speech, much of which I support, said that we should build on what has been achieved. That is very much how we should be considering the matter today. We should be looking ahead so that we can build on the 25 years of achievement since the Bill of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe reached the statute book.

Politics is a funny old business, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I suspect that, if he captures your eye, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) may make what would be a maiden speech from the Opposition Benches. If that is the case, I should like to obey the conventions of the House and welcome it. I think that it was the former right hon. Member for Waveney, now Lord Prior, who once told me that he thought that all the ills of the nation could be ascribed to the adversarial nature of the Chamber.

I cannot accept my former hon. Friend's arguments, as I have read them, for joining the Labour party, and I am sorry that we find ourselves on opposite sides of the Chamber. Perhaps if the Chamber were a different shape, or even if there were Cross Benches as there are in the other place, there might not have been quite such a divide to separate us. In any event, I think that there is much common ground between us on this subject.

I think that my argument that we should be spending more money on the sheltered employment scheme to increase flowback savings to the Treasury and thus benefit society as a whole by enabling more disabled people to work and make a full contribution to society will be accepted by all parties, and I hope that, when my pamphlet is published by the Social Market Foundation, it too will receive cross-party support.

9.15 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): It is a pleasure to contribute to this debate in recognition of the tremendous amount of work that has been done in the past 25 years in obtaining rights for disabled people. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) appreciates that in this country and internationally he is known as someone who has established rights for the disabled. As the president of a large disabled group that meets every Sunday in the Ogmore constituency, I can assure him that the Act that he introduced and the subsequent related measures to provide facilities for disabled people over the past 25 years have been greatly appreciated.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) that there is unity among the parties about the need to provide facilities for the disabled. In previous debates, we have rightly asked how we can pretend to legislate for the disabled when, although they can perhaps enter the mother of Parliaments, they cannot get to the Grand Committee Room or various other rooms.

Members of the Accommodation and Works Committee have met officers of the all-party group on disablement several times to try to deal with the justifiable criticism levelled in the Chamber at the House itself for not providing the necessary facilities to enable disabled people to have access to most rooms in it. In answer to a written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 8 February this year I, in my capacity as Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, outlined some of the projects that the Committee was pursuing to assist disabled people to gain access to the Palace of Westminster. I should like to take this opportunity to inform the House what progress has been made since then.

During the summer recess, we continued to implement many of the improvements recommended by experts to try to make the House more accessible. The new entrance that has been created in Black Rod's Garden enables people in wheelchairs to go directly to the start of the Line of Route. A ramp has been constructed at the entrance to Speaker's House giving access to the North Door. The ramps in Star Chamber Court allow access for people in

wheelchairs to the Strangers' Gallery via lift No. 1. The new ramp at the Medals Corridor enables them to go on to the Terrace, to the private dining rooms, and, via lift No. 15, to the Principal Floor and Committee Rooms. That lift has been specially adapted to include such features as relocated control panels, with embossed and illuminated buttons, hand rails to the sides and rear of each car and door edges with time-delay sensors. Lift No. 3 serving the Peers Gallery and lift No. 17 serving Speaker's House have been similarly adapted, as has one in the other place.

Modifications to lavatories have been carried out and there are now specially adapted facilities on each floor in the following locations: the Centre Curtain Corridor, the Lower Waiting Hall, opposite Committee Room 7 on the main Committee Corridor and opposite Committee Room 19 on the Upper Committee Corridor.

In addition, a continuous handrail has been ordered for installation on the Strangers Staircase and a platform lift is shortly to be installed to take people in wheelchairs from Westminster Hall to the Grand Committee Room. In time we hope to install a proper lift there as part of the plans for a visitor centre.

Altogether, in the Palace of Westminster, some £688,000 is to be spent this financial year on facilities for disabled people. I am confident that, now that statement is recorded, hon. Members will read it and know that they can advise some of their visitors who are disabled on the extra facilities that have been made available.

I am very glad to be able to give that report. Indeed, even more funds have already been made available so that there will be greater access to facilities for the disabled in the House. I hope that in future there will be less criticism of the facilities that we are planning and, indeed, introducing as a result of the joint efforts of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

9.21 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): After a day of deeply felt antagonism across the Chamber, it is good that hon. Members from both sides of the House can come together to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. I happily join others on both sides of the House in paying my tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). It was a rare, creative achievement in politics to introduce that Bill and bring it to the statute book. His dedication on the Front Bench and the Back Benches to the cause of disabled people has never subsequently flagged.

The 1970 Act was an epoch-making measure and so too could be the Government's Disability Discrimination Bill if they would but accept amendments tabled in another place, and if they would, even at this late stage, be willing to fill what are major gaps in the legislation.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act originated as a private Member's Bill, as has the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. The difference is of course that the 1970 Bill was supported by the Government, following the negotiations of which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has told us something.

The Government could have been constructive in their approach to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, but they were not. Of course there is a deep difference of principle embodied in the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill to differentiate it from the Government's Disability Discrimination Bill. The former is comprehensive in its reach, as was the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill.

I take it that it should be axiomatic for all parties and for a Government of any party in this country that it is our obligation between us all to do everything that we can to promote equal civil rights for everyone and, as far as possible, equal opportunities. It saddens me that the Conservative party and the Government have been equivocal in that regard.

I hasten to say, however, that I exempt from that charge the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott). I am also quite certain that all those who know the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People know that his heart is very much in the right place concerning the cause of disabled people. I know that the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) also did all that he could to advance the frontiers of the legislation during its passage over the past year. Let me add my tribute to the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) and to my former hon. Friend and, I trust, my continuing personal friend, the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who has just told us eloquently of his hopes for sheltered employment.

Over the past 12 months or more, the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry set their grim faces obstinately against allowing this legislation to be as generous and far-reaching as it should be. I fear that they were backed by Conservative Members, all too many of whose hackles always rise at the very mention of equal opportunities. Part of the Government's objection is that they have a great dislike for rights-based legislation because it allows powers of interpretation and scope to judges to check the Executive, which this House all too often lamentably fails to do. The Government pass a torrent of secondary legislation that is not debated, which allows loosely defined powers to the Executive, and the Disability Discrimination Bill will be no exception to that pattern.

The Government's dislike of rights-based legislation and of the intervention of judges has been demonstrated all too clearly in their opposition to incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into our domestic law. This Session, I tabled a private Member's Bill that would achieve that. I felt strongly about the extraordinary complaints made by the Deputy Prime Minister about the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

The logic of the Government's position is that they should repeal the equal opportunities legislation passed 20 years ago in the fields of gender and race. But if they are prepared to be fair minded, they must recognise that that legislation has led to enormous improvements in our culture and practical advances in our society on the issue of discrimination. They must accept that that legislation should provide a model for legislation to ban discrimination against disabled people.

The cost of equal opportunities legislation has not proved onerous, as the Conservative party may have feared. It was a great pity that the Government's tactics for seeing off the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill meant producing disinformation. They alleged that the measure would have cost £17 billion over five years. That was a shoddy and dishonest piece of work. The best cost-benefit analysis that I saw tabulated the cost at some £5 billion before taking account of the benefits. When one

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

takes into account the benefits arising from the contribution of disabled people to our economy, I believe that the net cost would have been nil.

So far from the Government being willing to accept modest costs, they have been cutting back on their expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled. That is utterly unacceptable. Conservative Members have mixed feelings about claiming that, during the life of this Government, there has been a 75 per cent. increase in social expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled. But the Government now seek vigorously—they have already legislated to that end—to reduce expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled. Invalidity benefit has been cut back in the transition from invalidity to incapacity benefit. The Government mismanaged the economy over a period and ran up an enormous public sector borrowing requirement. The retrenchment that they were driven to undertake was to be paid for in part by the long-term sick and disabled. Some six volumes of research were produced by the Department of Social Security, none of which supported their contention that there was wholesale abuse of that benefit and that money was being squandered on it unjustifiably.

Now the Conservative party clamours for tax cuts at a time when the needs of the disabled are not being met and support in important areas is being diminished.

I believe that the Education Act 1993 is an important and beneficial measure in the interests of children with special educational needs for which the Government deserve credit, in particular the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). The code of practice in the legislation could be an instrument for much good. I speak as a vice-president of the British Dyslexia Association. We know that there are some 300,000 dyslexic children, notwithstanding the 25 years during which Whitehall denied the existence of dyslexia. What we and those children need is to have their dyslexia identified earlier, at the age of five, say, rather than at 15. We need therefore proper investment in in-service training for teachers, particularly special educational needs co-ordinators. Of course we also need better resources for statements so that the process of statementing children with educational needs ceases to be a miserable process of attrition characterised by disingenuousness on the part of local education authorities, which use every technical excuse as a smokescreen to disguise the fact that they are not willing, because they are not able, to spend money on statements, and characterised by antagonism and heartbreak for parents and their children.

The Government have also caused charges for disabled people to increase enormously. We have seen a massive percentage increase in charges under the community care policy which have hit frail and poor people in a most shaming way. There is a lack of central guidance and therefore a lack of local consistency and fairness. Benefits for disabled people are set centrally, but they have not been increased to take account of those charges.

The Minister mentioned the National Assistance Act 1948, which was, of course, a great reforming measure. It does, however, contain within it an important stumbling block—the bar on social services departments making cash payments to disabled people rather than providing benefits in kind.

The Minister spoke of the Government's desire to lessen the dependence of disabled people, but it has taken a very long time for the Government to commit themselves to act to open the way to direct payments. I greatly welcome the fact that that commitment was made a year ago. It is over a year since I sent to the then Secretary of State for Health a model scheme drawn up by social services directors and others to show how direct payments might effectively be implemented. I hope very much that the Queen's Speech will contain the legislation that has been promised and that it will be a wholehearted and positive measure.

I must say a further word about the Disability Discrimination Bill. It was unfortunate that it was a piecemeal measure and that concessions had to be dragged out of the Government during its passage. I hope very much that the Government will now be willing to accept amendments, for example the amendment on perception, which was eloquently spoken of by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall). If an employer thinks that a person is disabled, although he or she is not, or if an employer anticipates that a person may become disabled, it cannot be justified for that employer to discriminate on those grounds. The evil against which we seek to act is that prejudice. I hope very much that even at this stage the Government will be willing to accept that the legislation must establish the principle unequivocally that discrimination itself is an unacceptable practice.

There are still large defects in the legislation. The definitions are a shambles and will, notwithstanding the Government's intention, be a lawyers' charter. It is wholly unacceptable that it will be permissible under the legislation for employers of fewer than 20 people to discriminate. It is wrong that it should be within the law for a person to be discriminated against because of where he or she happens to work.

Perhaps most importantly, it is imperative that the Government agree that there should be a disability rights commission. No one wants litigation, but there will not be legal aid so it will be difficult for disabled people to avail themselves of the rights that the legislation purports to create. Notwithstanding what the Minister told the House earlier, there are no credible arrangements for the provision of advice to employers, providers of goods and services and disabled people themselves. Ultimately, there needs to be an agency with power to investigate and to enforce. That is what we have under the race and gender legislation, and so we should under the legislation that we are discussing.

If we do not, the Government's intentions will merely be a matter of minimal concessions rather than a measure born out of a positive and generous will to help disabled people. Disabled people and decent people expect no less.

9.34 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): For me, our proceedings in this debate are reminiscent of those which in 1970 led to the enactment of my Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill. The House of Commons was never more constructive in its concern for people in special need of its attention than it was then. There was no party animus in our proceedings. Everyone who spoke seemed to know the value of things as well as their cost.

One of the penalties of longevity in parliamentary life—I have now had two and a half times the average stay in the House—is the loss by attrition of close and valued colleagues. The longer one survives here, the more colourful and crowded one's gallery of old and trusted friends. Many of the most honoured in my own gallery are those who laboured with me to enact my Bill in 1970. They were not all of one party. They were of all parties, but of one mind.

What united them was the shared determination that Parliament must no longer ignore the rightful claims of long-term sick and disabled people—that they must be free to live their own lives as normally as possible, to have the same opportunities to contribute to industry and society as everyone else—and that the law affecting them must be based on rights and not on charity. I am grateful to the Minister for recalling that expression of my view in the speech with which I presented my Bill in December 1969.

The Back Benchers who worked most closely with me to enact the Bill included Jack Ashley, John Astor, Lewis Carter-Jones, Sir Clive Bossom, Laurie Pavitt and Sir Neil Marten. Outside the House, my collaborators included Duncan Guthrie, who then headed both RADAR's predecessor, the Central Council for the Disabled, and Action Research; Peter Large, as he then was, of the Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled and of the Disablement Income Group; Mary Greaves, who led DIG after the death of Megan du Boisson; and Mary Stott, a columnist on *The Guardian*.

No one gave me more practical help than the late Duncan Guthrie and today's debate is a timely occasion to pay renewed tribute to his memory. Flexible of mind, he was a man of transparent decency and inflexible integrity, and he is mourned by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

This debate would not be taking place but for the commitment to making life better for disabled people on the part of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster). I am most grateful to them both. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for his characteristically kind speech. I most warmly congratulate him on the distinction that he has achieved by his re-election to the shadow Cabinet yesterday. He was followed tonight by many other hon. Members who made distinguished contributions to what inevitably for me has been a moving parliamentary occasion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), the hon. Members for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) and for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) and my hon. Friends the Members for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) all made memorable speeches. To my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore I want to express the appreciation of disabled people and their organisations for his tireless and outstanding work in making this Palace so very much more accessible to disabled people. I thank him on their behalf for all that he has achieved.

To my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon I want simply to recall that this is not the first time I have referred to him as my hon. Friend. I have done so often over the three years we have worked together, in Committee and elsewhere, to achieve enforceable civil rights for disabled people. I found his constancy to their cause wholly admirable. I honour him deeply, and he has honoured us today by making his maiden speech from the Opposition side of the House in this debate.

For Back Benchers, first place in the ballot for private Members' Bills is the most coveted prize in the lottery of parliamentary life. Ministers whose Departments are affected by the Back Benchers' choices of Bills may not, however, share their delight at winning the ballot. I have to confide to the House that Richard Crossman, then Secretary of State for Social Services, who was to become an undeviating supporter of my choice, was not best pleased when he heard in November 1969 that I intended to use my good fortune to present a Bill to enhance the well-being and status of disabled people. He offered an alternative measure—a human tissues Bill, drafted by the Government. I am glad to tell the House today that it was my good and hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), although he was too modest to say so in his interventions, who pressed and persuaded Dick Crossman to recognise that I was totally resolved at least to try to legislate on disability.

Dick was not alone among Ministers who initially wanted me to drop the whole idea. The Minister of State for Education inquired why I was proposing to include in the Bill help for people with dyslexia—a condition which, he said, "simply doesn't exist." To which I was provoked to reply, "Then it won't cost you anything." Official reaction to my proposals for helping deaf-blind children and those with autism, like my proposal for an institute of hearing research, was no more supportive; so the Bill's prospects looked anything but promising.

It seems incredible and outrageous now, but from 1945 to 1964 there was no mention in any party manifesto of anything specifically to help disabled people. Between 1959 and 1964, as the hon. Member for Rochdale recalled, there was not one parliamentary debate on disability. Westminster and Whitehall always had more pressing things to do than to respond to the claims of people with disabilities. One could say that the attitude of both was one of serene satisfaction with the status quo. No one even knew how many disabled people there were in Britain. They were mostly seen or heard only by their families or, if they were in institutions, by those who controlled their lives.

Even to talk then of as-of-right cash benefits for disabled people or for the carer of a disabled relative was to invite ridicule. Local authority services were wholly discretionary and often non-existent. I knew of disabled people with every kind of moral justice on their side, but no statutory right whatever to vitally needed help.

That was how things were when, against all the odds, my Bill became law in May 1970. Those who worked with me to enact the Bill will remember how often and how close we came to disaster. But in the end it was Dick Crossman's main Bill of that parliamentary Session which hit the rocks while ours sailed safely by.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill became an Act of 29 sections. It imposed new duties and responsibilities on 12 Departments of state and became the model for legislation in many other countries. It amended 39 existing Acts of Parliament in the interests of disabled people, including such major statutes as the Education Act 1944, the National Health Service Act 1946, the National Assistance Act 1948 and the Housing Act 1957.

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

In the decade after the Bill's enactment huge leaps were recorded in the numbers of disabled people identified as disabled; millions were helped by the provision of aids, by adaptations to their homes and by the Act's five sections on access to the built environment, the first such legislation anywhere in the world. The research division of the House of Commons Library estimates that, at the latest date for which figures are available, as my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West has said, there were 12 million cases of assistance under section 2 of the Act in England alone, while in Scotland, over a shorter period, there were 1.7 million cases. Those are minimal figures since, to give just one example, they do not include the 1.3 million orange badge holders in England, under section 21 of the Act, and countless millions more beneficiaries, here and abroad, of its access provisions.

Public spending on related benefits and services went up from £330 million to £3.03 billion in the Act's first decade—between 1970 and 1980. But its effects went wider than its impact on statutory provision. There was now a wholly new emphasis on the importance of the statutory and voluntary sectors working together and many new organisations, often for disabled people, were created.

I take especial pleasure in this being also the 25th anniversary of the British Dyslexia Association and am most encouraged that the first ever statutory references to dyslexia in the law—and to autism—have led to so much progress towards better provision in those areas of need. I very much support the argument that investment in teacher training for special needs is an appropriate way to continue that progress.

As our understanding of these different disabilities grows, so does the need for professionals, including teachers, to be trained in identification and support of dyslexic children and those with other special needs. The challenges facing the teachers in a mainstream school classroom are immense. We must equip them to cope with the diversity and range of special needs. Both initial teacher training and in-service training are vitally important here.

The challenge does not stop at the school gate, however. Legislation and provision for adults with difficulties need now to catch up with the legislative framework that exists in education. Just because a disability is not obvious does not mean that it cannot be severe and disabling. The person without command of the written word and number is disabled from taking an effective part in society. I hope that the work to follow up the Government's poor imitation of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill will include all categories of disability, including the hidden handicap of dyslexia.

At first, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act lost some momentum due to the lack of clear ministerial guidance. Many people thought that, as it had been a private Member's Bill, it lacked the force of Government legislation. In fact, the Act was described by some local councils as a "private Member's Act". There is, of course, no such thing; but it was responsible for slow reactions, as was the myth that the legislation had no money resolution. Without sanction by the Commons of financial backing, my Bill could never, of course, have become law. So reports about its cost having to be met wholly by local authorities were baseless.

Twenty-five years on, our task is not just to assess the Act's impact and to take stock, but also to address important items on the long, unfinished agenda of unmet need among disabled people. The most pressing duty now is to defend the services that the Act provides. Powerful voices ask for more "flexibility" in applying the Act, by which they mean the right to dilute its provisions. Council leaders of all parties say that the Government's current rationing of resources is turning them into law breakers by forcing them to choose which of their legal duties to fulfil. They complain that they are being made to break one law in order to stay within another.

Many recent studies suggest that councils are finding it more and more difficult to meet their statutory duties to disabled people. For example, as the number of people over the age of 75 in need of the home help service increases, the more the service declines in both cases and hours. The Act's benefits clearly are not reaching many disabled people in the way intended by Parliament; and there is intense concern among them about the absence of any clear commitment from the Government to return to the Act's original purposes.

Why should disabled people so often now have to resort to the courts for the provision of services which Parliament plainly intended them to have as of right? Why do Ministers allow some local councils to play cat and mouse with them by deferring assessments of need, thus delaying the provision of services even where urgent help is demonstrably necessary?

Today, even when it is clear that disabled people could succeed in court, their rightful claims are resisted because delay can cut costs. Often that leads to the withdrawal of claims by disabled people for whom the law's delay is much harder to cope with than for most other people. By sleight of hand and fleet of foot, what used to be available to disabled people without means testing increasingly becomes subject to charges and is seen as penalising thrift, especially by elderly disabled people whose adult lives have been spent striving to remain self-supporting in their post-retirement years.

Ministers claim that, while they are tough on the generality of claimants, the weak and vulnerable are fully protected. But just how fully are disabled people protected? The Government say that they are being "singled out" for special help. But disabled people insist that they are being singled out for special hardship. Let the Government try to convince elderly people whose homes are being sold over their heads to pay for residential care in private nursing homes that they are being singled out for special help. Even to suggest that is to add insult to injury for people who feel cruelly victimised by current policy.

As of now disabled people and their organisations complain bitterly that the provisions of section 2 are being trampled on in many parts of this country. The disability organisations are as one in their determination not only to end abuse of the Act, but to see it joined on the statute book by the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which I drafted in 1990 and first presented to Parliament in January 1991. Unfair discrimination against them leaves disabled people doubly disabled. That is morally wrong and what is morally wrong ought surely no longer to be legally permissible in Britain.

I am sure most Members of Parliament will agree that much the best way of marking this 25th anniversary year would be to vouchsafe full and enforceable civil rights to disabled people. In continued fellowship with them, let that remain our urgent goal.

9.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Let me start by thanking all right hon. and hon. Members who have taken part in the debate and echoing the opening thanks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for initiating the debate.

Let me also set aside the hon. Gentleman's untypically ungenerous opening remarks. He and I have campaigned together for a number of years for improvements in the lives of people with disabilities. We have rarely been on opposite sides of an argument in these matters and when we have it has usually been over speed or scale rather than the principle of a proposal. That is good because the House is so often at its best when it comes together to promote the welfare of disabled people and to overcome obstacles for them.

The House is also at its best when it does not patronise such people, but recognises that disability can develop in or happen to each and every one of us to a greater or lesser extent—sometimes from birth, sometimes from the aging process and sometimes from an illness, accident or event in our lives—and that each and every person with a disability, however severe, is a potential achiever if we enable him or her to develop latent talents and abilities or remove obstacles from his or her path of progress.

Some people will need much greater levels of care and support than others. For some it will be in-patient care, for others it will be mobility support or aids to help them hold down a full-time job. Whoever, wherever and whatever, our task as a society—in central Government, local government, health, education, leisure, housing and transport authorities and as employers, friends, neighbours and families—is not to help people to forget their disability as that would be impossible, but to overcome it, to manage it and to achieve the highest quality of life despite it.

Government and Parliament have a linchpin role and I am proud to be a supporter of and a member of a Government who have done so much in so many ways to enhance the lives of people with disabilities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People and my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) listed the resources. When I look at the calls that I made as a new Back Bencher in a debate on disability that I was fortunate to be able to initiate some years ago, I am impressed by the number on which there has been progress—from special educational needs to support for carers.

Many measures have originated in private Members' Bills and today we acknowledge the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) brought to and through the House 25 years ago. I was impressed to read "Be It Enacted", RADAR's celebration of that anniversary, in which Denny Denly describes the right hon. Gentleman as a "powerful beacon".

I had always thought that on major anniversary celebrations beacons were usually taken to a high place and set on fire. I hope that that will not be the fate of the right hon. Gentleman, but he can at least glow with pride at the progress which came from that Act. It is a pride that he has shared with a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House. One might add others too—Fred Evans, Sir Maurice Macmillan, Arthur Latham and the formidable Dame Irene Ward—who were with him in the trenches at that time. Then, as now, there was an all-party coalition working in support of disabled people.

We have been reminded of the occasion when, as RADAR's splendid publication describes, the right hon. Gentleman

> "first took his ideas to Richard Crossman, the Secretary of State for Social Services, who hit the roof. His response was to ask who Alf was, after a mere five years at Westminster, to instruct him about social priorities. Had such a Bill been needed, said Richard Crossman, he would have put it on the Statute Book himself."

That is confirmed in a letter from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell):

> "I well remember how Dick Crossman tried to bully you into either changing drastically or dropping the Bill at more than one point".

That just shows that obstacles to legislation are not always on one side of the House.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the achievements that have come from and were built on that Act through innumerable measures—some legislative, culminating in the Disability Discrimination Bill, but many not, such as the development of community care and the partnership that the Government have with so many charitable, representative and research organisations. Behind that progress has been our great health service, with advances in medical science and technology paralleled by strides in health care delivery and co-ordination with agencies such as social services and the independent sector. I will ensure that my colleagues in the Department for Education and Employment consider carefully the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) as they—not I—are probably equipped to consider the accounts of the organisation that he mentioned.

Community care has already played a significant part in enabling people to remain in their own home or to come out of institutions and into more homely settings. As years go by, community care's fundamental principles of assessment of need, involvement of users and carers in decision making and openness about eligibility criteria will help to make services responsive and flexible to the needs and wishes of disabled people. That will be strengthened from next April, when each local social services authority should have in place its community care charter.

We have recently issued our development programme for community care, "Building Partnerships for Success", which highlights the need further to develop partnerships with users and carers—not just in decisions affecting them personally but in strategic decisions. That mirrors the work that I so much valued during the introductory years of national community care planning and implementation undertaken by our National Users and Carers Group. I pay the warmest tribute to Peter Swain, the group's chairman, and all his members, who have served as a challenging

[Mr. John Bowis]

and constructive ginger group that has been an invaluable source of wide experience, geographically and over the range of disability.

The Government work with an enormous range of disability organisations. I pay tribute to the people who run them and to the great army of volunteers who support them. Their work as befrienders, informal carers and advocates is valued by us and, more importantly, by the people they support.

It is inevitable that there will always be more that could be done by such organisations if they could afford it. I always understand when an organisation comes to see me or welcomes me to an example of its work, thanks me courteously for the Government's financial support, then gently and eloquently directs my attention to new ideas that just need a little priming of the pump. My hon. Friend hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) referred to constraints. As to the Mencap issue, charging is a discretionary issue. It is entirely up to each social service's elected authority to decide whether to charge and, if so, how much. It also has the discretion completely to exempt or to reduce charges for any category of people that it chooses. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that message to the people at Mencap.

Like those organisations, I have a budget and a shopping list for tomorrow. At least, unlike Alice's White Queen, tomorrow does come for a great many projects. If the bad news is when I have to say no or not yet, the good news is when I travel the country and see the innovation and dedication that we have been able to support. Much of that involves representative groups. I refer in particular to RADAR's independent living unit research and the work that we funded, to produce training packs and courses on the implementation of section 2 of the 1970 Act. SKILL is doing likewise with sections 5 and 6 of the 1986 Act in respect of disabled students and local authority schools and colleges.

The agony of stigma in addition to the disability from which an individual suffers means that work in the areas of epilepsy, incontinence and mental health is particularly important. We are also in the middle of a five-year programme to develop model rehabilitation services for those who suffer brain injury. Had I time, I would list many of the section 64 initiatives that we support, which enables so many voluntary sector organisations to work across a range of disabilities, of which we can be immensely proud.

There are about 6 million people with disabilities. Of those, 4.3 million face locomotion difficulties, 1.7 million have sight problems and 2.6 million have hearing difficulties. Many of those people have more than one disability. It is a substantial population within our nation. We attach high priority to the development of services for them so that they can achieve the maximum degree of independence.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East in congratulating the all-party group on its work and I join the House in acknowledging the work of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. I join all Members—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) European Community Documents Nos. 7465/95, relating to financial provision for fisheries enforcement, 7596/95, relating to the common fisheries policy control system, and 8817/95, relating to fisheries log book records, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A; and

(2) at the sitting on Monday 23rd October the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Fisheries not later than one and a half hours after their commencement, and that Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Child Support Agency

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

10 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is a wise Member who from time to time assesses the way in which the work that goes through his or her constituency office and the House is composed of individual cases. It is important that the House should examine the implications of what has happened with one of the next steps agencies, which are having a direct and, in some instances, horrifying effect on the lives of my constituents.

I speak of the Child Support Agency. We have seen a fairly classic example this week of what happens when Ministers seek to distance themselves from the implications of their policies. That gives us all the more reason to examine in a comparatively calm atmosphere the continuing saga of the CSA. It has now had long enough to undergo certain changes and to absorb the alterations that the Government felt were necessary.

I am glad to welcome the Minister to what I understand is his first Adjournment debate on the Government Front Bench. I know that he is sympathetic to the work of the CSA and does his best to deal with the myriad claims upon his time that the agency must represent.

The reality is that for the House, the CSA has become a major difficulty. If we analyse the cases with which we deal in a month, we see that those involving the CSA are becoming more numerous. I have carried out an analysis of the cases raised in my constituency since the CSA came into operation. There have been 56 cases. Of those, four women are paying maintenance while six women, one male and one grandparent cannot get any maintenance. There are 30 cases where people are already paying and eight where there are arrears.

Those cold statistics may not sound tremendously impressive with a population of 78,000. I was rather stunned, however, that the director of the agency—who I am glad to say is a civil servant—in giving evidence yesterday to the Select Committee on Social Services was congratulated by the Chairman on the facts that she presented. I found them rather concerning. She said that embittered couples were aiding the benefit fraud drive by reporting each other to the agency, which had become a lightning conductor for officials investigating benefit and VAT fraud, tax evasion and unpaid national insurance. That is certainly the experience of many of us.

Of the 7,610 cases that have been passed on to the agency, 39 per cent. had a "fraudulent element". Miss Chant did not say how large that was. She moved on to justify the cost of the agency by saying that it had taken £1.44 billion back in savings on benefit. From my point of view, the threatening thing that she then went on to say was that 66,000 people had stopped claiming income support. Fine, that may be perfectly justifiable; I am not in any position to judge. But 12,000 single parents are on reduced benefit after refusing to name the father of their children.

Now, I know that, for the present Government, single parents are indeed not only the lowest of the low but probably the pariahs of modern society, but what cost will we have to pay in future for those 12,000 children, who are not only being removed from what I regard as a very inadequate level of benefit but presumably are being thrust even further into the poverty trap?

I want to raise with the Minister tonight some of the real problems that arise from the CSA, because we just do not know what damage it is doing. That agency is stirring the detritus of relationships and is having a direct and terrible effect on the children of those marriages. Anyone who has gone through a divorce knows that, if one is unlucky, it is an exceedingly bitter and unpleasant experience. The effect that the CSA is having on individuals is really very frightening.

I have taken up a number of cases, but in two of them males have given up quite highly paid jobs because of the CSA and are now unemployed. In theory, of course, one can say that they have made themselves intentionally unemployed, so one cannot expect any kind of sympathy for them. The reality, it would seem from the cases that we have considered in detail, is that the CSA has gone largely for people in salaried jobs, where they can be easily reached: working for the police, the fire service or some large organisation, such as British Rail, where they can be got hold of quickly and where attachments of earnings can be shoved in quite soon.

On the other hand, a large number of people who have come to me, whose husbands or wives have announced that they were self-employed, have been told in effect, "There is really very little that we can do to help you. We don't have investigation facilities ourselves. We have no way of following up the particular details that you've handed over to us. Indeed, we don't even know where the people concerned can be found."

In at least two cases that I know of, the offended spouse handed over details of addresses, of a considerable number of assets, including extra houses—all sorts of large elements that seemed at least to suggest that there was a large income—but they were unable to receive any support for their children. Naturally, that not only leads to a lack of faith in the workings of the CSA but makes it very clear that, so far, it neither has the machinery, the efficiency nor the method of doing anything practical unless people fall into easily defined categories. When they do, good—the agency is happy and is able to take the money back.

It goes further than that. I have cases in which people were receiving maintenance payments through the courts. They had come to an agreement. The agency accepted the monetary terms of the agreement; yet people discovered that, whereas the local court was able to pay the maintenance quite quickly, the agency, because the money went from the court in Crewe to the west midlands, trundled all through the government machinery and then came back to them, frequently making them wait three weeks for payment—a payment that they would normally be able to obtain within three or four days from the court. That cannot be right. It cannot be defensible. Frankly, one wonders whether the Government are using that as a method of making some interest on the goods that are going through their system, because when one raises it with the CSA, one is told, "We're sorry about it. That's the way the machinery goes. That is what is going to happen." If that leaves the family with no money, they are told, "We are sorry about it, but there is nothing we can do."

In one case, in order to feed her family, a woman was forced to ask for a crisis loan. She had what can laughingly be called a bank account, she was given a

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

crisis loan of £60 and the bank charged her £60 for being overdrawn because the agency had not given her the money. It was not that the money was not available; the agency hung on to it for three weeks. The answer that I received was, "Sorry about that. That's the way the thing is working. We can't do anything about it."

If it is true, as it says in the press—I do not always believe the press—that Miss Chant said yesterday that there were 382,000 outstanding cases and 350,000 mothers on income support from last April who still had not had determinants, the number of cases in my constituency is quite small. But the investigations are extraordinarily leisurely.

People who are already bitterly on edge find the situation impossible. When they ring the agency, they seldom speak to the same person twice. They speak to a nice person who gives his or her name and they start off on the whole story. They feel humiliated because each time they have to give all their details again to someone new, a member of the so-called business team—how this can be described as a business, I do not know—who has to call up the details on the computer and may or may not give the same advice as was given previously. That has happened time and again.

I see that the agency is to offer DNA testing in paternity cases. The savagery that disputation of paternity unleashes is something from which the children involved will probably never recover. It is born out of desperation. It is the worst kind of dispute between divorcing parents, and the agency now seems to be prepared to provide DNA testing—but on a paying basis—if anything goes wrong. That is not the answer and it will not help in any way.

I come now to the effect of the agency's business classes. Someone must sit down and think seriously about arrears. It is nonsensical when people are earning, say, £125 a week to say to them that, because of the time that it has taken to assess the case, they owe the agency thousands of pounds. That happens time and again. Sums of money in the order of £5,000 or £6,000 produce much trauma. Anyone who has had to deal with CSA cases knows that a lot of time is spent calming people down enough for them to be able to give the details of the case. At some point, someone must assess the likelihood of obtaining thousands of pounds in arrears and whether it would not be better, and encourage people to stay at work, to seek to come to a proper agreement with a recognisable sum.

At the moment, we have the worst of all worlds. Many women do not receive proper maintenance payments. They do not understand why this great agency, which is supposed to be so effective at finding the cash, so brilliant at getting the money from the Treasury, is not finding them money, saying, "We are terribly sorry, but your spouse has somehow or other managed to escape the net." They understand that there are still far too many loopholes and far too many difficulties.

Looking through all the cases, I am saddened at the effect that the CSA is having in addition to the effects of divorce. In a sense, the CSA is in danger of becoming an additional hazard, not for the parents, who may or may not be worthy of support and sympathy, but for the children. I begin my complaints about the CSA with the children. They are the people who concern me; they are the people who will always concern me. If we have a system whereby people are not receiving rapid support in the form of a suitable amount of money, it must be re-examined effectively.

For example, I know one man who is paying half his existing wage to the CSA. In another case, a woman's husband is obviously working full time as a builder but has declared that he is self-employed. He paid £70 only when the bailiffs went in, yet the CSA took £70 for expenses.

We have examined the cases very carefully. They all have one thing in common: being enmeshed in the CSA is not a happy experience. That complaint is not made only by the male of the species who has to pay up; it is frequently made by the female who is left having to cope with a second family.

I believe that the agency was set up in haste and created in chaos. It is now being run by people who are desperately trying to make it work. I do not criticise the civil servants involved, although I feel that the system—split working and the employment of low-paid civil servants and many part-time workers—contributes to the way in which the CSA is regarded. I must point out to the Government, however, that the actions of the CSA have led to a number of suicides.

It is no use saying that the sort of people who commit suicide probably have other problems. I understand that, but I am dealing with an increasing number of people who show clear signs of what is described in lay terms as mental breakdown because of the impact of what is happening in their lives. I do know a bit about this. I think that the House had better sit back and consider whether we are actually doing a good job.

I believe that the only way in which to right the position is to destroy the agency and start again. That is not a fashionable view. Opposition Members think, as they always do in all contexts, that if the odd sticking plaster is put on the Tory system it will work, but that is not my experience, and it is certainly not my understanding in this instance.

The Minister is both compassionate and sensible. He may find when he looks closely at his responsibilities for the agency that he is asking too much of the people who are trying to make a wholly inadequate system work. He is certainly asking too much of the individuals who are caught in it; they are under such pressure that the damage is too great to be justified by the amount of money that it is bringing in. The Minister will also find that the system is rather like the Tar Baby: anyone who comes near it gets stuck. I hope that he will move quite fast.

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Andrew Mitchell): I thank the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) for raising this important matter, and for giving the House the opportunity to reflect on the performance of the Child Support Agency. The debate takes place in the aftermath of major legislative changes enshrined in the Child Support Act 1995 and the April 1995 child support regulations.

The changes were designed to remedy serious defects in the child support system, and to build on the early but unsatisfactory experience of the workings of the Child Support Agency. They sought to ensure that the agency fulfilled much more effectively the important objectives

that Parliament laid down for it. It did so against some clear and unchallenged principles, which I believe continue to command widespread support across the House and among our constituents.

The first of those principles is that the CSA must hold the ring between father, mother and taxpayer. Parents should meet the cost of their own children wherever they can; it is wrong to rely on the taxpayer as the first resort when a child's own parents can afford to pay in whole or in part. Taxpayers are often themselves bringing up their own children on relatively low incomes. Secondly, the child support system should produce fair and consistent results, and allow for regular reviews to reflect changing circumstances. Thirdly, incentives for both parents to work should be maintained and dependence on benefit reduced by the establishment of realistic and fair levels of maintenance and regular payments. That is the theory of the system set up by Parliament in 1993, but the practice, as we now know, has not always honoured those objectives.

However, significant reforms have now been introduced. Either they are already in operation, or they will be as soon as we can practically bring them into force. They are largely the work of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and my predecessor as Minister responsible for child support, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). They resulted from an extensive and thorough exercise in consultation and the results were widely welcomed during the passage of the Bill, which I viewed at first hand as the Government Whip responsible for its safe transit through Committee. The Government drew particularly on the helpful comments and reports of the Select Committee on Social Security.

I want to reassure the hon. Lady on both her central points—the efficacy of the current system and its sustainability. I do so against the background of four key changes that have been introduced. First, we have a new 30 per cent. rule. That will mean that no absent parent will face paying more than 30 per cent. of their net income in current maintenance payments. In other words, after paying tax and national insurance and 50 per cent. of any pension contribution, they will keep 70 per cent. of their remaining income.

That was the most important reform. It injected a key fairness into the system which we had always intended and which was not previously present in a number of cases. Even absent parents whose payments are in arrears will normally pay no more than an additional 3 per cent.

Secondly, we have introduced a degree of flexibility into the formula. I will return to that later. Thirdly, although there can never be a "clean break" where children are concerned, the Government have recognised that a "clean-break" capital or property settlement may have resulted in a lower award of child maintenance by the courts before the introduction of the child support scheme. That was not always properly reflected in the child support assessment, so we have introduced regulations to make a broad-brush allowance for those property and capital settlements.

We have also recognised high travel-to-work costs. There is a case for an additional allowance for the minority who travel long distances and who therefore have genuinely high travel-to-work expenses.

The formula is clearly successful in the majority of cases, as demonstrated by the comparatively low take-up of the travel-to-work and "clean break" provision in April. It provides the best means of establishing a fair and consistent maintenance liability that takes account of individual circumstances. Experience has shown, however, that a small proportion of cases were not being fairly dealt with by the formula. That is why we shall introduce an appeal system that will allow some discretion to "depart" from the basic formula in special circumstances. We shall allow flexibility where fairness demands it.

Once parliamentary approval has been obtained, that change will be piloted for three months from next April. Subject to the results of the pilot, I anticipate the full scheme will be introduced towards the end of 1996. By doing that, we have addressed one of the biggest criticisms of the child support system and in doing so we have gone beyond the changes suggested by the Select Committee on Social Security in its last report.

I turn next to the work and administration of the agency itself, which were raised by the hon. Lady. I accept that the agency's performance remains a source of concern for many hon. Members. As a constituency Member of Parliament, I am aware of and share many of the general concerns that have been expressed.

Two factors are crucial to the future of child support. The operation of the scheme must be further improved, and we need to secure a general acceptance of the Child Support Agency's work. Those absent parent groups which campaigned so loudly against the child support scheme can no longer claim legitimate grievance. It is time for the small minority of outside groups that oppose the agency to accept that times have changed. I hope that all hon. Members will acknowledge and reinforce the message that absent parents have a responsibility to support their children where they can afford to do so.

I reassure the hon. Lady that there have been tangible improvements in the performance of the Child Support Agency, as the Select Committee on Social Security recognised last night. In 1994-95 the agency collected or arranged more than £187 million in maintenance. The £76 million collected was almost six times the total of the previous year. Maintenance arranged or collected for this year already totals more than £117 million. The agency is therefore on track for this year's target of £300 million.

The agency's increased emphasis on maintenance collection entails a strong commitment to enforcement action where maintenance is not paid—a further point raised by the hon. Lady. Improvements in payments of maintenance to parents with care are clear. Between April and August this year—the first five months alone—the agency collection service paid out £20 million. That was almost as much as in the whole of the previous year. Accuracy, which was formerly woefully inadequate, is improving significantly.

I commend the agency's memorandum to the Select Committee of the House. That details the agency's achievements in a number of areas. I hope that all hon. Members will be impressed, as I was, by the replies given by the chief executive in her evidence to the Select Committee yesterday and by her commitment to achieving further improvements.

I appreciate the concern about the apparent complexity of the system. A great deal of information is required to assess child maintenance. I acknowledge that simplification of the system is a key to improving the process. Progress has been made to resolve the difficulties experienced in the treatment of housing costs and wages.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

If the agency can continue to simplify and streamline its procedures, and can get it right, the way forward will be easier.

I know that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security about self-employed absent parents, and she raised the issue again this evening. She is quite right to express concern. As I said, where they can afford to do so, all absent parents should contribute to the upkeep of their children. It is true that the agency has experienced a number of problems in collecting maintenance from self-employed absent parents. This is not a new problem; the courts experienced similar difficulties. Mostly, it results from the difficulty some self-employed parents have in providing accounts. However, some absent parents have sought to exploit this difficulty in a bid to sidestep their legitimate responsibilities towards their children. I am pleased to be able to say that we have made important changes designed specifically to address such problems.

The Child Support Act 1995 introduced two new provisions. First, it bestowed a new power that will allow the agency to have liability orders entered in the county court register of debt judgements. The threat of such an entry will be an incentive to secure the absent parent's compliance, especially in the case of the self-employed as they generally rely on credit for their business.

Secondly, the agency can now issue special interim maintenance assessments. This measure is designed to facilitate the assessment and collection of maintenance. The special assessments will ensure that parents with care receive a contribution towards maintenance from the earliest possible date. In turn, this will reduce any build-up of initial arrears. Payments should come quicker and easier.

The hon. Lady implied that the old child maintenance arrangements worked better, that the old system delivered maintenance where the new system does not. The reality was somewhat different. The old system failed the parent with care and children. Child maintenance liability was put well down the list of an absent parent's commitments. Maintenance not paid would become maintenance never paid.

We have introduced a new method of enforcement: the deduction from earnings order under which maintenance can be deducted from wages by the employer at source. If the absent parent is self-employed, or a deduction from earnings order is ineffective, the agency can go to the magistrates court for a liability order. Once an order has been obtained, the agency can distrain goods up to the value of the order. The agency can seek a charging order to enable maintenance to be recovered. However, just as these measures were often ineffective under the old system, so they are not enough under the new—hence the need for the two provisions that I have outlined.

The hon. Lady suggested that the old system was better able to secure maintenance payments from absent parents. If this seemed so, it was in part due to the lower levels of expectation and inadequate levels of maintenance. This increased the burden on the general taxpayer by placing further demands on social security expenditure.

The child support scheme has rightly done two things. It has raised the legitimate expectations of the parent with care and it has highlighted the absent parent's financial responsibility towards their children. The current system is also more responsive to changes in the circumstance of either party. Maintenance assessments can now be reviewed without the need to return to court. That removes an important obstacle to securing fair and realistic maintenance assessments.

The Government have listened and have acted. We have made necessary adjustments to the system without risking a return to the old, open-ended discretionary system. Critics of the new system forget too easily the problems of the old one. The old system was fundamentally inconsistent and by no means fair to the parent with care and their children. Average maintenance payments awarded by courts were lower than those established by the Child Support Agency.

In 1993, before the Child Support Agency was established, the average amount of maintenance being received by the one in three lone parents who received any maintenance was approximately £23. This compares with an average of around £40 per week under the new arrangements. These figures also underline the inevitable extra burden that is rightly being borne by absent parents.

I once again thank the hon. Lady for the opportunity to consider the changes in hand to improve our child maintenance system. The current system has experienced significant problems. Recent changes address the functioning and the fairness of the system. Not all the changes are yet in place. In certain cases, it will take time for the improvements to feed through. However, these improvements are exactly those necessary to help the kinds of cases raised with me and my predecessor by the hon. Lady.

I speak with qualified optimism. In the short time in which I have been the responsible Minister, I have come to appreciate the real and continuing efforts of the agency's staff to improve its performance. I have now visited all six Child Support Agency centres and several local field offices and met the staff who run the system. I have been impressed by their determination and drive to succeed in the face of disruptive and sustained efforts by a small number of opponents.

There are tough times ahead for the agency while it seeks to win the trust and confidence of clients who have experienced unacceptable mistakes and delays and to implement further legislative changes, but the CSA has made real, recognisable progress. Its introduction of the April changes was particularly commendable, but further improvements in speed and accuracy are required. The CSA needs to offer its clients the standards of service that they rightly expect. Much still remains to be done to consolidate achievements to date and to continue the lengthy transition to efficient and effective operations.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 October 1995

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Science and Technology

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Science and Technology Committee of Session 1993-94 on the Forward Look of Government-Funded Science, Engineering and Technology 1994, HC 422; the First Special Report of Session 1994-95 containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 216; the Multi-Departmental Scrutiny of Public Sector Research Establishments, the First Report of Session 1994-95 on the Efficiency Unit Scrutiny of Public Sector Research Establishments, HC 19; the Government response to the Efficiency Scrutiny, Cm 2991; and the Third Report of Session 1994-95 on Human Genetics: the Science and its Consequences, HC41-I.]

9.34 am

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Ian Lang): I am delighted that so early in my tenure of office as President of the Board of Trade the Government have made time available for this important debate. It reflects the importance that we attach to the subject and it is particularly timely in the light of the transfer of responsibility for science and technology to the Department of Trade and Industry.

The United Kingdom is outstandingly good at science and technology. Our scientists and engineers are world class. There are many peaks of outstanding excellence which are widely recognised as such. I must beware of highlighting single areas, but one has only to think of recent achievements in molecular biology to appreciate this truth. The United Kingdom's success in attracting the European Bioinformatics Institute to Cambridge is an excellent illustration. There, it will form part of a new world-class centre for the study of genetics. There are other examples of excellence that I could quote.

Our strength in science is a huge national asset which draws in investment from around the world—for example, in the electronics industry. Our ability to compete in world markets depends increasingly on producing world-beating high-technology, high value-added goods and services. Science and technology are central to this, but it is not only our wallets that science affects. Science is relevant to the environment, transport, employment and almost every aspect of our lives. For example, in addition to being a prime means of competing effectively in wealth creation, science and technology also underpin the improvements that we are making and continue to make in the quality of life.

Pharmaceuticals, medical techniques in diagnosis and treatment and improved understanding of the environment and the ways in which we can co-exist harmoniously with the natural world are all underpinned by science and technology. The United Kingdom is world class in many of those areas.

Before I go any further, I should acknowledge the valuable work of the Select Committee on Science and Technology of this House. The Committee has tackled a variety of important topics and played a considerable role in drawing scientific and technological issues to the attention of hon. Members and the community at large. The Government have recognised that in their support for the continuation of the Committee as a separate body, following the transfer of the Office of Science and Technology to the DTI.

In the past 18 months, the Committee has produced reports on the routes through which the science base is translated into innovative and competitive technology, on the "forward look", on the merger of Glaxo and Wellcome, and on the Government's scrutiny of public sector research establishments. All have been influential on the Government's thinking. In July, the Committee published a report on human genetics, to which the Government will respond shortly. The Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the technology foresight programme. I very much look forward to answering the Committee's questions on that and other topics when I appear before it next week.

The Government have brought science and technology to the forefront of policy. The 1993 White Paper "Realising our Potential" was the first major statement of science policy for almost 30 years. The White Paper expressed pride in the excellence of our scientists, engineers and technologists, and set out the Government's determination to see that excellence better used to create wealth in the United Kingdom and to improve our quality of life. The White Paper saw the key to achieving that goal as the building of partnerships between the science base, Government, business and other users.

The White Paper was widely welcomed for its vision and boldness. Since 1993, the Office of Science and Technology has made great strides in taking forward the White Paper initiatives. The White Paper remains the basis for our policies and the OST will continue to work within that framework.

When I took over the helm at the Department of Trade and Industry, I announced my intention to focus a great deal of my efforts on developing the science and engineering base. Part of that focus is an emphasis on improved connections between firms and the science and engineering base which will help them to achieve and maintain competitiveness in world markets. In the highly competitive and technologically intensive world in which our firms have to compete, it is essential that they are fully able to understand, gain access to and apply scientific and technological advances. If they do not do so, they will fall behind our competitors. To be able to do so effectively and speedily, they need good connections to expertise and skills in the science and engineering base. I am greatly encouraged that that is being realised by an increasing number of firms.

Our approach can be summed up as excellence plus partnership. We are determined that Britain's basic research must stay top of the class, and we place great importance on forging closer links between the science base, industry and Government.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): From his position at the helm of the DTI, is the President of the Board of Trade comfortable with the fact that so much of the research is done on a short-term contract basis? In the past 15 years, short-term contracts have increased by 217 per cent. and permanent posts by only 2 per cent. Is the right hon. Gentleman happy about that situation?

Mr. Lang: The time scale of research is less important than the outcome and the Government's continuing commitment to ensuring that research, both basic and applied, is properly funded and that proper priority is given to it by the Government, universities, research councils and industry.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Is it not the case that a researcher on a short-term contract is not fully productive for the whole two or three years for which that contract applies? One of the problems is that university researchers are finding it difficult to get jobs when their short-term contracts are completed, and spend the last 12 months of the contract looking for other work rather than doing the research.

Mr. Lang: The American experience does not bear out what the hon. Lady has said. I do not believe that the short-term contracts to which she refers, which are the way of the world not just in science but throughout industry, jeopardise the quality of research, and I see no evidence that they do. If any such evidence became apparent, I would be interested to see it.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East) *rose—*

Mr. Lang: I must press on, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

This emphasis on forging closer links between the science base, industry and Government is how to see the move of the OST to the Department of Trade and Industry. We need to make the most of the potential vicinity between our science base and industry. I shall say more about that in a moment.

The basic point is clear—bringing industry closer to science and stimulating it to build up its own research base is good for Britain. It is not in any way to downgrade science, but is saying that Britain needs top-quality basic and strategic research. It needs investment in science and technology for the longer term, but it cannot afford to overlook the benefits from science that arise along the way. If there are opportunities for closer working between science and industry—for sharing resources and similar goals—let us make the most of them.

Some people have expressed concern about the OST's move. Let me repeat what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have said before. The policies of "Realising our Potential" go on. There will be no lurch to short-termism. I fully accept that the role of the science base is to undertake long-term basic and strategic research.

The Prime Minister and I have made it clear that the roles of the chief scientific adviser and the Director General of the Research Councils are unaffected by the transfer. I have regular meetings with the chief scientific adviser, who also retains his direct access to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The OST will continue to exercise its transdepartmental role of developing and co-ordinating policy for science and technology across all Government Departments. For example, it is co-ordinating the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on human genetics, which I mentioned.

The move to the DTI is not a threat, but rather an opportunity.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Can the President of the Board of Trade explain the relationship between the OST and the chief scientific adviser on the one hand, and the research and development for which the rest of the Department of Trade and Industry is responsible, particularly establishments? Is the chief scientific adviser responsible for those establishments?

Mr. Lang: The chief scientific adviser has a responsibility for all science conducted throughout all Government Departments, including the scientific work internal to the Department of Trade and Industry and the OST, which has now been brought into the DTI. I hope that that clarifies the position for the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Bray: Specifically, in the management structure of technology and research and development within the DTI, does the chief scientific adviser come in a line with those establishments and the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Lang: There is no distinction between the internal scientific work of the DTI and the scientific work of any other Government Department undertaking such work, as regards the relationship with the chief scientific adviser. The fact that the OST has become attached to the DTI does not undermine the internal DTI scientific work or the position of the chief scientific adviser, whose responsibility is spread right across Government.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I apologise to my right hon. Friend for pursuing the matter, but I think that what lies behind the question of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) is that the DTI would appear, uniquely among large spending research and science departments, to have no chief scientific officer of its own. Dr. Robinson has not been replaced. Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on that?

Mr. Lang: I do not know what my hon. Friend is so concerned about, because there has been no change in the context of the overall responsibility of the chief scientific adviser, or indeed of the Director General of the Research Councils. The fact that the OST has been moved into the Department of Trade and Industry does not undermine its role, or the activities of or responsibility for DTI research, or any of the commitment that exists towards that. I think that I have made that position fairly clear, but if my hon. Friend wants to pursue the matter, I will be happy to try to clarify it further.

I do not see the move to the DTI as a threat. I see it as an opportunity. The key message of the 1993 White Paper was that the United Kingdom's business and science needed to get better connected. Progress has been made since that White Paper. Much of the initiative has come from the science and engineering base.

Our efforts to encourage scientists to forge links with business need to be met by an equal willingness on the part of business to engage with science. All sectors of business need to open their minds to the potential for using technology to enhance their cutting edge. This is

where the opportunity lies for new approaches, drawing on the combined resources of the OST and the rest of the DTI.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It is interesting that we are having this debate on the OST's move today, after the event. One of the helpful words that the Government have introduced into the debate is "foresight", yet the White Paper suggested an independent OST to pull Departments together. Where was the planning, preparation and public discussion before the decision to move the OST was sprung on us on the afternoon of 4 July?

Mr. Lang: These decisions were taken before I took responsibility for the matter. My right hon. Friend the then President of the Board of Trade might have been influenced by the Labour party document that I have here, which committed the party to co-ordinating science and technology under a Minister for science in the new DTI. That was a commitment in the Labour party manifesto for the 1992 election.

The science and engineering base is the engine house for new ideas, trains the next generation of highly qualified engineers and scientists, and provides a dynamic source of advice and expertise to enable us to exploit new ideas wherever they may originate. It is one of the cornerstones of our approach to enhancing national competitiveness.

Basic science permeates all places—*[Interruption]*—including this Chamber, and basic science, undertaken purely out of curiosity, has often led to advances in different products or processes, including bleepers, pagers and mobile telephones. An obvious example is the way in which early work on molecular biology has led to major advances in medicine—for example, the identification of a gene that causes a particular type of kidney disease.

The time scales are often quite long, however, and the Government recognise that they are the prime sponsor for such work. They take that responsibility seriously, and have a long record of sustained support for basic and strategic science. Since 1979, the science budget, which supports the research councils, has risen in real terms by about 30 per cent., and now stands at nearly £1.3 billion.

Some firms have responded to that increase in funding by increasing their investment in the science and engineering base.

Mr. Dalyell: On the identification of genes, is the right hon. Gentleman or the Minister who is to reply to the debate going to say anything about the byzantine problems of the patenting of such genes, especially in relation to the tricky question of personal insurance and the knowledge of defective genes that might be given to insurance companies?

Mr. Lang: We are aware of the concern over that matter. If the hon. Gentleman would like to develop that point during the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister will certainly want to respond.

Some firms have responded to the increase in funding to which I referred by increasing their investment in the science and engineering base—a real terms increase of nearly 20 per cent. between 1987-88 and 1993-94. That interaction does not drive the universities in the short term; rather, it provides the all-important dialogue between the academic community and industry. However, we must recognise that there is still a long way to go.

The Department of Trade and Industry is working hard to stimulate the dialogue and improve the climate for business innovation by promoting best practice in business management and the use of technology, and by supporting the development and application of new technology through collaborative R and D programmes. In addition, the DTI focuses help on small and medium-sized firms through the SMART and SPUR schemes, which provide grants for the development of new products and processes.

Through the work of the innovation unit in particular, the DTI is seeking to change attitudes in both the public and private sectors in favour of innovation. That is being achieved by improving communications between companies and financial institutions on longer-term investment and development, the annual innovation lecture and publishing the annual scoreboard of company R and D expenditure. The Government are developing a more comprehensive innovation index for introduction during 1996 to promote further analysis and debate about innovation in firms.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: The real point about the R and D scoreboard is that it shows an appalling lack of investment by UK companies in research and development. Would the right hon. Gentleman care to comment on the 1994 figures, which, from memory, show that about £7 billion was spent by the top 362 UK companies on research and development, compared with £14 billion paid out to shareholders? In the top 200 world companies, the ratio of investment in R and D to shareholders' dividends is completely reversed.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady seems to discount all the work that we are putting into technology foresight and all the schemes designed to increase and stimulate R and D.

I disagree with the hon. Lady's figures. The figures for overall public and private investment in research between 1986 and 1993, the last available figures, show a 6 per cent. real increase, with the private sector contributing some 70 per cent.—about £9.5 billion. That trend stands pretty good comparison with most of our industrial rivals.

As we acknowledged in the second competitiveness White Paper, "Forging Ahead", alongside the UK's proud scientific record there is ground to make up in commercial exploitation. There are huge opportunities ahead for the United Kingdom if we can strengthen the links between our outstanding basic research and commercial exploitation. This is an area where the OST and the rest of the DTI with its knowledge of industrial sectors and wide range of activities to promote the health of small firms can work closely together, complementing each other's efforts at improving the interface between science and business.

The partnership between the DTI and OST in the LINK and teaching company schemes reflects the wider partnerships which we are seeking to forge between the science base and industry throughout the country. The Government are taking further steps to encourage the development of productive connections of this sort. For instance, we recently announced the OST competition for industry-academe collaboration, and the DTI competition for technology transfer to reward those in universities and technology transfer units who are successful in building such connections.

We must not forget the people dimension. People are central to the science and engineering base, as they are to industry and commerce. In particular, the key to partnerships of the sort that we have in mind is

[Mr. Lang]

encouraging movement of people. This helps the flow of ideas and knowledge, breaks down barriers and builds up understanding and mutual trust. The Government support a number of schemes to promote this movement of people, including the teaching company scheme, postgraduate training partnerships, the shell technology enterprise programme and co-operative awards in science and engineering.

The technology foresight programme is central to our efforts to strengthen the science-business partnership. The 1993 White Paper announced the Government's intention to conduct a national technology foresight exercise, building on the theme of partnership, to bring together industry, academia and Government to reach a shared vision of future market and societal changes and the science, engineering and technology required to underpin, advance and exploit them.

Over 10,000 individuals took part in the exercise, through workshops, seminars or Delphi questionnaires, giving their expert opinions on one or more of the 15 sectors identified. That first phase of the programme culminated earlier this year in the publication of the 15 panel reports and the report of the steering group whose job it was to advise Ministers, through the chief scientist, on all aspects of the programme.

I am pleased to report to the House the support and interest that the reports have received both from within the United Kingdom and from other countries. The Government have stressed their commitment to the foresight programme as a continuing process through which we can establish active networks and clubs between science and every sector of business—small firms as well as large. In particular, we aim to make firms more aware of what is on offer from the UK science base and of the value of wise investment in and use of technology.

The Government also want foresight to inform priorities within publicly funded science and technology. As the 1993 White Paper said, neither the UK nor any other country can afford to cover all areas of research equally well; priorities will inevitably be set. We must ensure that the process of priority setting takes due account of strategic relevance to wealth creating and the quality of life. Technology foresight will help to inform that process. One key strategic aim—extend quality life, or EQUAL—is to extend the active life of our aging population, drawing on our great strengths in biotechnology, medical research and our strong pharmaceutical industry.

Industrially relevant basic and strategic research can be as challenging and exciting as pure research, and can open up new challenges and opportunities for academic scientists. Contact with industrially relevant problems and needs can also stimulate creative scientists and engineers to tackle these problems with imaginative approaches. It can also enable scientists to try out their ideas on a larger scale and in a more realistic environment.

At the same time, the Government are clear that we should not go too far in directing basic research into areas perceived to be relevant now. We must retain an adequate balance of research driven by curiosity alone with a view to longer-term wealth creation. The foresight exercise has already achieved a great deal, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of the panels and their chairman, and all those they consulted in producing their reports.

In the next phase, there are two main challenges. First, we must ensure that the foresight recommendations are intelligently reflected in the balance and direction of publicly funded science and technology, while we continue to nurture the seedcorn of fundamental research. Secondly, we must encourage a positive response from industry and commerce to the opportunities identified by the foresight reports and using the foresight process to help secure more and better quality academic and business links.

The foresight challenge competition, announced last month, will catalyse science-business partnerships by providing pump-priming funding for collaborative foresight projects. My Department is also providing funds to support regional seminars and clubs to push forward the foresight agenda within business across the country.

Mr. Connarty: The Minister makes two points that I would have raised anyway. Could he comment on the view of vice-chancellors and principals that this policy is already distorting the type of research being done, and that highly rated basic research is not being undertaken and money diverted to lower-rated research because it has more interest for industry?

Mr. Lang: That point was mentioned by the Royal Society in a recent comment on technology foresight. I met the president of the Royal Society earlier this week, when we discussed the matter. I do not believe that there is a distortion. Of course, that is something about which we are anxious to be careful. However, the recent Realising Our Potential Awards, details of which I announced yesterday in the report and hope to mention shortly, do not suggest to me that there is such a distortion.

The Government have also started on the process of implementing technology foresight outcomes. For instance, new LINK collaborative programmes have been launched directly in response to foresight, covering as diverse a range of target areas as applied bio-catalysis; waste minimisation through recycling; genetic and environmental interactions in health; and earth observation.

LINK is the Government's principal mechanism for supporting collaborative research programmes, and an indication of its success is that over 570 LINK projects, worth over £300 million, and involving more than 800 companies, have been started since its conception in 1988. Collaborative research is not short term. It requires sustained commitment, via schemes such as LINK, over many years to make it successful.

There is a huge programme of activity going on within Government and outside to take forward the technology foresight exercise. For example, the DTI's sector divisions have a key role in interpreting foresight output to industry, putting them in the context of the competitiveness messages which the Department discusses on a day-to-day basis with companies. Most importantly, foresight gives an excellent opportunity to encourage firms generally to think more strategically about their business and future markets. The Government will publish a first progress report on how the exercise is being taken forward at the end of this year.

The Realising Our Potential Award scheme—ROPA—is an important and successful element in the Government's science strategy. It has two main aims: to

encourage academic researchers to collaborate with industry in strategic research; and to enable them to carry out undirected research in any area of their own choosing.

We have two years' experience of ROPAs: the 1994 pilot scheme; and the subsequent full scheme in 1995, both of which were operated by the research councils. The response has been tremendous, and the scheme has clearly captured the imagination and interest of both academics and industrialists. We have had more than 1,500 applications for ROPAs, and those researchers quoted more than £260 million of funding from industry in support of their applications; 719 ROPAs have been awarded, some to the top names in UK science and engineering. The awards so far have a total value of some £71 million. All of it is for curiosity-driven research of the researchers' own choosing. A detailed report was published yesterday.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The President may be aware that, in response to yesterday's report and the two years' experience of the scheme, including the refinement of the guidelines, the Royal Society of Chemistry, for example, which was initially cautious, is now prepared to give a positive response, and says that the future now rests on the shoulders of individual researchers.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that encomium for the scheme. It certainly reflects the warmth of the reception for it that I have also recognised.

ROPA grants have gone to the top-rated research departments in our universities. Two thirds of such ROPAs went to those rated in the top two bands, which is a greater concentration than for many other grant schemes.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Would the President care to comment on the report by one of the panel chairmen of the Medical Research Council, who commented that ROPAs were forcing him to give grants to research which it would be better not to fund? There have been many comments about the quality of research done under ROPAs. Indeed, in some areas they are becoming known as "ropy ROPAs".

Mr. Lang: That is dealt with in the report. The whole point about the awards is that they are for curiosity-driven research. It is easy for somebody in a particular discipline of the science world to say that the areas being chosen are not worth pursuing; but it is only by carrying out curiosity-driven research—blue-skies research—of the kind that ROPAs exist to encourage that we can make the progress that both sides of the House are keen to see.

Some universities and institutes have been very successful in seeking ROPAs, and the most successful include Cambridge and Imperial college. In terms of departments, biological sciences, chemistry, engineering and medicine were particularly successful, while the industrial support quoted by applicants was dominated by the chemicals, engineering, medicine and pharmaceutical sectors. It is probably significant that these include many of our most successful companies.

On the other hand, the ROPA results tell us that we need to do more to bring other sectors of industry into play. The recent move of the Office of Science and Technology into the DTI can help that process, through bringing together a combination of initiatives such as foresight, ROPAs and the activities of our business links teams and the DTI sectoral divisions.

The 1993 White Paper recognised that there were still deep-seated cultural barriers in this country, which prevented full recognition of the importance of science and technology. Serious media coverage of science and technology was thin. Many people were ignorant and fearful of science and technology, if not openly antipathetic. We have made some progress. The BBC has greatly improved its coverage, and it is possible to point to some examples of first-class journalism. Nevertheless, there is still too little recognition among the general public of the extent to which our economy and the whole fabric of our society rests on science and technology.

The White Paper therefore launched a new Government campaign to spread the understanding of science and technology among young people and among the public at large. The campaign is a central part of our efforts to pull science and technology more fully into the UK cultural mainstream. I share my predecessors' view of the importance of promoting public understanding, and I shall take forward and develop their initiatives, particularly the establishment of National Science, Engineering and Technology Week.

We have also launched a parallel initiative in engineering entitled "Action for Engineering". It brings together the academic community, the engineering institutions and business to build on the opportunity offered by the coming together of the engineering institutions under a new engineering council to project engineering's contribution to our national life.

Earlier this year, the OST set up a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Arnold Wolfendale to examine how professional scientists and engineers could better promote public understanding of their work. I am pleased to announce today publication of the committee's report. Hon. Members will be aware of the critical role played by scientists and engineers in generating national wealth and improving public well-being. The report highlights the need for such awareness among the wider public. It is vital if we are to fire the enthusiasm for science of able young people and encourage informed debate of the major scientific issues that affect us all.

The report makes a number of important recommendations on how scientists and engineers can be encouraged to communicate to a wider audience. The recommendations directed to my Department—for example, the publication of a good practice guide—will be implemented, and I commend to other organisations the recommendations that apply to them. I am grateful to Sir Arnold and his committee for the work that they have done.

I am conscious of time pressing on. There is a great deal more that I could say about the Government's science and technology policy. It is an area of vigorous activity reflecting the urgency that we feel of realising the potential of national strengths in science and technology. Within the DTI, we are taking forward a range of activity to promote awareness of the importance of innovation and best practice in managing innovation—for example, through the managing in the nineties programme. That programme spreads best practice in its broadest sense, including innovation, management and the application of new technologies.

The DTI is promoting access by firms to technology from the UK science and engineering base through a number of activities, such as the teaching company scheme centres at universities, as well as through the

[Mr. Lang]

NEARNET and SUPERNET networks available at business links. The DTI's overseas technology services give UK companies access to overseas science and technology—for instance, through the expanded engineers to Japan scheme and the overseas science and technology expert missions scheme.

The DTI and OST are active on a wide front internationally, promoting opportunities for UK researchers to engage in collaborations with overseas partners where it makes sense for them to do so. In Europe, under the third framework programme, UK researchers secured more research contracts than any other single member state. We are endeavouring at least to maintain that performance under the fourth framework programme. UK researchers have a deservedly strong reputation internationally, which is why others want to work with them. That strength also offers us the opportunity to use our capabilities in science and technology to promote UK exports and attract inward investment, which we do vigorously.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Science and Technology is hot-foot from attending the ministerial Council of the European Space Agency. There are those who have chosen to misunderstand our attitude to the ESA. The UK is committed to collaboration in space through the ESA, and fully recognises the excellence of the ESA's research programme. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the ESA is not spared the disciplines of economy, efficiency and effectiveness that we would expect to apply to the administration of science in the UK. We must not allow growth in the cost of space mission infrastructure to squeeze out our ability to contribute fully to the science.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lang: Yes, but I must then press on.

Mr. Batiste: My right hon. Friend refers rightly to the important work that is done in the European Space Agency, and the need to ensure that it is done efficiently. Does he accept that one of the consequences of ESA spending is that the money available for national programmes, to be applied to matters that fit our national priorities, has been reduced and become very limited in recent times? The danger is that, in areas such as global navigation satellites, for example, we may find that useful leads by our industry are squeezed out for lack of funding in the future.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes a sound point, of which we are aware. It is precisely to avoid the danger of the problem that he identifies that we are keen to emphasise the need for efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the funds that we devote through the ESA.

At home, we are improving the co-ordination of science and technology across Government. The 1995 "forward look" presented a comprehensive overview of Government Departments' plans for science and technology. It reported on the steps that the Departments are taking to improve collaboration with each other, and on their progress in aligning their science and technology more closely with the needs of business and in ensuring that the potential for commercial spin-off is fully covered.

We are also working to improve the efficiency and value for money of the substantial public investment in science and technology—by, for example, exploring the scope for closer working between public sector research establishments. My Department has worked successfully to bring a more commercial approach to bear on its own laboratories through a programme of privatisation and contractorisation.

We have improved the career management of researchers in the science base in consultation with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. We have relaunched, and injected additional funds into, the LINK scheme, with the result that it is already delivering collaborative R and D programmes that take forward foresight recommendations. We have established a development unit within the OST to promote the participation of women in science, engineering and technology, which has already achieved a great deal, working with voluntary organisations and industry.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lang: I am just about to finish. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not giving way, but many hon. Members wish to participate in the debate.

As President of the Board of Trade and Minister in the Cabinet with responsibility for science and technology, I am fully committed to sustaining the momentum and direction of the Government's science and technology policies. The OST and the rest of the DTI are working together towards a common strategic aim: developing and nurturing the excellence of our science and technology and ensuring that industry—indeed, society as a whole—makes more use of this vital national asset for the greater good of the British people.

10.11 am

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I welcome the President of the Board of the Trade and the Minister for Science and Technology to their new appointments: I believe that this is the first time that we have debated science across the Dispatch Box.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on her appointment yesterday as shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. She has a long-standing and deep commitment to science, engineering and technology, and I look forward to her being with us for such debates in the future.

Mr. Batiste: Are we to understand that the first action of the new shadow spokesman for Trade and Industry is not to turn up for a science and technology debate?

Mr. Battle: That is a cheap and churlish remark. My right hon. Friend was appointed only yesterday and it is not reasonable for her commitments simply to be torn up; there is a little interregnum. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have the good grace to join the House and extend a word of welcome to her.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Battle: I will take a question in a moment.

May I take this opportunity to invite Conservative Members to extend a word of congratulation to Professor Joseph Rotblat on his Nobel peace prize? It is a rare and deserved example of the contribution of science to peace. We should, not least in this debate, congratulate him.

Mr. Donald Anderson: As far as we are aware, Professor Rotblat is still awaiting congratulations from No. 10. Have they yet been sent?

Mr. Battle: As my hon. Friend knows, I cannot answer for No. 10, but I hope that in this debate the President of the Board of Trade and Conservative Members will congratulate him.

Nobel prizes have recently been awarded for a range of scientific disciplines and the winners deserve our congratulations. The timing is all the more poignant as the winning projects are considered to have been ones that may not have received funding from the Government. *Nature* of 12 October reports:

"Peter Lawrence, a geneticist at the laboratory for Molecular Biology in Cambridge, described the trio"—

those who won the Nobel prizes for science—

"as 'role models for scientists of the future'. The award, he adds, is a much-needed signal to science policy makers of the need to continue funding unfashionable, risk-laden, long-term projects whose result is not always in sight.

This research, Lawrence says, is the type of work that should be every scientist's bread and butter, but is becoming more and more difficult to achieve. 'I am convinced that Ed Lewis would not have got a grant in our days,' he says."

I emphasise that point because we question whether the Government have got the balance right between basic curiosity-driven science and technology transfer.

Dr. Bray: The Nobel prize for the discovery of the depletion of ozone in the upper atmosphere went to the Americans rather than to Joe Farman, the British Antarctic Survey scientist. That was perhaps partly due to the fact that Britain did not contribute any of the research infrastructure and the basic observation systems are carried out by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, to which Joe Farman had only indirect access. The underlying problem is that British scientists do not have the heavyweight back-up of scientists elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Battle: That is a good point and I should like to extend it by mentioning the need to support international collaboration so that our scientists can be at the forefront internationally. I shall return to that issue.

Under this Prime Minister, there have been echoes of the past and of a Government locked into the nostalgia of warm beer and cycling past the village green. Suddenly, however, it seems that the Government have woken up to the information age of the new technologies. I understand that they now have their own world wide web page.

P. J. O'Rourke described modern politics as simply survival and the need to

"sustain an image of competence from one day to the next."

We believe that the Government's policy is characterised by that sustenance of the image of competence from one day to the next. Indeed, it sometimes seems that policy is now being decided and changed from one press release to the next.

The 1993 White Paper, "Realising our Potential", was released with great fanfare but the expectations that came with it have not been fulfilled; indeed, they have been dashed. The policy potential of the White Paper has not been realised. The Office of Science and Technology has not fulfilled the role that it was established to fulfil—that of co-ordinating departmental research and development across Government. The suggestion that it was simply pushed into the Department of Trade and Industry does not match the foresight or planning prefigured by the Government. It is up to us to get out of the world of press releases and out of this place to see what is happening on the ground.

Two months after his appointment as the Cabinet Minister responsible for science, the President of the Board of Trade made his first visit to Keyworth to see the headquarters of the British Geological Survey. I was told that he had been there when, a few days later, I went out with the British Geological Survey on Baildon moor to examine its research methods. It is important that we get out to see what is being done by our research establishments.

Sadly, this year for the first time, people were disappointed that not a single Cabinet Minister was present for the British Association for the Advancement of Science's week-long festival in Newcastle, although the Prime Minister was in Newcastle at the time. He turned down a personal invitation to present an award at the ceremony for young European scientists so that he could have a private meeting with party activists instead. It was a surprising move. When asked to explain why he could not be there, or even squeeze in a five-minute photo call, the Prime Minister replied:

"Whether it is a good or bad thing, there are slightly more football supporters in the United Kingdom than there are space scientists."

The comment in *The Daily Telegraph* was:

"Translation: Short-term considerations are more important than the long-term impact of British research on the national wealth and quality of life."

As much as I love my home team, Leeds United, I do not consider being at its games more important than ensuring that the manufacturing base of Leeds is sustained so that people can afford season tickets in the future.

The Minister for Science and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor): I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman introduces childish criticisms. He and I were both at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which is the right and proper way of taking seriously its excellent week, and I am sure that he took part in as many experiments with the various children's groups as I did. The remarks that he attributed to the Prime Minister were remarks that I made flippantly. Fortunately, Roger Highfield's subsequent article in *The Daily Telegraph* would have failed any peer review, so I believe that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to embarrass Roger Highfield further by mentioning that article.

Mr. Battle: I think I can allow the Minister to take his complaints about the press to the appropriate place.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Canada.

Mr. Battle: Yes, Canada.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: While the hon. Gentleman is dealing with the British Association for the Advancement of Science, will he pay tribute to the work that it and its committees do to improve public understanding of science? They do a great deal in that respect.

Mr. Battle: Absolutely. We can share that view across the Floor of the House.

[Mr. Battle]

I take the Minister's point. It is important that we try to attend and give the British Association for the Advancement of Science all possible support. Its work is excellent.

Science week should be extended. Instead of there being a single week celebrating science and technology primarily focused on schools, the whole of commerce and industry should have open days or open weeks throughout the year so that we can better understand what manufacturing engineering and technology is about and can understand more about research and development. We need to extend our vision of the role of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and to do everything possible to support it.

Under the Conservative Government, despite the encomium that we heard from the President of the Board of Trade, there is a feeling that research and development continues to be marginalised and demoted. It is not being pushed further up the political agenda, as he suggested.

Let me reflect on the role of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the First Secretary of State, the Deputy Prime Minister, the man noted for his back-of-the-envelope outlines of the future. It seems to me that, on that hot summer's afternoon on 4 July, he had another back-of-the-envelope plan of how the Government should be run. He was to leave the Department of Trade and Industry and move to the Cabinet Office in his new role, but he kicked science behind him. He pushed the Office of Science and Technology back in the opposite direction.

It was as though science and the Office of Science and Technology were an afterthought, a left-over. Where was the planning, the consultation, the involvement of the Department's staff in that sudden transfer of the OST to the DTI, not to mention the appointment of the newly appointed Government chief scientific adviser—whom, incidentally, I welcome to this place and to his post?

There did not appear to be much foresight in that decision. It appeared to be a classic afterthought by the then President of the Board of Trade as he moved into the new role of Deputy Prime Minister.

So what do we get? Science is put into its third Department in as many years under the Government. We have now the fourth science Minister in as many years. That is it—science has become a reject of the new Deputy Prime Minister. Or is it? The President of the Board of Trade told me that he has Cabinet responsibility for science, yet the Deputy Prime Minister tells us that he chairs the Cabinet Committee covering science and that science is now subsumed under the sole heading of competitiveness, along with other disciplines.

The White Paper on competitiveness was presented to the House. We had a debate on competitiveness. On the same day, all the technology foresight reports and the "forward look" document, which we welcome and which we would have wished to comment on, were not presented to the House. They were presented in a press conference at 5 o'clock in the Queen Elizabeth centre by the then President of the Board of Trade. In other words, they were subsumed to competition policy. Science was tagged on to the launch of the competitiveness White Paper.

We are left with the lingering question: who ultimately is the Cabinet Minister responsible for science? Or is the President of the Board of Trade in effect another deputy's deputy, with which we are becoming so confusingly familiar? I hope that the Minister for Science and Technology will not take offence when I say that I hope that he has not been asked to reply this morning on behalf of the real science Minister, the right hon. Member for Henley.

There is confusion about who is responsible at the heart and centre of Government for science policy. It is a shambles of an arrangement. What a way to treat our country's future. No wonder the Save British Science Society has commented:

"A Government with so little regard for the intelligence of the research community shows a stunning lack of true 'Foresight'. Many will question whether this is any longer a Government whose words and intentions can be respected."

With the best of respect to the new Ministers, I know, from seeing for myself in perhaps more than 100 visits to research establishments, universities, laboratories and businesses throughout the country in the past nine months, how lacking support and credibility are now in the field of the Government's science, engineering, technology and research and development policies.

Having seen that, I believe that we should be in no doubt of the scale of the science and technology challenges that we must face, and which the Government so manifestly fail to tackle.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman makes a big point about that, but I should remind him that the former chief scientific adviser has made very positive remarks about the transfer from the Office of Public Service and Science to the DTI—in his article in *The Daily Telegraph* of 19 July, not least. The new chief scientific adviser has specifically told me that the transdepartmental responsibilities of the chief scientific adviser have been preserved entirely. Those are two very eminent gentlemen, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that into account.

Mr. Battle: I will take that into account, but it is interesting that their comments come after the event, not before. There were no hints before that that would happen. There were no fliers from the chief scientist at the time suggesting that that was the way forward—and he had ample opportunity.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I wish to comment on the remark attributed to the new chief scientific adviser. He, of course, had no experience of the previous system when there was a Cabinet Committee directly concerned with science and technology. That has been abolished. It is difficult to understand how that makes it possible to continue those central co-ordinating arrangements with the same effectiveness as in the past.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman makes a good argument. I seem to recall that, at the time of the transfer, he made those arguments public. They are welcome.

In a way, the debate is post hoc; it has happened. Nevertheless, we are anxious to draw to the Government's attention the fact that it hardly becomes them to defend the line of careful forethought when a decision is jumped on the whole of Government and Departments on a hot afternoon as a result of a crisis at the highest levels of Government.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I am confused by what the hon. Gentleman says. We know that it is Labour policy that the OST should be part of the DTI, and presumably it urged that because that is what it wrote in its documents.

The hon. Gentleman has bored the Chamber with a long diatribe about the move that has been made by the Government. I have to tell him, as a former junior science Minister, that I believe that it was exactly the right move. It was impossible to determine what was the difference between the technology parts of the DTI that my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) was in charge of and the parts that I was in charge of at the Office of Public Service and Science.

It is a welcome move. For once, as the Labour party said it before and it had been thought of in government, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) might have welcomed it. That might be more constructive.

Mr. Battle: I am amazed that the former science Minister asks that question, because he gives me the chance to ask him a question. It would be interesting to know what he felt when he stood at that Dispatch Box saying how good the arrangements were, if he now feels that they were all wrong. He never told us that he was greatly unhappy with the OST and he believed that it should be moved to the DTI—and I know that some voices urged him to do that. He held out in the opposite direction.

Dr. Bray: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority about present Labour science policy. The President of the Board of Trade actually quoted from former Labour party policy in the manifesto at the last election, for which I was responsible. It was a highly selective quotation, in which he said that the Department of Trade and Industry was responsible for that area of industrial research. The overall concept of the Office of Science and Technology belonged firmly in the centre of Government. We were rubbished by the Conservative party at the time, only for it to adopt our policy after the election.

Mr. Battle: The document "Pushing Back the Frontiers" was published in 1992. We felt that the Government had stolen our clothes. We suggested the setting up of an office of science and technology within the Cabinet Office, which is precisely what the Government did after the election. We welcomed that because we thought that they had taken our idea.

We should face up to the science and technology challenges of our world in a less complacent manner than we saw from the President of the Board of Trade this morning. Science is becoming increasingly international. There are already 30 million people on the Internet. Within a decade or two there will effectively be a limitless capacity for fibre-optics and we will be capable of transporting the entire contents of the British library in less than a minute.

Scientific research can be accessed from all over the globe. Universities and scientific societies are pioneering new ways of making research internationally available. By the year 2005, 10 million people will be working with computer software in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development alone. But the danger is that Britain will be left behind as American companies such as Mathwork make all the engineering inroads.

By the year 2010, there will be 2,260 telecommunications satellites in orbit—twice as many as there are now. Today, the Asian Pacific market for chemicals is roughly equal in size to the markets of the European Union and the United States put together. In 25 years the Asian Pacific market could be bigger than both put together. There have been new advances, not just in the industry, but in environmental technologies, education and health. Machines, materials, manufacturing and even the concept of transportation are being transformed by continuing advances in micro-processing, wireless networks, high-speed optical networks and artificial intelligence. It is an economy and society in which knowledge will be power, information will be opportunity and technology will make things happen.

How does Tory Britain prepare itself for the information age, when even more important than the technologies to communicate knowledge will be the capacity to generate the knowledge in the first place? What characterises the Government's approach to science, as in so many other spheres of policy, is that they cut budgets in the short term—they fragment, marginalise and demote.

Let us compare Britain to our international competitors, as both the OECD report and the International Monetary Fund report spelt out this summer. Let us compare ourselves with America, Japan, Germany and France. The percentage of GDP spent on research and development in Britain is lower than all the others, at 2.19 per cent. The United States spends 2.72 per cent. of its GDP; Japan spends 2.93 per cent. The President suggested that Britain was top of the class in terms of spending on research and development per head of population, but we are bottom of that league. Let us consider the number of people employed in research and development. Europe employs nearly 300,000 more today than in 1981, as does Japan. Germany employs 140,000 more; France employs 50,000 more and Italy 40,000 more. But here in Britain we employ fewer—nearly 40,000 full-time equivalents fewer.

British industry is working hard to boost research and development spending after a decline in 1990, when it was down 0.3 per cent. By 1993, it had risen 4.6 per cent. But despite the industry's efforts, Government cuts mean that extra investment in our society is wiped out. There has been a massive shift to part-time researchers on temporary contracts in our society—from 11,500 in 1982 up to 21,500 in 1994. What does that mean? Employees on short-term contracts worry about their next wage rather than the details of the creative research upon which they should be engaged.

The picture is not as rosy as the President of the Board of Trade suggested. The OST budget is projected to shrink by 12 per cent. next year and is being steadily undermined by cuts in research and development spending by other Government Departments. That action comes from a Government who claim in their press releases to be offering a teaspoon of aid through the OST with one hand, yet the fingers of their other hand are around the windpipe as Government Departments cut research and development across the board in health, transportation and the environment.

In the recent "forward look"—the Government's annual science review—total Government spending is projected to fall by 7 per cent. in real terms by 1997. By the financial year 1997-98, spending will be more than £1 billion less than it was in 1986. The worst culprit is the Department of Trade and Industry, where research and development programmes have been slashed by 68 per cent. in four years.

On the very day that the Government announced the White Paper, "Realising our Potential", the DTI, then under the right hon. Member for Henley, slashed

[Mr. Battle]

£40 million from collaborative research programmes. It is no wonder that the scientific world is nervous of the OST's move into the Department of Trade and Industry.

This very day, while we are here debating science, the Chancellor is at his Dorneywood retreat, cutting Government departmental budgets. I am in some ways surprised that the President of the Board of Trade is here this morning. I thought that he might be at Dorneywood defending his budget. While we are debating the need for science spending, the Chancellor may be cutting the budget again at Dorneywood. Obviously, we shall have to wait and see, but to cut the science budget in order to deliver tax cuts in the coming Budget must be one of the most short-sighted economic decisions that can be made in our society.

Even industrial renovation research, funded by the DTI, is down from £104 million in 1993 to £85.6 million now. The national space programme has been halved. I hear that the Minister for Science and Technology was at the European Space Agency yesterday. The coded way in which the President of the Board of Trade reported back suggested that we should cut our cloth accordingly. I suspect that the Minister was at the ESA to campaign again for a larger cut—perhaps of 25 per cent. I should like to hear the details of the Minister's argument in Brussels and whether he argued to reduce our commitment to the ESA. I would welcome it if he would give us an answer.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in this matter, he will be delighted to congratulate us on our efforts in altering the balance within the ESA budget. There is to be a flat cash arrangement for the next five years of the ESA science budget, capped at a 3 per cent. level of inflation. All the members around the table at the ESA agreed to that. It was a difficult negotiation, but the key point was to preserve the science element. It was clear that if we had not brought that budget under more control than had originally been proposed, other member countries in subsequent years would have tried to take out key platforms from the science activity. I did not wish to do that.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to the Minister for giving us some hints and I look forward to the details. The Government's record on the ESA is not spectacular. We are not involved in manned flight or telecommunications—we have pulled out from two key areas. We remain in one of the voluntary sectors: earth observation. But even there, if the Minister would care to visit the Meteorological Office, he would discover that we are making cuts. I gather that when the Minister was last at the ESA he sat at a table on which there was a model of the Ariane rocket. He asked why flags of other nations appeared on the rocket, but not the British flag. He was told that it was because we did not make a contribution, and that we could have our flag on the rocket when we made one.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman should be properly briefed before he comes to the Dispatch Box. I understand only too well that we are not part of the Ariane infrastructure project. He should wait and see what may happen this afternoon, although the injection of funds is still a matter for further discussion. He should recognise that we have been long-term contributors to the Kourou ground station. British companies play a part in the Ariane programme and we should pay tribute to them.

Mr. Battle: I am encouraged that, by raising more points, I am forcing the Minister to make more commitments. I am suggesting that it would be very beneficial for our industries if Britain were to be more "solidly at the heart of Europe"—as the phrase goes—in scientific and research and development terms. We have precisely the technologies, back-up technologies and commercial interests that would allow us to make a major contribution. In other words, British investment would pay off back home.

The space programme budget has been halved and, amazingly, the DTI renewable energy budget has been cut by one third. The Government raise value-added tax on fuel and then cut the renewable energy technology budget. Are they so short-sighted, or do they simply want to raise revenue in the short term at any expense?

We are told that the £1.3 billion budget of the OST will be protected when it moves into the DTI, which also has a budget of £1.3 billion—I think that "ring-fenced" was the term used in the press releases. How long will it be before that ring fence becomes a Chinese wall, as the DTI and OST budgets are fused and then cut year after year? That is what we have seen repeatedly in the development of technology and research in recent years.

Perhaps the President of the Board of Trade or the Minister for Science and Technology will deny that the budget of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council is due for a real term cut this year, next year and the year after. Will they deny that there is a growing infrastructure crisis in university laboratories? In the last debate we raised the practical issue of the lack of fume cupboards—a basic support system for chemistry laboratories. Are the Government addressing that problem in any way? No Tory election tax cut is more cynical than one that is financed by undermining new research and development and scientific and technological possibilities. In other words, the Government are cutting our future economic prosperity and our social well-being. That is short-termism with a vengeance.

The Government are addicted to short-termism, and scientific research and development is paying the highest price for that short-term approach. Vital cash is increasingly diverted from the research councils into short-term, headline-catching, acronym-titled competitions that bear all the hallmarks of the right hon. Member for Henley—the competition addict. Some £40 million—which we were told was not new money—was allocated to the technology foresight competition. We were then told that the sum had to be matched by private money or it would not be released.

When the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for the Environment, his Department initiated competitions every day. They proved to be simply a cover for reducing mainstream programming. When private funds do not match the money that is declared available, that sum is cut and less money is spent on the programmes. That has happened every time.

I shall take the Realising our Potential Awards as an example. Applicants must win funding for a project that is original and feasible and they must demonstrate that they have secured at least £25,000 of industrial income. I would argue that the worth of the proposed research is not

considered properly as, increasingly, the research programmes that win cash are those that have failed on the basis of peer review. As the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) pointed out in the House on Monday, alpha-rated research projects—that is the highest rating there is—are being passed over because resources have been diverted to less rigorous ROPAs.

The chairman of the Medical Research Council's molecules and cells panel has said that the ROPAs have meant that his panel was

"boxed into a corner where you had to fund something you didn't want to."

The Government's review of ROPAs, which was published yesterday, reports the research councils' concerns that they are being forced to fund "poor-quality" science. While the concept of ROPAs—to build links between industry and the science base—is good and one that the Labour party supports fully, the practice under the Government belies the intention.

Not only is top-quality research passed over, but the overall thrust of R and D funding is driven into the short term. Researchers cannot find support from industry for longer-term basic research for entirely understandable reasons: firms are unwilling to take the risk of funding research whose applicability is as yet uncertain and whose exclusivity to the funder is unlikely. The result is that funding goes instead to short-term, near-market research. We do not deny that such research is valuable in itself, but it is no substitute for long-term thinking. As the Medical Research Council panel chairman said, ROPAs in their current form have led to

"clinical trial work, not innovative science".

Everywhere one looks, Britain's science base is being threatened by the pressure for near-market research.

I have met many industry representatives and I do not believe that industry wants academia to do its job for it. Industry should not be expected to conduct basic, curiosity-driven, blue-skies research. In the same way, academics should not have to test products. I get a clear message from firms up and down the country: there must be a well-trained and resourced science base from which firms can draw people who are trained to the top of their field and who can be recruited to work to firms' near-market ends. Industry needs excellence and quality in British basic science.

The Labour party's policy is clear. The ROPAs can stay; we welcome them. But quality shall become the criterion. We shall restore a long-term time horizon and ensure that funding structures do not channel research projects short term and purely near market.

The Government's failure in the science field is not just about cash; it is also about the abject lack of co-ordinating strategy across the range of Government Departments, research councils and public and private sector research establishments.

The former Defence Minister gave evidence before the Defence and Trade and Industry Select Committees, which met concurrently on 23 May. He was questioned about defence research and the potential for generating new ideas and production. He said that he was keen that the notion of the potential of the defence industry should be extended. However, he did not even mention technology foresight; he seemed totally unaware of the defence aerospace foresight report. He referred to the technology demonstrator programmes, but he did not mention the technology foresight report, despite the fact that it had been launched only days earlier in the QEII centre.

Despite the Government's claims to the contrary, there is no co-ordination between Departments. Other Departments may not know what the Office of Science and Technology is trying to achieve. For example, the Wellcome Trust has reported that the university dual support system is collapsing because individual research programmes cannot justify the capital expenditure on equipment that the research requires. That is not to say that the research is not needed, the equipment is not necessary or that it will never be used again; there is simply no attempt to link the research between laboratories or Government Departments.

How do the Government think that they can remedy that situation? This morning we heard the new buzz-phrase: "fostering partnerships". That involves establishing networks of support between different branches of research. However, I am not convinced that that is really the Government's approach because, for some strange reason, they seem to be insisting upon privatisation and fragmentation. Their response to the scrutiny of the public research establishments has been to establish a prior options review of all public sector research establishments with a view to pushing them out to the private sector.

Research councils and Government Departments are to be reviewed on a function-by-function basis and analysed for their potential for transfer out of the Government domain and into privatisation.

We are entitled to ask what form the privatisation would take. For some weeks the House debated the privatisation of AEA Technology. Hon. Members on that Committee will recall that we asked repeatedly whether AEA Technology would be sold off en bloc or fragmented. We received no response. We fundamentally opposed the Government's strategy because they could not tell us how it will be sold. If it is sold off in fragments, that could undermine and pull apart a critical mass of scientists in a key area. Arguably, clean-up technology is a key area in respect of our environmental needs and should be at the forefront of technology rather than undermined.

Individual functions will be hived off and cherry-picked, tearing down the bridges and links that join research establishments. I visited the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, which is across the green at Teddington from the National Physical Laboratory. The Government are pushing out both those organisations to the private sector in different directions and by different means. Occasionally, however, scientists from the establishments get together and exchange ideas. We should be fostering coming together and development, not atomising and fragmenting, as the Government are by allowing individual functions to be pulled apart. That box or silo thinking pervades much of the Government's action; there is no serious joined-up thinking across Government Departments.

Labour will call off that ideological drive towards the privatisation and fragmentation of public sector research establishments. We realise that the principal aim of science and technology policy is to ensure the creation of effective technology support systems that bridge industry and the science base and build links within the science base to generate interactive scientific expertise.

[Mr. Battle]

We recognise that firms, universities and public research bodies are distinctively different institutions that are adapted to specific purposes, but, just as it would be foolhardy to make academic institutions into commercial ideas factories, so it would be foolhardy to make private firms non-commercial. It is foolhardy to push out Government expertise that has been built up over the years into the private sector to see whether it thrives or dies because we might kill off some of our much-needed expertise that will lead us into the future. The central problem of policy is how to connect and co-ordinate and we do not accept that the Government are moving forward in that strategic direction.

The establishment of the foresight panels is welcome, but the weakness in the Government policy is the strategic implementation plans. Where are the responses from other Government Departments? Where are the commitments to carry policy forward throughout the Government? In other words, the economic and social return from scientific research and development is not determined solely by the capacity to develop new products and processes. Equally important is the system of support for diffusing those technologies and the relevant applications.

Throughout history, British scientists are rightly reputed for their brilliance at researching new scientific advances. Science and engineering have been coming together for years, as the new paradigms of computer-aided design demonstrate.

I have to reflect that for some years the Government wrote off manufacturing industry. When the noble Lord Young was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he declared that the service sector was all, the manufacturing sector was over and that Britain would thrive if only more people would eat out. I remember it directly because in my city manufacturing was declining from 52 per cent. to 32 per cent. of the manufacturing base. However, there have been welcome and encouraging reports in recent days because of real partnership at local level between chambers of commerce, industry, universities and technology and the engineering initiative in Leeds. Manufacturing is starting to come back and we need a manufacturing base. I welcome the fact that the word "manufacturing" appears in a positive way for the first time in the past 10 or 15 years in a Government publication.

The examples of British excellence that result in profitable industry are diminishing. Not only is the basic science capability of Britain to generate such ideas being undermined, but the Government are failing to support industry and academia in their attempts to transfer ideas and technology back and forth. There is a weakness in Government because they are not tying together Government programmes with the outside world and research and investment in industry.

Science and technology policy needs genuinely to co-ordinate and encourage the take-up of scientific advances by industry, particularly small and medium-sized firms, where the shortfall is even more marked. As SmithKline Beecham remarked on the technology foresight programme:

> "The challenge now is to ensure widespread dissemination and implementation of the Panel findings. This requires a coherent political strategy."

That is not what we were getting from the Government. It is a view shared by industry throughout the country and by many professional bodies, including the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Royal Society and the CBI.

Partnership across Government and between public and private sectors can happen and under a Labour Government it will. We shall establish an industry-wide advisory council on new technologies, on which management and consumers will have a voice. We shall have a Minister to work with those and other innovations to ensure that we effectively promote change and understand in advance the long-term economic and social implications.

We understand that science and technology policy is central to the economic and social future of our country. Positive support for our manufacturing base needs to be enhanced and support needs to be returned to research into health, education, transport and the environment, which the Government have short-sightedly allowed to deteriorate because such research cannot deliver a short-term immediate cash return.

We shall work for better international collaboration. We shall seek not to isolate Britain in the European Space Agency, jeopardising our capacity to benefit from new advances that the agency makes, but to ensure that research and the work of scientists are supported here and internationally. Nor would we, alone among our competitors, allow the burden of an expected £10 billion increase in subscriptions to CERN to be borne by science expenditure here so that other programmes have to be cut to allow for currency fluctuations. Unless the Government act to deal with the impending international subscriptions crisis, the result will be a halving of resources available to the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council to prepare experiments and use CERN. The Minister may mention that in his reply to the debate.

We shall sort out intellectual property rights and tackle the science switch-off in education between the age of 16 and 18 when students are not taking sciences at a higher level. We will encourage the opening of local science shops to bring scientific understanding within the reach of local communities and we shall ensure that the Office of Science and Technology has a genuine co-ordinating function. We shall pull Departments together in a co-ordinated strategy, breaking down the narrow departmental thinking of the past.

We need a clear Government vision to infuse society with a deeper and broader sense of the vital importance of science, to bring about the long overdue shift from short-term to long-term perspectives on the economic, social and political possibilities of the future. We know from today's debate that the Government are still addicted to the short term. They are incapable of providing a vision and we suspect that science will continue to pay a high price until the election of a Labour Government.

10.59 am

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): This is an important debate on an important subject. In all the time that I have been in the House, we have never found a way of reconciling the inevitable short notice of Friday business with accepting, at longer notice, invitations to attend functions in our constituencies. The irony is that I have been invited to open a new science and technology

unit at Heathside secondary school in Weybridge—an excellent institution and the first grant-maintained school in Surrey. The House would expect me to honour that commitment, so I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister and the House for having to leave this important debate early.

I warmly welcome the confirmation by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade of the continuation of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, which is clear recognition of that Committee's effectiveness under the wise chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw).

I will confine my brief remarks to the subject of intellectual property. It is widely agreed in almost every saloon bar in the country that we are good at innovation but not at exploitation. Part of exploitation is the protection of new ideas in the world of intellectual property. Announcing that one is to talk about intellectual property is a way of clearing a room of people quicker than shouting, "Fire!" In these Nolan-obsessed days, I should declare that I speak as the totally honorary and non-remunerated chairman of the Institute for Intellectual Property, which was created a year ago as a reformation of the Common Law Institute for Intellectual Property, known by many people as CLIP, which for 10 years, under the wise guidance of Lord Scarman and the late Stephen Stewart, provided an important focus for intellectual property activities.

The Institute for Intellectual Property continues the excellent research work of its predecessor but also combines a much-needed industry focus by having 10 important UK companies as founder members on its board of governors. The question sometimes asked, although not as often as it should be, is: how important is intellectual property to the United Kingdom? Two studies by CLIP on the economic importance of intellectual property showed that the copyright-based industries accounted for approximately £17 billion or 3.6 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1990, and that they employed more than 800,000 people. The patent-based industries accounted for approximately 2 per cent. of GDP. Both results have been widely accepted as conservative.

The figure resulting from the copyright study was cited by Ministers when presenting the Bill that is now the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988. On the best estimates available, the UK is second in the world league table of copyright producers and exporters, and fourth or fifth in the sale of products relying on patent protection. However, it would be dangerous to underestimate the forces that oppose intellectual property. At a national level, the consumer lobby would prefer that the products of the IP industries were either free—for example, by copying films and records off air—or at greatly reduced prices, such as with generic pharmaceuticals. But without intellectual property protection, there may be no videos, records or new drugs, because the companies that produce them could not recoup their substantial and essential investment.

Every democratic Government must be mindful that, for every creator or right owner who has a vote, there are 1,000 consumer votes and that, for every Bill desperately needed to bring and keep intellectual property up to date, a dozen other Bills are politically more important. At the international level, developing countries often resist intellectual property protection on the ground that they need IP-based cultural and technological goods for their development but cannot for the time being afford to pay for IP. Piracy, which usually involves copyright or trade mark infringements—or both—is estimated to cost UK businesses more than £1 billion, which is worth at least 100,000 jobs.

Industry competitiveness in the UK will increasingly depend on brain rather than brawn. The successful exploitation of public and private science and technology expenditure demands an effective intellectual regime. Products and services now reach the market place rapidly and are constantly updated. For example, the explosion in multi-media products and services for industry and consumers demand collaboration between creators and innovators in the entertainment, computer and communications industries. That rapid change requires intellectual property regimes to adapt at a similar rate if disputes between collaborators are to be resolved promptly and are not to inhibit progress.

The essence of patent and copyright law is the granting of a monopoly to an individual or a company for a specific period. The House will always be sensitive about monopolies and will not readily relinquish control. Therefore, IP law—except for the implementation of European Union directives under the Single European Act—cannot easily be covered by the secondary legislative process. The law is complex and it is expensive for IP owners to enforce their rights against an infringer. Typically, it costs £50,000 in the county court or at least £250,000, as a starting figure, in the Patents Court, which is a branch of the High Court.

Lord Woolf has produced an interim report on reform of the civil law. Cheap, fast-track litigation and simpler rules of procedure are needed, together with a level playing field in the EU. At present, in many EU countries—but not in the UK—the state subsidises litigation by paying for expert witnesses, which are always an expensive item. If we do not work rapidly to those objectives, litigants will shop around for the best service and disputes will be resolved in Dutch or German courts. That will further damage the UK as a trading centre.

The PIMS report "Panorama of EU Industry", which was published last month, concludes, among other things, that innovation and intellectual property are the strongest drivers of competitiveness, leading to a growing market share, value added and more jobs. Intellectual property, however, is valueless without a cheap and efficient means of enforcing rights. We should support Lord Woolf and the patent judges in their efforts to reform and modernise the law.

My concern is that the speed of technological change and innovation at which we marvel makes it difficult for the legal framework to keep pace. I am not convinced that the Department of Trade and Industry has adequate resources. If adequate resources and expertise were made available, the Law Commission could keep a watching brief and bring forward proposals when necessary in this crucial part of national activity.

11.8 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): This debate is timely, as are all science and technology debates, and I welcome the ready interest of the new President of the Board of Trade in coming to speak to the House so soon.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

We must firmly establish the ground rules within which science policy will be conducted, and it was useful to have the right hon. Gentleman's outline.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) gave a powerful critique of our misgivings about the Government's level and direction of science policy. My hon. Friend is a diligent visitor to every kind of scientific establishment in the private and public sectors and is well respected by the research community as an observer of the field of science. He speaks with real authority of feeling in the science community, and that was reflected in his speech.

I welcome the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) as the shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. She is a metallurgist with a strong scientific background and a lifelong interest in science policy. I have worked with her for many years in that area. While the Office of Science and Technology remains within the DTI, she will be a powerful advocate for science and a vigorous defender of the science base.

The fault that we perceive in the transfer of the OST to the DTI is not the wish for a more effective application of technology in industry, but the narrowness and naivety of the Government's view of the innovation process that lies behind the move. The science base must be safeguarded and the science budget ring-fenced to protect it against the mismanagement of the DTI's research resources that we have seen over the past 10 years.

It is about the narrower issue of increasing the competitiveness of industry in Britain that I am most concerned. In a way, the science base can look after itself. Scientists will be robust street fighters in the defence of the science base during the short time before the next election. However, industry cannot wait. I have sufficient confidence that scientists will fight their corner, but our manufacturing industry is not sufficiently competitive to be able to afford any delay. We are not able simultaneously to achieve sustainable balances of payments and public borrowing with low levels of inflation and unemployment. Britain is not unique in that among European countries.

We must be realistic about what we face. I want to refer to my constituency which, as the President of the Board of Trade knows, is an important part of industrial Scotland—for which, as Secretary of State for Scotland, he was responsible for many years. Scotland's steel industry wrapped up during his tenure of office, but 20 years ago it was the mainstay of employment in my constituency. Steelmaking finally ceased with the closure of Ravenscraig. Today, the best orders coming to our one remaining steel plate mill in Dalzell works have come from the shipyards not of the Clyde, but of Korea. The first major manufacturer to come into Lanarkshire after the rundown of steel promises to be Chung Hwa Tubes from Taiwan, which makes television picture tubes.

Electronics manufacturers in Scotland's central belt compete with the south-east Asian tigers—Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong—in the manufacture of components and they assemble their components in competition with the lower-cost assemblers in Malaysia, Indonesia, India and China. Those are only straws in the wind, but my constituents do not talk about putting up barriers against trade with low-cost labour areas. They are ready to recognise our common global interests in development and in rising standards across the world. However, they have little grounds for confidence in the innovative capacity of British industry and its research and development.

We face a highly dynamic situation. Hong Kong is running down its manufacturing even faster than Britain as its factories move into China, and those within China move further inland from the coastal provinces. The universities in the tiger countries of south-east Asia turn out a higher proportion of the age group as graduates than Britain does. Also, their postgraduate research is building up faster than anyone expected five years ago. I accept that Britain excels in some areas such as pharmaceuticals and molecular biology, which the President of the Board of Trade mentioned. There is no major pharmaceutical industry research laboratory in south-east Asia, not even in Japan.

A very important research paper was published in *Nature* this week by Dr. Craig Venter. He is the chairman and chief executive of the Institute for Genomic Research in Maryland. The Select Committee recently paid an interesting visit to that institute in the course of producing its report on human genetics. We had a most informative discussion with Craig Venter and his colleagues in Human Genome Sciences and with SmithKline Beecham about the patenting topics, among others, that were mentioned earlier.

When walking around that research institute, it was interesting to observe the number of Asians working on the bench. When the research paper was published, I checked on its authors and found that 15 of the 85 authors listed in this first human genome directory have Chinese names. The large and capable body of western-trained Chinese researchers who have contributed so much to the development of electronics now exists in most areas of science, ready to transfer their scientific and technological skills to applications in south-east Asia. Furthermore, it creates an attractive and exciting environment for western scientists. At the City university in Hong Kong, which I visited last week, I was fascinated to meet an old friend, an American mathematician called Steve Smale. He is a Fields medal winner, which is equivalent to being a Nobel prize winner, and one of the dozen leading mathematicians in the world. He now occupies a distinguished professor's chair in this former polytechnic in Hong Kong. Which British ex-polytechnic has the resources to attract a leading world scientist of that calibre?

There is an immense global task in building up the physical and institutional infrastructure in the developing world. We used to think of that as a humanitarian concern—and so it is. That task is now being tackled with immense vigour and success, with participation by western firms—but with the main effort and resources coming from within the developing regions. I find it an exhilarating and challenging prospect. We share a common humanity, common skills and common potential. There is no reason to believe that in the not-so-long term we have any greater advantages or disadvantages than people in any other country. Likewise, we know that if we put less effort into education, research and other forms of investment, we will suffer the consequent disadvantages.

We also know that if we think that we can hang on to positions and privileges that we enjoyed in the past, but do not earn today, we will suffer great frustrations. While an economy is catching up it can learn new technologies from others, but in due course it will have to develop its

share of new technologies and contribute its share of basic research if its industry is to comprehend and use the facilities of a highly technological world.

We can take pride in the past achievements of British science, but we would be foolish to abandon what has provided the strengths of that tradition just as other countries are learning to use them. "Japan opens new era in university funding" was the headline for an article in *Nature* only last week. It described a pattern of university research funding very similar to that which existed in this country before the Conservative Government took office. I urge hon. Members to visit the science and engineering laboratories of the six universities in Hong Kong—as I have done—to see how, under the leadership of a former Conservative Minister, Chris Patten, now Hong Kong's Governor, that laggard among the tigers is catching up in its research and development expenditure. Hong Kong has the greatest potential of them all, as a gateway to China.

As a clue to tracking down the root of our own particular problems, it is instructive to compare the reports of the Bank of England and the Singapore authorities on the collapse of Barings and to ask which report was the more competent and more honest. When it comes to the sophistication, say, of the financial derivatives market, ask why the Isaac Newton Institute in Cambridge, which draws on and reports to the world mathematical community, was able recently to mount so very much more powerful a workshop than could be mounted by any British bank or financial institution on the technical structure of the derivatives market.

As for human genetics and its impact on insurance markets, the dialogue that was opened up by the Select Committee on Science and Technology is being pursued by the Royal Society and Institute of Actuaries, with one of the organisers of their dialogue being Roy Anderson, the research collaborator of Bob May, who is now the Government's chief scientific adviser. That collaboration between the Royal Society and the Institute of Actuaries preceded the appointment of Bob May as chief scientific adviser and therefore does not reflect any element of Government initiative in this very important field.

We have an industry, an economy, running at half cock, with the clutch slipping between the intellectual powerhouse and the practical conduct of business. It is not a linear process, from research through application to production, but rather a network of processes, in business, education, research, each of which needs to be intellectually informed and linked to others.

Market mechanisms have a role to play, and all credit to the Government in bringing that to the fore during their period of office, but market mechanisms are not the intellectual network that is needed. They may be the letters of the alphabet, but they are not the language. We have to learn again the language of innovation and discovery. Somewhere in this language, a coherent science policy needs to be presented, and the lines of it are fairly straightforward. There is a high rate of return from research and development, but wherever it is carried out, there is great difficulty for the researchers—whether it be in a firm, university, research institute or Government laboratory—in appropriating sufficient benefits from that research to cover its cost. There are big spillovers in the benefits of research to other people in other institutions, firms and industries, indeed other economies. In the United Kingdom, there is a disproportionately low level of industry-funded research and development.

To address the problem of spillovers and the difficulty of appropriation, the obvious device in a market situation is to institute research and development tax credits. We accepted that argument before the previous election. I shall be interested to see whether it becomes Labour party policy for the next. I hope that it does. Evidence is accumulating in every other industrial country—we analysed it in our report in the Select Committee last year—on the route through which the science base is applied in industry. We established that there is a high cost in lost revenues, but the increase in research and development from recent work appears to be greater than the cost in lost resources, so in fact it is a more efficient way of supporting research than direct grants.

The correct measure is not the cost of tax revenues forgone but the increase in net output from the economy that results from the increase in research which is stimulated. This proper measure can be looked at by putting together the evidence from different areas of research, as we did in that report. It does, of course, need a supporting framework such as that put forward in the Faraday Institute proposals, which were adopted by both parties before the previous election, but which have disappeared from the scene since. It needs a supply of well-trained researchers coming from the science base to industry.

That has broadly been the framework of Labour policies that we have argued over the past decade. The evidence is there. We ask the Government to re-examine it. Indeed, it will be examined in a fortnight's time at a conference that the Minister for Science and Technology will attend in Cambridge and at which he will speak. I hope that he will also be there to listen, because some of the leading researchers in this field will attend. I hope that the Government will learn from what they hear.

Against this background, one can see why Labour Members feel profoundly uneasy about sticking the Office of Science and Technology into the Department of Trade and Industry, because it appears to be a spokesman with a vested interest in manufacturing industry, whereas in fact the Office of Science and Technology needs to enter into the mainstream economic policy debate and to be in a position in government where it can do so. The DTI, particularly as it has been run down to such a state over the past 15 years, is simply not able to carry that weight in the discussion of economic policy in government. That is apart from the health and environmental issues, which are of such great importance.

Of the work that has been done by the Office of Science and Technology, the foresight exercise is fine. It has been well received. I hope that it will continue. Good luck to the foresight challenge. It needs to be genuinely additional new money. The evidence that we have been given by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals justifiably questions that. As for the scrutiny report, that is well buried. I hope that the letter that the President of the Board of Trade sent to the Chairman of the Select Committee really does represent that burial. In that letter, one sentence read:

"The Research Councils will be opening up their research grants when they are seeking to achieve specific research aims."

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

That is a very important qualification. Does that mean that the research councils are to seek, to invite, under the prior options process, other bodies to do the research only where the research councils are not acting in responsive mode to grant applications or where, according to the practice of the Medical Research Council, the MRC is not backing the individual scientist in building a research unit around him? It is a crazy idea to pick a leading scientist who is the authority in his field, who puts up a good programme of research, which only he is able to do, and then to go out to open tender for somebody else to do it. That is a lunatic undertaking. Does that sentence in the President of the Board of Trade's letter reveal that response mode research and backing the individual researcher will not be subjected to the prior options process?

On the prior options process, it has often been said that Government, and the research councils in particular, will consider proposals for the carrying out of research from organisations other than academic and academically related bodies. However, for the research councils it has always been a dead letter because it has not been carried out in the awarding of grants. I know of examples in which I would argue that research council money should go outside academia, but people have not been able to make their case because, in the machinery of the research council, there is not sufficiently high-powered peer group judgment to establish that that is the right way to do it. Therefore, the problem is not in stating the principle of opening up different ways of doing research; it is in organising the process of peer review and administration so that genuinely the best person able to do the research is invited and enabled to do it.

From one point of view, modern industrial society and the democratic processes of politics that sustain it have been astonishingly successful. If we look at the world today, we see that there are more people, better fed and enjoying greater liberties than ever before in the history of mankind. A great deal of that success is due to the combination of science and technology and our political systems.

Anyone who has tried to build actual systems that really work, be it a robotic arm, a chemical plant, a global positioning satellite system or even a pay-as-you-earn income tax-raising system, knows how difficult it is to get systems to work. The fact is that the new systems that we build are built out of bits of systems that more or less work already, so the task of new system building is even more complex. Modern society achieves astonishing success which goes far beyond the capacity of any scientist in any laboratory to get systems to work.

Yet from another point of view, politics appears grossly incompetent in its handling of the world. Unemployment, the waste of resources, social frustrations, urban squalor, decay of communities, social injustices and fears for the environment are all very real and all have to be taken seriously. They are properly laid as failures at the door of politics and as challenges to science and technology.

The greatest failure of the Government's science policy is that it fails to see the contribution that science and technology have to make at the systemic level and their ability to give new vision and hope to the political process and the community at large. My advice to scientists is to get on with the tasks that they see need to be done. They should try to educate the Government, but meanwhile get on with the tasks.

11.32 am

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): It is a privilege to follow the characteristically thoughtful speech of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). He paid a tribute to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who opened the debate for the Opposition. The hon. Member for Leeds, West had a testing task in filling in today for the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), whose absence we of course comprehend. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I say that we look forward to her presence in a future debate.

In welcoming the decision of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to open the debate as an index of the importance that he attaches to the subject, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology will forgive me for churlishness—for I am much admiring of the qualities and personal experience that he brings to the job—if I say that the Government would have taken a further trick if a Minister from the Department for Education and Employment had also taken part in the debate.

I shall not dwell on the move of the Office of Science and Technology into the Department of Trade and Industry, for by their fruits shall ye know them, and the fruit jury is still out, but perceptions are important and scepticism could have been mildly disarmed if the Government had extended their response to the debate to more than one Department.

Of course, I know the internal argument against such multi-facetedness, but we have no hesitation in telling scientists that they must mount multi-disciplinary teams when, at least in the ancient universities, the undergraduate-based discrete nature of disciplines is working as usual. Business as usual is a poor guide in science.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench should take any emphasis in my remarks on universities not as misunderstanding what Her Majesty's Government are trying to do in their new emphases, but as a deliberate counter-balance to help ensure that we do not throw away our historic strengths in a fit of modernism, which is a proper philosophy for anyone speaking from the Conservative Benches.

I declare an interest as a member of the council of the university of London and a presentation fellow of King's college London. Present trends constitute two threats—in no particular order, but unfortunately reinforcing each other. The first is the retreat by the research councils from responsive mode work as a concomitant of the emphasis on relevance. The scale of the retreat over years is by a factor of five. I shall return shortly to its impact.

The second trend is the delegation by Her Majesty's Government of higher education funding decisions to the Higher Education Funding Council, which has an understandable enthusiasm for the formulaic. It is a commonplace that the latter is likely to raise average quality, but at a spectacular price in international salience. It is international salience that should be the keystone of the DTI's preoccupation with competitiveness.

As a quick index, only perhaps one university in 10 has the quality of reputation to attract scientists from abroad. It is ironic that the present research assessment process and the HEFC funding methodology which arises therefrom are prone to encourage a transfer market in major research figures which will reduce critical mass.

However, more serious is the weakening of infrastructure in the key institutions by the spreading of jam more thinly. The infrastructure is already vulnerable because neither Government Departments nor charities are prepared to contribute to overheads at a time when the cost of facilities has risen exponentially, despite the HEFC's financial memorandum, which says that the universities must secure full cost recovery.

I acknowledge that the cost of equipment can go both ways, but the imperative of multi-disciplinary work is profoundly expensive in facility terms. To take a simple example in the biomedical field, the health and safety implications of maintaining in large numbers in animal houses mice with characteristics which make it essential to keep them out of the community have a substantial cost consequence.

Those obligations are necessarily not shared by what I will neutrally call the very new universities; yet the spreading of the jam more thinly does not of itself yield what the DTI seeks. One has only to look at where in particular industry puts its money in the universities for research purposes to see why it is important that we sustain our ability to achieve international salience.

There is a hazard that a university which raises a quarter of a million pounds from industrial sources will earn brownie points in today's climate, but if that consists of 125 projects at £2,000 each, that way does not lie our international salvation. Present trends threaten grade drift across the nation and a reduction of the unit of resource in those internationally competitive institutions which have larger obligations and on which we nationally depend.

An example of the potential opportunity costs might be taken from the work of I. C. Park at Imperial college in my constituency. Its extraordinary work on scheduling, in which British Airways is a partner, has reduced the time for examining scenarios when a plane is unexpectedly taken out of service from a couple of hours to a minute and a half, with a dramatic shift from the admirable but impracticable to the immensely relevant. That would not have been possible but for the depth of prior academic work and the scale of the infrastructure needed.

Why does responsive mode work matter? Just as one cannot know which scientific disciplines are going to be considered critical and necessary in 10 years' time in terms of their relevance then, so one cannot predict what curiosity-driven science will throw up in wholly new products and industries.

We Back-Bench Members are no use to our colleagues in government if we do not produce examples, and especially examples with a DTI resonance. I encourage any hon. Member who has not yet done so to visit the Alexander Fleming museum in my constituency, and to see the tiny room in Paddington in which, in 1928, he was conducting work, driven by academic curiosity over a long period of patient and painstakingly acute observation, on the ability of one micro-organism to inhibit the growth of another.

The impact of the room is numinous. What happened later is history and owed much to others, but no one would have predicted in 1928 what would follow, either in terms of wealth creation or the effect on quality of life, and to do so would have been treated as irresponsible.

The university of Dundee falls some way outside my constituency, but the richness of the harvest that the Japanese have reaped in liquid crystals goes back to original work on amorphous properties in the electronic field at that university. I am, however, one of the Members of Parliament who represents IBM, and I remind the House of the first laser diode demonstrated in the early 1960s as the result of basic work at IBM laboratories on semiconductor junctions.

Once upon a time, lasers were solutions in search of a problem—I must quietly note that that is the opposite of today's credo. Today, laser-generated communications through optical fibres are superseding electronic communication. Modern versions of diode lasers are the light sources driving a multi-billion dollar activity on the international super-highway, yet they derive from some rather fundamental physics.

To tell a similar story the other way round, the polymer industry, including my constituents at BP, is rushing to commercialise polypropylene made using a new chemical process involving metallocene catalysts. The original work to discover the structure of the catalysts was done by my constituent and Nobel laureate Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson as pure curiosity-driven research in the 1950s. I shall not take the House through the subsequent 40 years of developments, except to remark that the time scale is longer than that of a Department where the absence of a chief scientist has already been remarked on.

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman was a member of the Cabinet and, indeed, a helpful Minister with responsibility for higher education. Has he any personal view on the absence of a chief scientist, which has already been mentioned this morning?

Mr. Brooke: I think that the way in which I phrased my remark might be interpreted as expressing a view.

The first engineer to win a Nobel prize, Dennis Gabor of Imperial college, won it for highly academic work on optics, which led to the discovery of holograms. Their ability to project a three-dimensional image from a flat surface has a host of recreational and industrial applications, but they are most familiarly found as a security device on credit cards that are household names.

Finally, I cite magnetic resonance imaging. Nuclear magnetic resonance is a piece of fundamental physics that has long been a research tool of physicists and chemists. Mansfield in the United Kingdom and Purcell in the United States of America pointed out that it could be used to generate an internal map of a solid object. Many refinements later, we have, in the magnetic resonance scanner, a multi-million pound industry and a sine qua non in any major hospital.

None of those examples arose as a result of a specific problem being set. I do not for a moment decry the work of the foresight panels, and I join in the admiration for the quality of the scientists who participated, although their effectiveness may be being blunted in the implementation, as administrators take over from scientists. I simply want to point out that outsiders and foreigners might take the view that the pendulum has swung too far against the responsive mode.

[Mr. Brooke]

The literature that the Conservative research department thoughtfully provided to Conservative Members draws attention to the number of British Nobel prize winners in the 50 years between 1940 and 1990. It might have been more intellectually honest, however, if it had broken the half century into two periods of 25 years.

To remain momentarily abroad, we should be grateful for the fact that European Union research projects enable British scientists to remain involved in fields that we might not perhaps be centrally maintaining in this country. It would be a matter of profound reassurance, however, if my hon. Friend the Minister could confirm in his reply that the Treasury's practice of docking Departments for money contributed to such research in EU programmes will not apply to the OST under the principle of attribution.

I have apologised to my hon. Friend the Minister, as a long-standing constituency engagement may cause me to miss his reply. I close on the subject of technology with one apprehension that is central to his Department's activities.

In the current world, I do not fear for large companies, which have both the size and the exposure to international competition that are likely to ensure that they attend to the opportunities of science and technology. I do not fear for the small companies. Not only are a large number of our brightest young people going into the smallest companies, but such companies have had a reputation in the past 20 years for generating employment, which will itself ensure that they receive the Government's continuing scrutiny.

My concern is the middle-sized company that may employ about 1,000 people, but often does not employ one single person who is wholly literate in science and/or technology. Scientists may be entitled to take a Darwinian view of that condition. I suspect that Ministers and we Members of Parliament who represent the employees of those companies might not be able to take so sanguine a perspective. I have no obvious solution, and Darwin might well play a part in the outcome.

I salute the Government for making this debate possible. For a non-scientist, it has been a privilege to participate.

11.46 am

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): We have heard some thoughtful speeches, and the last two have been a credit to the occasion.

First, I welcome the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister to their relatively new responsibilities, and wish them well in their task of persuading their colleagues that investment in science, engineering and technological research is fundamental to the well-being of our country. I hope that they do not have too much of an uphill task. Incidentally, I see that the right hon. Gentleman has taken the advice of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), and beetled off to Dorneywood to protect the science budget from the Chancellor's axe.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) no longer has responsibility in the Cabinet for science. The former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster tried to support the science base. In his introduction to the 1995 "forward look", which was published earlier this year, he wrote:

> "I see it as my overriding function as Cabinet Minister for Science to seek to ensure that the United Kingdom sustains and enhances its SET base. I have the highest admiration for UK scientists, engineers and technologists, in both the public and private sectors, and for the excellent work they carry out. I want to work with them."

We all agree with that.

What a pity that, in the summer reshuffle, the science community certainly saw itself as relegated from Cabinet status and subsumed in the Department of Trade and Industry, although I welcome the commitment of the President of the Board of Trade today to speak up for science in the Cabinet—perhaps in tandem with the Deputy Prime Minister. We will judge them by their actions.

It is also a pity that this debate has been tucked away on a Friday morning, when most hon. Members have returned to their constituencies or are about to do so. I suspect, however, that by putting it on a Friday we have been allowed more time than we would on another day.

The scientific community is rightly furious at what it sees as a demotion. The community is also none too pleased by the cuts in funding, which it sees as accompanied by a Government illusion that there is increasing funding of the science base.

Dr. Eric Voice of the Royal Society of Chemistry points out the effect of funding shortages on chemistry departments, many of which were built in the 1960s and are reaching the end of their useful lives. They need growing sums of money for vital refurbishment to provide our scientists with a modern environment in which to work.

Those needs range from providing enough fume cupboards, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Leeds, West, for routine daily use to a serious shortfall in the state-of-the-art equipment normally found elsewhere, such as nuclear magnetic resonance—NMR—imaging machines. Many British professors come back green with envy from visiting universities in the United States or Germany. We need to match the investment of those countries to give our scientists, engineers and technologists the chance to compete. All the evidence seems to confirm that Britain is falling behind.

The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) mentioned Nobel prizes for science. Britain has a truly amazing record, but the trend is in the wrong direction. Between 1946 and 1955, British scientists won 10 Nobel prizes; in the next decade, 11; and in the following decade, 12. Between 1976 and 1985, they won only eight, and in the decade from 1986 to 1995, only one—although the peace prize award for a scientist may put the number up to two. The President of the Board of Trade said that we were top of the class; we may not be any more, but we ought to be.

Health and safety legislation for research establishments is greatly affecting research—the more so with chemistry departments. A large majority of 1960s chemistry department buildings are now unsatisfactory under current Health and Safety Executive rules, with which it costs money to comply. It is not unknown for the HSE to order the immediate closing down of an activity being run with the only equipment available to that department.

Equipment spending levels in real terms per full-time academic have nose-dived over the past decade, especially in the past six years, from £1,850 per academic in 1987-88 to £1,193 in 1992-93—a drop of well over a third in six years.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West, to whom I always listen, spoke forcefully and clearly about cuts in Government support for science. I hope that the Minister will tell us what he intends to do to turn around Government's attitude to funding science and technology.

I shall deal next with the effects of good scientific and technological developments on our quality of life. There is a problem in projecting science into the community so that the community understands the benefits that past scientific research brings to life today. It is the role of hon. Members, inside and outside the House, to make the public aware of what is going on and of the importance of scientific investment. The House will know of and appreciate the huge improvements that medical research has brought to mankind. We know of life-saving breakthroughs by our scientists and by those of other countries.

I have a personal reason to be grateful to recent medical science. My twin daughters were born 10 weeks prematurely in 1986; had they been born 20 years earlier, they would probably not have survived, because their lungs were not sufficiently developed. Today, thanks to past medical research, and to the skill of doctors and nurses, they are as healthy and, I have to admit, as noisy, as any other children.

There are huge developments in information technology, an industry in which I spent more than 20 years before entering the House. There is much comment—some of it exciting, much of it hype and plenty of it ill informed—about the coming information revolution which is being brought about in part by the British invention of fibre-optics and its use in the transmission of data. The so-called information super-highway has sparked interest in the most unusual places.

My hon. and learned Friend—and office colleague—the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) describes a meeting between my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and Al Gore, the Vice-President of the United States. For the first 20 minutes, they talked about defence and foreign affairs. My hon. and learned Friend described it as "straight bat stuff". Then my right hon. Friend mentioned the super-highway, and the Vice-President sprang to life. For the next hour, his brow furrowed with bewilderment, he was treated to

"Ashdown and Gore rising above us on a cloud of cyberspeak."

To be fair, he now has a laptop of his own.

Like it or not, the information revolution is coming. Its impact will be as dramatic as the invention of the pencil. The merging of broadcasting and computing technologies in the digital age offers mankind opportunities—and dangers—to change the way we live. Its impact cannot be ignored. I know that the Minister is appearing at the European conference on cable communications on Monday, and I will be pleased to be there to listen to what he has to say.

Today, only a small, although growing, number of people use the Internet. The hon. Member for Leeds, West said that there were 30 million worldwide. They use it to communicate their message to individuals or to the wider public. At the last count, 99.5 per cent. of the population were not using it; the nearest they get to it is watching "Tomorrow's World" on television—an excellent programme—or seeing hieroglyphics on their television screens next to the telephone number or contact address for giving their views on the topic of the day.

The Government have washed their hands of part of the issue. They prefer to let market forces dictate the way forward, yet it is a curiously distorted market. The Government ban on British Telecom broadcasting live entertainment is equivalent to shooting Linford Christie in the foot at the start of the 100 metres. If we have a world beater, we should encourage it, not discourage it. Both the cable companies and BT are of key importance in installing the infrastructure for the information super-highway, which needs further development by our science community. There needs to be a national plan to ensure that anyone who wants access can have it.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman makes a specific point with which I may not have time to deal in my winding-up speech. If he read my letter in the *Financial Times* on Tuesday of last week, he would see a succinct description of Government policy.

The hon. Gentleman must remember that it would not be possible to invest in the cable industry if there had not been asymmetrical regulation in favour of market entry. That is the key point. The ultimate beneficiary is the consumer. That must be never be forgotten. The quality of services being introduced is due to the fact that BT is subject to competition, and its reputation abroad exists partly because it has a competitive home market from which to develop its services.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for clarifying that. I do not agree with him, because, in my discussions with BT, I was told that it believes that the ban has affected its export opportunities that it could have gained had it been able to demonstrate a home market. It was able to demonstrate that it had the technology for installation. The case mentioned to me involved east Germany. The Minister and I will continue to debate that issue.

There needs to be a national plan to ensure that everyone who wants it can have access to the information super-highway. It is not enough to cherry-pick areas of high population density—the towns and cities—where the costs of cable installation are lower. We must ensure that the fruits of this scientific breakthrough are available to all our people, including those who live in rural areas such as rural Gloucestershire, Cornwall, Devon and Warwickshire. Those areas are all what I call Charles Kennedy territory. Those people are as much part of the future as anyone else.

We have heard already that fibre-optic technology was invented in Britain. How fitting it would be if Britain became the first complete super-highway nation.

Some scientists will go into detail and claim that microwave technology should fit into the overall plan, and I do not argue with that. What I want is a plan rather than no plan at all; otherwise, I fear that we shall create a new category of poverty—the information have-nots, who are excluded from the services that businesses, local and central Government, and health authorities will provide in the future.

At the moment, the human race is scratching at the surface of what could be achieved using the information super-highway. There is far more to it than delivering 37 entertainment channels, although I know people who sit all day flicking through them until they find repeats of

[Mr. Jones]

"Neighbours", "Dallas" or "I love Lucy". The super-highway—the result of a British invention—will have a profound effect on how we work and live. With the digital age, computing and broadcasting technologies are merging into one.

This is a great opportunity for Britain, because British software scientists are among the best, if not the best, in the world, and our broadcasters have a reputation for excellence worldwide. Putting the two together in the new information revolution places Britain in a unique position to create wealth and influence events in the exciting new age of multi-media services, reaching across national boundaries and around the world.

Let us be clear—the Internet of today is not the super-highway of tomorrow. The super-highway as envisaged by Al Gore and my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal Democrat party is a broad-band system that allows high-definition pictures as well as text to travel from any point on the super-highway to any other point.

Businesses will use the technology to promote their products; holiday companies will offer a "See before you fly" service; and estate agents will give a multi-media conducted tour of your home of tomorrow from the comfort of the armchair in your home of today. Inevitably, a colleague will call and download the document or the three-dimensional image of the building design on which one is working, or the inevitable press release, so that one can make those last-minute adjustments.

There is also evidence that companies will locate and create jobs where they have access to the best information, as well as transport infrastructure. Soon, access to local and central Government services will be available in the home. One will be able to fill in a tax return on a Sunday afternoon when the football is a bit boring, find one's way through the benefits maze—if any benefits remain by then—or even send a stroppy letter to one's local Member of Parliament who voted the wrong way on an issue about which one feels strongly.

The Government have a responsibility to enable everyone who wants the skills to use the new technology. If a 10-year-old child of today does not have the skills to use the information super-highway by the time he or she is looking for a job, he or she will probably not be able to get a worthwhile job. So the Government have a responsibility to ensure that the infrastructure extends nationwide, which means ensuring that there is no financial barrier to gaining those skills.

That means that people in schools, colleges, universities, libraries, and village halls and people at home must be able to gain access. By upgrading the skills level of everyone in Britain, we can become a decent, tolerant and prosperous nation once again. If we do not do it, I guarantee that some other country will.

I welcome the Government's continuing recognition that we need to attract more women, not just into science but to stay in science once they have completed their PhD, because women have just as much to offer as men and our nation should make use of all our academic talent. Women are a vital part of our future.

I hope that, when the Minister and the President of the Board of Trade get together before next month's Budget, they will press the Chancellor to ensure that the science community is properly funded in future. If we do not invest heavily in our science base, the future will not be much to look forward to.

12.3 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): May I join in the welcome to my right hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), the new President of the Board of Trade, on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box in his new capacity? I also welcome my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology, whom we have already recognised as someone with a considerable grasp of the issues involved in science and technology. He has been extremely active throughout the country in support of those central themes in our economic development.

The activities within the Office of Science and Technology have been considerable over an incredibly short time. I listened with declining attention to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) as he approached his 47th minute, but I heard him conclude with what I can only regard as a remarkably backward-looking commitment to old Labour when he said that Labour would establish an advisory council at national level, local science shops and a co-ordinated strategy. Shades of good old George Brown were entering into the discussion at a most relevant point and I am glad to see that the great mark that he will make on the future starts in the past.

I contrast that with the fact that, in 1992, the Government took what were probably the three most fundamental steps in shifting the way in which science was handled, not just in previous Administrations of this party but in Administrations previous to that. The fact that the OST came into being; the fact that it was located in the Cabinet Office; the fact that it had a Minister at Cabinet rank to promote policies that might co-ordinate the Government's activity in science; and the fact that within its remit it quickly published in "Realising our Potential" a blueprint for scientific effort, both through research councils given new mandates and competition, and through the way in which industrial development could be fashioned through "foresight" and "forward look", were all considerable initiatives. We are not yet three years down the road since the establishment of that "new template" for British science and technology.

It is, at least in part, a shockwave reaction to the fact that that relatively new but hugely promising plant should be transplanted that has caused a ruction among the scientific establishment and hon. Members, which we have witnessed this afternoon. The meaning behind that seems to be that, despite initial anxieties, the OST in its original form and location had already gained considerable commitment and had started to provide evidence that it would take a grip on the future for science and technology in a way that had not been seen in a decade or two. From that point of view, it is a reaction based on success.

Although I have not felt great anxiety about that, I understand why others have such anxiety and feel that I should make some observations to my hon. Friend the Minister, to which he may care to respond. It is odd that, despite the technique of ring-fencing a budget—whether "ring" is the "Colgate ring of confidence" or merely a form of garotte, I do not know—it is insufficient to make it clear that the science budget will have a separate and determined level of expenditure committed on a

one-to-one basis between the OST and the Treasury. I am happy with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy being the protagonist, as he has admirable clout to deal with that matter, but I am a little anxious that ring-fencing is not enough.

Let me make two suggestions that might help. First, it seems odd that there is no chief scientific adviser within the DTI. Without such a post, it seems likely that the role of the splendid "chief scientific adviser (total Government)" is at risk of being diluted or involved in a special pleading relationship between the CSA, who is physically located elsewhere but whose responsibility within the OST would inevitably involve him with the Department of Trade and Industry, including officials, and the President of the Board of Trade and Industry himself. I am a little concerned that such influence may not be beneficial to the doctrine of separateness which I believe to be an important, if not crucial, aspect of the OST's credibility.

I am not encouraging a U-turn when I invite my hon. Friend the Minister or the President of the Board of Trade to consider reviewing whether the Department of Trade and Industry should not have its own scientific adviser and thus be complete. Such a person would be part of a team working under the CSA to co-ordinate the Government's science policies and would be a separate voice for the DTI. The CSA would not be a surrogate for the DTI. I hope that that is a constructive suggestion.

The next stage of development has to prove itself on the back of the first. I give enormous credit to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) who, in his previous incarnation as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, inaugurated a very productive period for science and technology. The Science and Technology Select Committee owes its existence to the OST. When the OST was transplanted to the Department of Trade and Industry, there was considerable doubt as to whether it would continue. I am delighted that the President of the Board of Trade made it clear beyond doubt today, and in public for the first time, that the current position is to be maintained and that the Committee will continue to monitor the Department and operate researches of its own choosing. I look forward to a future, reassured on behalf of the Committee.

Today's debate may be due to the Committee. It was, after all, in our response to "forward look" that we advised the Government that there should be an annual debate on science and technology shortly after the publication of the yearly appraisal. In parliamentary terms, it is broadly within two months that we are having it, if one puts the recess on one side. I welcome that as a response to our initiative.

The Government's response to our little report on the efficiency of our research institutions was a little unorthodox. I accept that the two-month period was not quite up. It was generously extended a little and we then received a letter from my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I covet a letter from him at any time, and the fact that he put a stamp on it was of immense importance. It was signed by him, I enjoyed reading it and I am deeply grateful to him. I understand, of course, that Pauline epistles are rare—not many responses did St. Paul receive in his day. In any event, I am delighted that we had one from the President of the Board of Trade.

I am not certain, however, that the Government's response was quite the correct one to a Committee's report that justifies debate on the Floor of the House. I am glad, however, that it is tagged for consideration today. I suspect that the Government's anxiety about the efficiency of the scrutiny of the research establishments is a matter of modest embarrassment, in which case I perfectly understand the way in which the report has been handled. It should not, however, be regarded as the way to respond to our Committee's reports.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I cannot resist the temptation to express my relief that at least the DTI's letters have stamps on them, even during the recess. I assure my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Committee that there was no attempt to downgrade the importance of the response, which was published as a Command Paper. The timing was partly due to the fact that we realised that a great deal of uncertainty needed to be dealt with. I have, however, listened carefully to my hon. Friend's strictures.

Sir Giles Shaw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generous remarks. I now move on to weightier matters. The debate is much advanced and I shall omit some of what I was going to say. I leave the OST as an office which will help to generate new scientific endeavours.

My Committee hopes to examine the research councils and their activities. The first to be selected by the Committee is the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council and CERN. We hope to begin work shortly. We regard it as part of our remit to examine all the research councils and how they have responded to and dealt with the various requirements placed on them. We have only recently concluded a major consideration of human genetics and its consequences. I am glad to hear that the Government will respond to that shortly. I put down a marker to the effect that the report, which, in my humble estimation, is very significant, involves trans-departmental response. I think that all members of the Committee will share my hope that any response to the report must involve other Departments which have a hand in dealing with its findings. When the Government have issued their response, I believe that the issues involved would justify a full-scale debate that should not be tucked away on a Friday. It should perhaps be given proper Government time so that we can deal with the fundamental issues, such as developments in scientific and medical research and the way in which genetics will affect public policy. I hope that that suggestion has also been noted by the Whip on duty. The Committee continues to provide commentary on developments in the scientific and technological world.

The emphasis in the speeches made by all hon. Members is the position of the United Kingdom and its scientific and technical expertise. There is no quick solution for making it more fecund than it has been. It is partly a matter of genuine leadership by the Government of the day and partly a matter of the huge efforts made by academics in universities great and small, new and old, to try to generate the excitement of discovery and ensure those minds suitable to become researchers and academic scientists are encouraged to do so. Outside of that, however, is the economy.

It is tragic that people who are qualified in various branches of the distinguished science of engineering find it impossible to get jobs with companies that can benefit

[Sir Giles Shaw]

from the skills that they can provide. Equally, many academic researchers may find many prospects for industrial improvement to their work. My background is not in science, as my long-suffering Committee members are aware, but in industry and I am sorry to mention it but many people believe that it is only right to bring the activities of universities that have industrial application closer to the industrial market.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: May I ask my hon. Friend to give way?

Sir Giles Shaw: He has.

Mr. Thompson: I shall not take long, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because I wanted him to consider including in his list of institutions and people who are vital to science in this country those who work in science education in schools.

Sir Giles Shaw: That I now do with willingness, and proceed on my way.

The importance of bringing those extremes of learning and commitment closer together must be right in so far as our economic activity goes, but this I do understand: that far too often, in the industrial context, either companies are unwilling to invest long term in research that is related deliberately to their own activity, or they are under pressures from Governments, lack of economic activity, pressures of taxation or perhaps the pressures of shareholders not to devote the correct proportion of long-term research money to the type of projects that will bring long-term benefit to their own companies.

That instance of short-termism—of companies not carrying with them, in their plans for research and development, shareholders' representatives such as the big institutions that nearly always hold all the shares in the major companies—is a clear fault in the links in the economic chain. It does not occur in other markets such as the United States, France or Germany. There are significant problems in that arena.

Science is about wealth creation, and most people would say that it was primarily about wealth creation. The OST needs to retain its departmental role so that it can ensure that our science has wealth creation properties. It is right that the priorities for science through "forward look" and through "foresight" be refined, and that our national effort—in pharmaceuticals, defence or medicine—should be refined for the betterment of our people from now for generations to come. In that endeavour, I welcome the OST as at least one of the godfathers of the national enterprise.

12.22 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Well, well, well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was a coded speech if ever we heard one. For the past 43 years I have listened on and off, with pleasure and amusement, to the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), and he will correct me if I decode his speech thus: it was crazy ever to get rid of the OST; it was done for short-term political reasons; now that it is done, I shall not complain too much, but why, in heaven's name, do they not have a chief scientist? *[Interruption.]* Because the hon. Gentleman laughs like that, I shall leave the subject, but that is a fairly succinct translation and decoding of exactly what he said. Everyone in the House knows that that is precisely the serious question that I asked the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). I asked him whether, in those circumstances, there might be some explanation of the reason why a chief scientist has not been appointed.

I shall concentrate on one topic—academic research careers for graduate scientists. Like many of my parliamentary colleagues who have visited science departments this year, I am uncomfortable, to the point of being distressed and dismayed, talking to post-doctoral researchers. From their mid-20s to their mid-30s, they tell me often that they see no glimmer of hope of obtaining a permanent post in the academic world.

I asked the Minister to deny, if he really means it, the proposition that research in Britain is now in large part conducted by young, hopeful postgraduates who are prepared to work for proverbial peanuts. That is not going over the top. They work for very small remuneration, on contracts lasting on average, for heaven's sake, less than two years. I am afraid that that is the reality in 1995.

That is the reason why I intervened on the speech of the President of the Board of Trade on the issue of short-termism and those contracts, followed up by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell). The Minister must say something about that.

What funds are available for improved career management? Industrialists tell us that even newly qualified PhDs are too specialised. If that is so, it is ridiculous to wait until young men and women are already on the post-doctoral treadmill before providing training to help them obtain a job outside universities. Is there not a serious case for financing a new layer of long-term research posts and projects?

It is 33 years since, as a new Member of the House of Commons, I was invited by James Cattermole to go to the university of Nottingham to speak about Labour party science policy. I still do not forget a man from the back of the hall rising to ask the second question and stringing together the five most awkward probing questions that it was possible to devise about Harold Wilson's white heat of the technological revolution. I floundered as best I could, sat down perspiring and asked the chairman, "Who in heaven's name asked me that?"

Mrs. Cattermole was the chairman—she was the wife of the Labour party eastern region organiser, whom my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will well remember. She said, "Don't you know that is Fred Dainton, our new vice-chancellor?" It turned out to be the beginning of a third of a century's friendship so, when the now Lord Dainton describes contract researchers as an "underclass"—that was his word—I am very worried.

The report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, which Lord Dainton chaired—"Academic Careers for Graduate Scientists"—cites examples of people who have now retired without ever having secured a permanent position. That often represents a human tragedy. Lord Dainton says:

"We will pay a price for it. Able young people will go elsewhere."

The Select Committee discovered that, between 1980 and 1995—that is where my intervention on the opening speech came from—there had been a 217 per cent. increase in contract research staff. The number of permanent research and teaching staff had grown by 2 per

cent. and the number of technicians had dropped by 14 per cent. Do the Government accept those figures? If they do, how on earth can such a position be right?

Young scientists are complaining that they are being treated as hired hands, there to do the donkey work, while established academics reap career benefits. The more skilled and experienced they become, the more likely they are to be shed for cheaper replacements. When scientists reach the age of 30, authorities and employers can start thinking that they are too old and becoming expensive. That is short-termism at its worst.

According to a Chemical Industries Association survey, a postgraduate degree in chemistry does not help someone to land a job in the chemicals industry and, in some cases, it may even damage a person's chances. Unless a candidate's PhD relates specifically to the job in question, most companies say that they would rather take on someone with simply a first degree—the greater age, inflexibility and higher salary expectations all work against the postdocs.

Some 35 per cent. of the 54 firms that responded to the survey had recruited postdocs for positions traditionally filled by postgraduates; but the trend towards employing postdocs for positions traditionally given to single degree holders was not as strong as expected, given the large number of postdocs looking for jobs. One reason for that may be that employers are worried that the job market for postdocs will soon take off and they will not be able to hang on to them.

The Government must have some view of the work done by the Chemical Industries Association. The House of Commons had better face up to the fact that supposed—I repeat the word "supposed"—so-called efficiency gains have come at the expense of a generation of scientists. Added to that is the culture of continual assessment. It sounds very fine, but do we on these green Benches have any conception of the administrative burden that continual assessment puts on teachers?

The position worries vice-chancellors, who have contacted us all. They say:

"While general research funding from the HEFCs has not increased significantly, externally funded research in universities has risen in value by more than since 1989 from around £800 million to over £1,200 million.

Much of that work is carried out by contract research staff employed on fixed-term or similar contracts. The number of contract research staff doubled in the ten years between 1983/84 and 1993/94 to 20,000, or one quarter of all full-time university academic and research staff."

Does that worry the Government? There are limited opportunities for such staff to progress to established university-funded academic posts. The vice-chancellors continued:

"Valuable expertise and trained personnel will be lost, and talented young people will not be attracted in, if arrangements for their employment and career development are not improved."

That is the vice-chancellors' considered opinion. I know that they are working on a draft concordat with the OST and the Royal Society, but may we have some sign of the Government's attitude to that?

The Royal Society of Chemistry hopes that the President of the Board of Trade, who has just returned to the Chamber—I make no complaint about his absence—and the new Minister for Science and Technology will take the opportunity of today's debate to give the House the Government's response to the House of Lords report and, in particular, to say whether sufficient attention will be given to the supply and demand balance.

I did not pick up from the President's opening speech that there was to be any reply to the House of Lords report—he certainly did not mention that specifically and I do not think that he did so by implication. I hope that, when he winds up, the Minister will make some response to that massive report.

Lord Dainton said:

"If you do not know where you are going next, you become restless, you start looking around!"

The truth of the matter is that scientists are human like everyone else. When they have to worry about human considerations, such as how they will pay for bread, butter and mortgages, it stretches the imagination to suppose that good science can be done at the same time.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I shall be brief. I have browsed through the evidence that was given to the excellent House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology and I ask the Government to examine and reflect on one passage. At the Committee hearing in Edinburgh, in answer to a question from the Chairman, Lord Dainton, Professor Bruce Proudfoot said:

"We are not at all convinced that the system of temporary appointments at junior level necessarily produces the best science and that at the end of the day is what we are interested in. It may produce a lot of short-term work but it does not necessarily lead to good long-term research. I think that is a general comment which would be very widely supported amongst those with whom we discussed the problems".

The Chairman then asked:

"Your colleagues agree with this?"

Professor Lane replied to that question. Lord Phillips of Ellesmere—whom some of us have known for a long time as David Phillips; we are delighted that he has entered the other place—then said:

"My Lord Chairman, perhaps I could intervene straightaway because this point worries me. It seems to me that the entry into academic research careers, certainly since the 1960s, has been an extremely competitive process. It is almost inevitable that it should be. If I say to you that many are called and few are chosen, you may recognise that quotation and think that it applies in this case. There does, in my view, need to be some sort of probationary apprentice system in order to select out those that are ultimately chosen. How would you do that?"

Professor Lane agreed with his comments, but I am interested in the Government's answer to Lord Phillips's very proper question—I describe it as "proper" because I do not necessarily endorse it. However, a legitimate question was asked and it deserves an answer. Page 33 of the Select Committee report states:

"To extend the length of courses is to enhance the cost of producing graduates and in science subjects is misconceived because it is in the nature of advance in understanding of a scientific subject that ever more comprehensive theories continually supersede earlier less comprehensive ideas. The implication is that the courses should not grow in length and that the student should be relieved of the burden of learning redundant notions. As the late Sir Peter Medawar succinctly wrote, 'we need no longer to record the fall of every apple'".

As was so often the case, Sir Peter Medawar was spot on and that question must be answered.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

It would be selfish for me to continue my speech. However, I ask the Government to comment on three of the Select Committee's recommendations, which appear on page 36 of its report. Recommendation No. 6.1 states:

"Contract staff should have the same status and rights as established colleagues of equivalent rank, including entitlement to participation, where appropriate, in university policy and decision making machinery and access to the same amenities and facilities as are available to established staff".

Recommendation No. 6.3 states:

"Universities should earmark funds to bridge gaps between contracts for contract staff."

Recommendation No. 6.8 says:

"Funding councils should increase their emphasis on industry/academia links when allocating grants to universities".

That is a source of on-going worry. Many talented young men and women are extremely, and increasingly, concerned about their futures and they should be treated properly. I hope that the Minister for Science and Technology will comment on that issue in his winding-up speech.

12.39 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I listened to the carefully coded speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). I never give coded speeches. Let me make one or two observations that might be to the advantage of the House.

I made an analysis of Government expenditure on research and development, and I have the figures here. Total expenditure on civil research and development in 1995-96 at 1994-95 prices—that is, in real terms—is £3,057 million. When one compares expenditure for 1990-91 with that for 1995-96, it is true that the money to research councils and the OST has increased by £252 million, but the money to higher education and funding councils has decreased by £67 million, that to Government Departments has reduced by £341 million, and that to the DTI has slumped by £143 million. They are significant figures, and I hope that the Minister will mention them in his reply to the debate.

Every year, we receive some indication of what Governments have done in this field. Achieving the quality of life that the nation deserves requires big expenditure on science, because it is almost as important as the air we breathe and the environment in which we work.

I was also impressed by the figures from the OECD report of 1993. The United Kingdom spends £21 billion, and France spends a similar amount—£26 billion—but Germany spends twice as much, Japan spends four times as much and the USA spends eight times as much as we do. One may say that those countries have larger populations, but we live in a competitive world, and whether our firms exist or perish will depend or our competitive position and the amount we spend on the seedcorn for tomorrow. We require an explanation of why we are not keeping up with our major competitors.

While I pay tribute to the work of the Minister, there is a long way to go. There is no painless way, in my judgment, of securing additional revenue, but one possibility is the national lottery. It is for wealth creation and the enhancement of the quality of life. I make the following recommendation to the Minister. I would extend the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 by amending section 22 to reduce the share of existing categories from 20 per cent. to 16.6 per cent. of allocated expenditure, and extending the categories to include science and technology, to strengthen the strategic scientific base.

When one considers the importance of science to the United Kingdom, not only in 1995 but in the ensuing years—and that is a vital factor—one cannot consider a better way to grant money from the public to fund not merely the equipment required in universities but the work that is being undertaken to get ahead and discover new lines.

I shall be brief, as other hon. Members wish to speak, but I should mention the transfer of the OST to the DTI. My arguments against that are as follows. The timing was premature. Given that the OST was formed only in 1993, to terminate it in 1995 because it has lost its autonomy is a great pity.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has given every indication of the OST's pertinence to the new Ministry, but there are indications of an opposite course. There is to be no new chief secretary for the OST, and, the ministerial and Cabinet Committee on science and technology having been abolished, science will come under another ministerial committee on competitiveness, under the Deputy Prime Minister. I envisage the OST being subject to complete absorption in future. If that happens, much of the money will have gone.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals states that that policy signals a shift of science and technology in universities to a more applied and short-term emphasis. When the OST is to be responsible for not merely one branch of science but trade and industry, education, health, the environment, transport, defence and the wider interests of the community, how can it be expected—having been impaled by one Department—to stretch out and assume responsibilities for all the other Departments? My other anxiety is that the DTI's track record on research management has not been good, and there was ample evidence of that today.

Technology foresight has provided a useful dialogue between academia, Government and industry, but at some considerable cost. British Telecom says that it has had its own technology foresight process for more than five years. The National Economic Research Council has for a number of years undertaken its own periodic assessment of future priorities, resulting in the publication of its scientific strategy documents. Nuclear Electric states:

"The truthful answer is that Technology Foresight did not generate any new ideas in the field of energy, but why should we expect it to do so?"

But everybody praises the dialogue. Every modern country in the world has a similar arrangement.

Apart from all the window dressing, a great deal is done by companies—and they would be fools not to do it. The Government are not in a position to pick big winners—it could never be that—but it may help the Government to allocate resources. The trouble with Government allocations is that extraneous elements enter the calculations and financial stringency may blow them off course. Linking allocations with specific economic objectives may be injurious, and short-termism is an obvious drawback.

What areas would I choose for fund allocations? Fifteen panels have been established. I look first to defence and aerospace. After all, British Aerospace is the UK's No. 1 exporter, with no less than £5 billion of exports per year. Fourth and fifth are IBM UK and Rolls-Royce, which between them export £4.5 billion. I would look next to financial services operating in the single European market. The City of London is the key to that sector, and has been for centuries.

The third category is information technology and electronics. BT is one of the leading enterprises in the European Union, and there are a myriad of electronic companies in the UK. I would throw in biotechnology, which will sweep across agriculture, medicine and even life itself.

It would be rather interesting to find out what sort of job the Department is doing. A departmental press release says that £46.7 million has been awarded to 473 new research projects. They include Cardiff university for research to determine the time of death of human corpses; Leeds university for research to identify criminals from dandruff found at the scene of a crime; and Southampton university to discuss how to track the allergenic particles produced by house mites. Those are just a few of the 473 projects. Many of them are good, but is it really the way to allocate money?

Mr. Batiste: I should have thought so.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend will be speaking shortly, so we will find out why he thinks that.

I am sure that we all agree that there are great difficulties with implementation. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has seven Ministers, 11,000 civil servants and 70 press and publicity officers to suggest what courses should be followed. The publicity department's budget increased from £4 million in 1979 to £25 million in 1994. Information on services provided pours out of the DTI, but regrettably only about 6,000 in 100,000 firms use it. With the plethora of information available, we must decide how best we can digest it, assimilate it and turn it to real advantage. The mass of statistics on the information highways must not be discarded unanalysed.

Most valuable to the United Kingdom is our science infrastructure and basic science, and I am sure that all hon. Members want that to be extended. In view of the efforts made by our major competitors abroad, we might wonder how the UK has achieved the results it has thus far. We have some of the best and most mature scientists in the world, but we lose far too many of them to the United States and elsewhere. We must keep them here by providing incentives and more new money. I hope that when someone in the Department reads what I have said, many of my suggestions will be pursued.

12.53 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I want to begin by saying how pleased I am to see the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) in such good spirits and good voice after his recent hospital treatment. I am sure that all hon. Members are pleased about that. In view of the tenor of his speech, perhaps I should ask him whether he wishes to join the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and cross to the Labour Benches—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps that might be going a little too far.

I declare two interests. First, I am a non-executive director of the Welding Institute in Cambridge. Secondly, my husband is the co-director of the Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Superconductivity in Cambridge. I intend to mention both those organisations in my speech, so I thought I should declare my interest.

Because of the way that business is announced in the House, two of my hon. Friends who wanted to attend today were prevented from doing so by constituency business: My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) would have liked to attend this debate, and are extremely sorry that they cannot do so.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North clearly highlighted the declining budget for science and technology under the Government. I should like to underline some of the figures that came out of the "forward look". If we look at the budget in real terms, we see that, in 1986-87, the budget for science and technology within Government was £6.7 billion. By 1994-95, that had fallen to £5.9 billion. The really distressing part about it is that it is projected to fall even further by 1996-97, to £5.5 billion. What we are seeing under the Conservative Government is not a steady increase in funds, as we keep being told by Ministers, but a steady decline in the real money that is spent on science and technology.

We do not even do very well by international comparisons, and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) highlighted the amount that is spent by different countries. Let me just express that as a percentage of gross domestic product. In Germany, in 1993, it was 2.48 per cent. In France, it was 2.41 per cent. In Japan, it was 2.80 per cent. In the United States, it was 2.79 per cent. In the United Kingdom, it was a dismal 2.19 per cent.—well below our major international competitors.

Dr. John Parnaby, of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, pointed out in a very cogent speech that the real danger to us in the United Kingdom is our rivals in Asia, China and the former Soviet Union. Unless as a nation we start to invest more heavily in research and development, so that we can produce high-value-added products and processes, we shall be vulnerable to low-labour-cost countries.

My own leader expressed it extremely well in his very well received and excellent speech to the Labour party conference in Brighton, when he said that we cannot and will not compete as a low-wage, sweatshop economy. That cannot be part of our agenda. We have to encourage innovation by industrial research, and we have to ensure that industry successfully exploits the science base.

I am afraid that the picture is dismal. British firms are subject to endemic short-termism. I mentioned earlier, in my intervention on the President of the Board of Trade, that the research and development scoreboard in 1994—these are the Government's figures, not something that I have invented—indicated that the top 200 world companies are spending £104 billion on R and D and just under £40 billion on dividends.

When we look at the top 362 companies in the UK, we see that that is completely reversed, and that only £7 billion is spent on R and D and £14 billion on dividends, making quite clear the priorities of our companies when it comes to spending money. It just will not do. City analysts are dictating the investment policy. The main

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

concern in the boardroom is to get the earnings per share right and to ensure that the three-monthly financials are okay. But what that does is force firms to cut research and development and training, and not protect the future.

One can hire 20 Vietnamese workers for the price of one British worker, or 200 Russians for the price of one Japanese. Those countries are doing a professional job. They are real competitors. We have to survive by our brains and our brilliant capacity to do first-class world research.

Other hon. Members have mentioned that we have often produced world-beating ideas and scientific theories, but those inventions have been exploited abroad because British firms and British financial institutions were unable to take up the challenge. It happened with monoclonal antibodies, magnetic resonance imaging and liquid crystal displays. The list is endless. The evidence is that British universities are doing their job very well. We need to make sure that British industry lives up to that and does its job very well by carrying out industrial research and ensuring that it understands and capitalises on the science base.

I am pleased to see that, on this occasion, room has been made for the Director General of the Research Councils to sit in the Government Box. On a previous occasion he has been squeezed out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We do not refer to people sitting in the Box.

Mrs. Campbell: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I was not aware of that rule.

What is the Government's reaction to the situation that I have described? I acknowledge that the Government are taking several initiatives to get academics and industrialists to work together, but I believe that they are not doing the really important things. For instance, are they trying to change the financial markets? No, they are not. They are not doing anything about the financial markets. Are they taking up the Science and Technology Select Committee's suggestion of reviewing fiscal incentives for industrial research and development? There is no sign that the Government have even started to consider that since the 1987 review undertaken by the Treasury.

Do the Government increase their input into industrial research? No, they do not. They do not keep it level. They cut it and decimate it. The DTI research and development budget is down from £683 million in 1986-87 to a projected £219 million in 1997-98. That is less than a third of the original budget. So, in 12 years, the most critical and crucial area of Government spending will have fallen to less than a third of its original value.

I wonder whether the Minister realises the extreme seriousness of all this. It seems to me extraordinary that those figures can be published and hardly commented on. I know that the Minister is fond of saying that the science budget has increased, but that myth should be exploded, and that is what I intend to do in the rest of my speech.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend can hardly be surprised that not much notice is taken when the Press Gallery, which was absolutely packed for that fiasco of a debate last night—if I may call it such—pays no attention when we discuss the vital interests of the country. The Press Gallery, with distinguished exceptions, is virtually empty.

Mrs. Campbell: I endorse what my hon. Friend has said. My local television station contacted me yesterday to find out what was coming up. I said that there was an important speech on science today. I was told, "Oh, well, you won't get any coverage for that, I'm afraid." That typifies the attitude. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the emptiness of the Press Gallery today.

Mr. Ian Taylor: We will, of course, give credit to the *New Scientist*, which follows all our deliberations with great attention.

Mrs. Campbell: Indeed, the *New Scientist* is an extremely good scientific journal, and one which I read regularly.

We have been distributed with an extremely good paper from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, which several other hon. Members have brought to the attention of the House. It explains what happened when changes were made to the dual support system in 1992.

There was a three-year phased transfer of funds from the Department for Education to the Office of Science and Technology. As much as £154 million was transferred by 1994-95. That money has certainly been taken out of the Department for Education budget, but I wonder whether it found its way into the OST budget. The Minister has talked of an increase in spending for science, but that transfer was never intended to be an increase: it was meant to be neutral for the total scientific spend. It was intended to cover overheads, not new research. I want the Minister to tell us if it was an increase in funding, or a sum of money that was transferred and is now being considered as an increase to make the figures look better than they really are. I want to know what happened to that money—whether it escaped en route or met the same fate as the £400 million of research and development funding at the DTI, which was filched by the Treasury to fund tax cuts at the next election.

I find the Government's science and technology policy totally irresponsible. Ministers must understand that we are discussing an extremely serious matter—tax cuts today that will mean job losses tomorrow. It is important that not only Ministers but the whole country understand that.

Dr. Bray: On the Government's claims about spending, does not the claim that research and development spending has been increased by 30 per cent. really represent a 30 per cent. increase in scientists' pay, which is rather less than the pay increase of the community generally?

Mrs. Campbell: I appreciate that intervention, and I hope that the Minister will take the matter up in his response.

To return to Government expenditure on research and development, let us see what else has happened. First, the research councils' budget has been top-sliced to fund the Realising Our Potential Awards, which were introduced to encourage academic collaboration with industry for what is supposed to be blue-skies research.

Unless I missed something in the announcement yesterday, there is no peer review of the awards. The chairman of the Medical Research Council's molecules and cells panel has been quoted as saying that his

"panel was boxed into a corner where you had to fund something you didn't want to."

That is a damning condemnation of the way in which the awards have worked until now.

Earlier, we saw the draft of the Department's report, which showed that some research council committees complained that they were

"forced to fund second rate science".

Both the MRC and the Biotechnology and Biological Research Council judged that few applicants would have passed the peer review hurdle.

Those are damning criticisms of a new Government initiative. It is no wonder that the awards are becoming known as "ropy ROPAs"—the term commonly used among scientists when discussing them.

Last year, the sum awarded was £5 million, but it is to be increased this year to £22 million. To increase the money without proper monitoring and evaluation of the success of the awards and the extent to which they are effective is absurd. The sum represents more than 2 per cent. of the research councils' budget.

Research council funding used to be restricted to universities and polytechnics. Recently, it has been opened up to bids from independent research and technology organisations. The door has also been left open for the funding of industrial research labs.

There is no doubt that independent research and technology organisations play a valuable role by helping to ease the link between academic and industrial research. They play an important part in that elusive sphere, technology transfer. In Germany, that is carried out by the Frauenhofer institutes, which receive up to 70 per cent. of their income from Government subsidy.

A few years ago in the United Kingdom, the independent research and technology organisations may well have received as much as 20 to 30 per cent. of their income through Government grants from research funds and so on, specifically the advanced technology programme which was administered by the DTI. Alas, that was one of the casualties of DTI cuts in research and development that I mentioned earlier.

The independent research and technology organisations now receive little money. Not surprisingly, they have been heavily lobbying the Government for reinstatement of the funds they have lost through the withdrawal of DTI money. Who can blame them? They have been told for the past two years that they will eventually be able to make up that funding by applying for research council funds. Now the Government have made the announcement and they will be able to apply, but no extra money has gone into the kitty to pay for the amount that will be taken from research council funds by the independent research and technology organisations.

It is dishonest to take money away and then give the RTOs the opportunity to dip into somebody else's pockets, because that means that another £10 million to £20 million a year will be siphoned off into the independent RTOs.

I have received a number of representations from universities about the move, including one from Professor Colin Humphries, the head of the department of material science at Cambridge university. He points out that the reduction in funding to the universities will be in key technological subjects, because they are the ones in which independent RTOs are competing, and not pure science, in which RTOs have very little interest. The very areas that the Government seek to promote in the White Paper will be most heavily hit by this move.

In addition, it is not a level playing field. Universities have to pay VAT on equipment, whereas RTOs are exempt or can claim it back. It adds enormously to the costs of university research to have to add 17.5 per cent. for VAT. Furthermore, universities have to devote a substantial amount of their time to teaching. A major research output of the universities is the research students and post-doctoral researchers who are trained there. That must be the primary purpose of universities. The RTOs therefore have a completely different ethos, and it is unreasonable to set up these two different sorts of organisation in competition.

How will the results of the move be monitored? I want some reassurance that conditions will be placed on research grants to ensure that the research will be disseminated in the same way as it is in the universities. It is important that that research is open and available to everyone, whether in RTOs, industry or anywhere else.

I shall deal briefly with the move of the OST into the DTI, because that has been well dealt with by other hon. Members. It was one of the worst handled news stories of the year, a public relations disaster. In contrast to the creation in 1992 of the Office of Science and Technology and its placement in the Cabinet Office—a move that was widely welcomed and, as a former Cabinet Minister has admitted, was taken largely from the Labour party's election manifesto—the move into the DTI has been a fiasco.

Science is not only about wealth creation; it is about quality of life, too. It brings important benefits to people through the part it plays in other subjects such as health, education, environment, transport and agriculture. As an agency of one Government Department, the OST is in no position to exercise effective co-ordination of science and technology policy across Government.

The DTI's reputation in managing research is appalling. In the early years of the LINK scheme, there was excessive bureaucracy. The privatisation of the research laboratories under DTI jurisdiction has been a disaster. Moreover, scientists have no confidence whatever in the ring fencing, which Ministers have assured us will keep the OST budget separate from that of its parent Department.

The test of the ring fencing will come quickly, when the DTI faces up to this year's administrative bill for the increased cost of the European fourth framework programme. The cost to the UK compared with the third framework programme is some £100 million a year. In previous years, the Treasury has tried to recoup that money from the DTI.

Every year, the DTI tries to get someone else to pay—unsuccessfully, I am glad to say—but what will happen this year when that money is disputed? No Minister will specifically defend the OST against the rapaciousness of the DTI. The Minister for Science and Technology is a

[Mrs. Campbell]

DTI Minister, although he is supposed to speak for the OST. The comments of a head of a department at Cambridge university—

"OST funds will gradually become indistinguishable from those of the DTI, and this is likely to lead to the disappearance of Government support for any research which cannot produce profitability in the short term"—

will meet widespread agreement within the scientific community.

So will the research councils see a further £100 million disappear from their budget? I mentioned the loss of £154 million with the transfer from the Department for Education; £22 million to pay for the "ropy ROPAs"; £20 million to the independent research and technology organisations; and a further £100 million filched by the DTI. That adds up to nearly £300 million—almost a quarter of the research councils' budget.

I should like to raise a number of other issues but, like other hon. Members, I shall keep my contribution short. One disaster that I should like to mention briefly is the Medical Research Council grant applied for by the Wolfson brain imaging centre at the clinical school at Cambridge university.

That project had already received £3.5 million from the Wolfson foundation and a further £1 million from university and national health service funds. The project was alpha-star rated by the MRC, which kept in touch with its progress and fully supported the aims, yet was unable to find the funds for that excellent project.

It is a research proposal on a problem of great social and economic importance—brain injury. The research was to be conducted in collaboration with a major medical charity, together with the university and the national health service. It had scope for industrial exploitation by the pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries. In short, it was just the kind of activity advocated by technology foresight, the MRC's response to which specifically mentions brain repair as a priority area. What a disgrace that the MRC cannot find enough money in this year's budget to fund that project.

I wanted briefly to mention the lack of progress with women in science. An excellent meeting was held at the Royal Society on 19 April, and Professor Julia Higgins from the department of engineering at Imperial college illustrated extremely well the rapid decline as a large proportion of women exit at each successive career stage.

Something must be done about that terrible waste of talent, because this country pours millions of pounds into training women, giving good scientific careers, but they do not realise their potential because of how our career structure works. Far more must be done besides setting up a development unit. What is the outcome of that development unit? What successes, if any, have there been, and for how long do the Government intend to fund it?

1.19 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): In view of the number of colleagues who wish to speak, I have promised to be brief and, unlike some, I shall indeed be so.

I am delighted that we are having this debate on science and technology policy, although future debates could perhaps be entitled "Science, Engineering and Technology Policy". One of the deep cultural problems in this country is that we do not give adequate recognition to engineering, and we should do so by giving the proper signals when we can.

To some extent, much of what has been said today is about signals—signals to the scientific community that we hold it in the high regard that any successful nation should. As the Science and Technology Select Committee said in one of its first major reports, there is a fundamental link between innovation and prosperity, and any country that forgets that does so at its own risk.

I hope that this debate will be an annual event linked to "forward look". Although I should have preferred it to be held in prime time, we have been able to have a lengthier debate by virtue of it being on a Friday. I am especially delighted that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry opened a Friday debate. That is not a common event and is worthy of note. I am also pleased that he has sent a firm signal to the effect that the future of the Science and Technology Committee is assured. That in itself is an important signal to the scientific community.

I also welcome the Minister for Science and Technology to his post. We have known each other for some 30 years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Surely not."] Perhaps a little less. I have the greatest respect for his ability and commitment and I know how excited he was to be able to take on this particular post. I know how committed he is to doing to the job properly, but it has to be said that the restructuring that led to his appointment has caused some mixed feelings in the outside community.

To judge from the reactions that I have seen, it would appear that, on the whole, the industrial community welcomes the shift represented by my hon. Friend's appointment to the DTI whereas the academic community has expressed considerable misgivings and reservations. What he has to do to put minds at rest is to deal positively with four precise questions.

First, how well or effectively can my hon. Friend perform the role of the science, engineering and technology champion as a junior Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, given that Cabinet Ministers have put their stamp on this policy so effectively and gained such support? At this point, I put in a plea for another signal which I do not think will necessarily be unwelcome to my hon. Friend: I think that the job of Minister for Science and Technology should be at Minister of State level. He would be an admirable candidate for it.

Secondly, how well can the strategic overview of multi-departmental research and development be performed at the DTI as opposed to the Cabinet Office? The third question has been touched on by other hon. Members and relates to the extent to which the Office of Science and Technology's budget can be ring-fenced within the DTI. Fourthly, to what extent can a fair and proper balance be established between applied and blue-skies research, given all the pressures facing the DTI?

I had wanted to refer to many other issues but, in deference to my colleagues, I shall not do so. I shall instead concentrate on a number of questions arising from the foresight programme, "forward look" and funding. We have to consider the practical use that the Government will make of the foresight programme. I know that commitment exists at the DTI because it squares with the DTI's objectives, but we want to know the extent of the

commitment in other Departments and agencies. In the context of overall funding, how will the foresight programme enable our scientific base and the industries that depend on it to focus on the challenges that they are likely to meet in an increasingly competitive world?

For example, will the foresight programme guide the research councils' priorities? It is fairly obvious that it will. However, given the inevitable funding constraints, shall we spend our money increasingly thinly over the full range of issues or shall we focus on the new priorities that the foresight programme delivers? If we are to focus on priorities, it is important that the Government signal fairly early on which areas will be abandoned. If there will be no financial support for those areas in the medium term, it would be unwise for companies to make plans to develop their own funding in that area if success depends ultimately on Government support.

I am especially interested in the announcement about "extending quality life". That is an interesting innovation. As I understand it, in that approach, the Government will act as the customer for solutions to meet challenging quality of life targets and industry, supported by academia, will supply the solutions and, in the process of supplying those solutions, will acquire innovative technology and skills, which it will then be able to sell in a much wider market. That is an extremely interesting concept of the way in which to develop the relationships between academia, public funding and industry.

However, obviously, if we choose a challenge-led approach we need to know fairly quickly which areas of challenge the Government will identify. Specifically, because the funding issues will be considerable in relation to that challenge-led approach, we need to know the extent to which our priorities, as established in the UK, will be shared by the European Union. Obviously, that approach, to be successful, must bring together British and European priorities so that common funding may be focused on those areas.

Considering the Minister's role as spokesman of British science in Europe, we need to know the extent to which he feels that his priority-setting programme in the UK will be shared by his colleagues in other parts of the European Union and in the Commission. We need also to ask seriously, to what extent are we prepared to allow our contributions to large-scale international research to drive out domestic funding of our own priorities?

I am especially worried about the space industry. I have been associated with it ever since I entered the House, as vice-chairman of the all-party space committee. I have no constituency interest in that industry, but I have always supported it because I believe that it is one of the sharp end testing grounds for new technology and, as such, it drives an enormous range of other technologies through industry at large.

Many times, through the years, we led in a specific area but, the moment we were poised to seize that lead and translate it into substantial benefit, funding was withdrawn prematurely and we failed to realise the potential. Communication satellites are a good example.

We are well poised in relation to earth observation and global navigation satellites. If we are to capitalise on the tremendous work that we have done, both aspects require some committed and secure future help from the Government. However, the figures show that, especially in relation to our space budget, the contribution to the European Space Agency has remained about constant but, in a shrinking total budget, domestic funding has been largely squeezed out. I hope that my hon. Friend will find a mechanism for reversing that trend as soon as possible.

Mr. Battle: It is not only that. The hon. Gentleman agrees that the domestic budget is in jeopardy because of the contributions to the European Space Agency. Does he also agree that, given that even within that agency there is a contribution—for example, to the earth observation satellite work which is going on, from which the Meteorological Office benefits—we are not playing our full part? We are reducing our contribution to earth observation programmes in the ESA, which means that the Meteorological Office in Britain obtains less back-up than it needs, yet it remains a world leader.

Mr. Batiste: With respect, I think that the British Government have played a fairly clever hand in the European Space Agency and have punched well above the weight of their financial contributions over a number of years. To a considerable degree, that reflects the fact that our industries are leaders in the field and have been able to win a considerable competitive advantage.

My answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) is that the "juste retour" principle for financing the ESA is profoundly wrong. It should be done on the same basis as competition within European programmes at large. At the very least, if the "juste retour" principle is being applied, it should be applied over a much wider area of scientific endeavour within wider European programmes. On the basis of merit and competitiveness and without the "juste retour" principle always tying the hands of those who award the contracts, the British space industry would be able to achieve a great deal more than at present.

The other issue is the extent to which the private finance initiative could be used. We have looked at it in terms of infrastructure programmes in the United Kingdom, but there is a case to be made for considering whether the PFI could be adapted for substantial long-standing commitments in relation to space.

I am conscious of the time and my desire to honour my commitment to be brief and allow my colleagues to contribute in the debate. Therefore, I shall refer briefly to just one more subject: genetics. Participating in the preparation of the Select Committee report was one of the most interesting and important jobs that I have done since I entered the House. That industry will probably do more to shape human endeavour in the next century than any other. I shall not go into any detail on it, as it could constitute a debate in its own right.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that a reply would shortly be forthcoming from the Department, and I am glad about that, but those of us who serve on the Select Committee and who participated in the report believe that early action is needed on our recommendations. Action is needed because we can anticipate many of the future problems—it is much better to tackle them and set up the framework now rather than be driven to take an ad hoc approach by a series of single issues that arise in the future. I am sure that the quality of decision making then would not be as high as it could be now. This is probably the last window of opportunity for a coherent and all-embracing approach to what I believe will be one of the most important industries of the 21st century.

[Mr. Batiste]

The OST has gained great support in the business and scientific community. That has been demonstrated by the commitment of so many to the foresight programme. The analysis of what is needed for British science, engineering and technology is now in place and the Government will be judged by their actions over the next few years. I am confident that my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology is the right man in the right job at the right time.

1.32 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I have participated in each of the debates on science and technology since I left the Office of Public Service and Science in the middle of 1993. On each occasion I have felt myself to be playing the role of a Cassandra. The House will remember that Cassandra's speeches fell on deaf ears and that she was generally held to be mad. She also turned out to be right.

The concern that I have been trying to voice in all the debates is that, in their laudable drive to improve Britain's industrial competitiveness, Her Majesty's Government are developing a fundamentally mistaken policy on basic science. The White Paper, "Realising our Potential", of which I was a part author, was an honest and, I hope, a successful effort to construct a balance to preserve the autonomy of the research councils while using them as a base within Whitehall for stronger central co-ordination of the science and technology policies of the different Departments.

Readers of the White Paper will remember that it gave up on the central question of the relation of defence research and development to the rest of Government-funded science. But at least the then Chancellor of the Duchy—who has now become Chief Secretary to the Treasury—was, with help from me, successful in preserving the funding and independence of the research councils from the determined takeover bids vigorously pressed by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I recall that he wanted 20 per cent., or £240 million, to be transferred to his Department. We won that round.

As a Cassandra, I should have recalled that nemesis always occurs sooner than one expects. Out of clear blue sky, on a side wind from the Prime Minister's successful bid to retain the leadership of the Conservative party—a bid in which I was happy to support him—that laboriously constructed policy was cast aside in a moment and all the delicate and fragile balances, which had taken two years of intensive consultation to construct, were abruptly overturned. The dream—I guess it was really always only that—of more effective co-ordination of Government science from the centre was brutally extinguished. All the research councils and their budgets were thrust into the gaping maw of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Concern has been expressed about that development by hon. Members on both sides of the House. None the less, Ministers might be forgiven for thinking: "What exaggerated language! What a Cassandra!" In the circumstances, I owe it to the House to give an account of why I regard the developments with such foreboding.

We must start with the fundamental question: why does the state support science? Basically, it does so for two reasons. First, science is an important branch of culture—perhaps nowadays it is the most important—and the state has a duty to act as a patron of culture. I recall that Lady Thatcher, as Prime Minister, put it very well in a Cabinet Committee when taking decisions about CERN. The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—doubtless reflecting the briefing from his Department—argued vigorously that we should pull out of such a useless enterprise, whereupon Lady Thatcher observed:

"But it is about the fundamental building blocks of the universe."

For that reason, she wanted us to stay in CERN. Science is a vital part of our national culture. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) made a good point when he highlighted the great gap in lottery funding, which treats our culture as consisting entirely of the arts and humanities and leaves out science, which is perhaps the most creative and vital aspect of our national culture today.

The Government also support science because it is useful. It serves the purposes of the different Departments of Government, which is why each Department needs its own research policy and why each should have its own chief scientist—something that has been neglected in the Department of Trade and Industry.

If the economy is in the hands of private operators, what is the state's role in respect of economically beneficial science? Its role is not to duplicate, replace or second-guess the science and technology activities of the private sector. According to the latest "forward look" document, total spending on research and development in the United Kingdom currently runs at just under £14 billion. Compared with that, the Government's spending on basic and strategic research in universities and through the research councils amounts to only £2.2 billion. The crucial point is that the only economic rationale for that £2.2 billion in Government spending is that it supports basic and strategic science.

If basic science is to be funded systematically, it must be funded by the Government as a public good and it must be accessible to all private operators. All Governments in advanced countries across the world take that view. I hope that the DTI will take note that British access to basic science products from other countries depends critically on those countries' access to products from the continuing British effort in basic science. Despite our diminishing contribution, doors remain open to us out of respect for our heroic contribution in the past. But we cannot trade on that for ever, and if we push our luck too far we will find those doors closing in our face.

I believe strongly that the Government have a role in encouraging private operators to invest in science and technology by offering them incentives and removing disincentives. Although more could have been done—particularly with regard to the tax system, as the Select Committee pointed out—much has been done in that regard in the past 20 years. The research councils and universities should be encouraged to work closely with industry. I have no quarrel with that principle, which is the basic thrust of the White Paper and which enjoys a consensus in this House. But the critical point is that none of that adds up to any sort of case for placing the research councils in the DTI. However desirable it may be to encourage industry to take research seriously, that transfer simply goes too far.

I noticed that that was how Sir Robin Nicholson sought to defend the shift in July, as if the perspective of the scientists were at last to be given an opportunity to prevail

over the short-term vision of the DTI's industrialists and bureaucrats. What, one might ask him, if the reverse were the case, as seems inherently more probable?

The final analysis is clear. There has to be a division of labour in science between industry, which must do what it can, and the Government, who should seek to do only what industry cannot. If that is the rationale for Government support for basic science—and the Treasury should not be satisfied by any other—certain consequences follow for the way in which the Government must conduct their science policy. Two of them are critical.

First, instead of being directly exposed to industrial lobbies, as will now be the case with the research councils under the DTI, the budget for basic science and the programmes sustained by it should be protected carefully and insulated from the inevitable pressures from the lobbyists for subsidies and short-term fixes. That is why institutional arrangements within the Government are so critical. In particular, that is why the arm's length principle is central to the institutional arrangements for science policy in every advanced country and why it was put at the centre of our arrangements by Haldane after the first world war and by Rothschild in 1971. The United States, Germany, France and, increasingly, Japan have structures for supporting basic science that function as our research councils are supposed to—autonomously and at arm's length from Government and industry.

In Britain, the research councils retain their autonomous statutory position as chartered institutions. So much of the apparatus that was carefully built up by our predecessors survives, but membership of the councils, which in future will be nominated by the President of the Board of Trade, is increasingly dominated by industrial interests. The independent Advisory Board on Research Councils, which stood between the Minister and individual research councils as a further level of protection, was done away with as a consequence of the shift of the research councils to the Office of Public Service and Science.

Three years ago, the research councils, their policies and their budgets were protected from the lobbies by being in the hands of the Education Secretary, by the existence of the ABRC standing between the Minister and the research councils, by the autonomy of the research councils and a membership which understood what that meant. Today, only the last of those elements remains in place. In the new institutional setting, the question is how effectively that insulation will work.

The second consequence of the rationale for Government support for science is that universities must be the central focus of that effort. Although numerous private sector research laboratories carry out important basic research, the culture of fundamental science consists essentially of an academic network. That is where the most exciting new intellectual developments are usually first registered. It is where new ideas are exchanged and developed most rapidly on a global basis, and it provides the most precious resource of all—the rising generation of scientifically educated young men and women. That is why every advanced country—except Britain—locates its governmental arrangements for supporting basic science alongside governmental responsibility for education, particularly the universities.

What are the prospects for the universities and university research under the new dispensation? I believe that they are pretty bleak. My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) painted an accurate picture.

The research universities are facing an erosion of their position on two fronts. In respect of Higher Education Funding Council research funding, they face pressures which will no doubt be supported by the DTI—now with redoubled weight—for a shift of research funding to the so-called industrially relevant projects which will spread the jam across the old binary line. In respect of research council funding of science, they will face the consequences of the new policy—emanating from Whitehall and not from the research councils; I wonder whether it is an operational or policy matter—and which envisages the councils acting as customers for research from a wide range of sources rather than custodians of the second leg of the dual-support system for basic research in the universities.

I recognise that the initial limits of the policy for wider competition have been very circumspectly drawn. The writing is on the wall and the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) correctly spelt it out. Research funding is now open to bids from Government research establishments, ex-GREs and a wide range of non-profit research laboratories. All are worthy suppliers of applied research. Many of them may be able to plead their superiority in terms of industrial relevance to so-called "blue-skies" work indulged in by the universities.

Competition is a powerful shibboleth in today's Whitehall and it cannot be long before it will be asked why competition is limited to one aspect of directed work, why there is a limited list of competitors and why a wasteful duplication of spending cannot be avoided by giving the new technology-oriented research councils responsibility for technological laboratories that used to be paid for out of DTI funds. That point was well made by the hon. Member for Cambridge.

When I asked the Prime Minister in July for reassurances about the future of the dual-support system, he gave them with no hint of a reservation. It is true that only the margins have been nibbled so far, but future trends are in the wrong direction.

I have great regard for the talent and good intentions of my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology. He and I worked on those matters when I was the Under-Secretary of State charged with responsibility for them. We see how the status of science and technology has become elevated over the years. My hon. Friend understands the case for basic science and university research. I also admire the new President of the Board of Trade, whose Scottish background will give him a special sense of the importance of the cultural issues at stake. My right hon. Friend spoke with great sincerity about his commitment to basic science, which I respect. Of course both Ministers will do their best this year, and perhaps next year, to reassure the scientific community that although much that was hitherto fundamental has changed, in reality nothing has changed. In that, I hope that they will be assisted by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who knows—at least, I hope he knows—how much he is responsible for what has happened to science since 1992.

Whatever the personal good will towards basic science felt by some of the Ministers concerned, what matters is what will happen in the lower depths of Whitehall, where all such matters are ultimately resolved. There, the

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

message will be clear. Ring-fencing is one of those Whitehall phrases all too easily emptied of significance. Within a few years, no one in the DTI dealing with the research councils—Ministers or officials—will remember a time when those councils did not "belong" to them. The centralising, bureaucratic culture of that Department, which has made such an unfavourable impression in the running of the LINK programme, will gradually permeate.

Research council budgets are now part of the DTI budget, and the Department will make its overall public expenditure case every year in the usual way. It will decide its own priorities between its own programmes. It will define what is in those programmes and what is not in them. It will, like all Government Departments, aim above all to satisfy its hungry customers—which do not include universities, which belong to another Department. The DTI will naturally apply its mandate for competitiveness with progressive rigour to everything that the research councils want to do.

For example, although concern has already been expressed about the quality of the work funded by the ROPAs, I understand that they go to more or less the same people who receive responsive grants. The DTI will ask whether those awards are made for the same sort of work. If the answer is yes, what is the point of them? If the answer is no, perhaps fewer people will ask what is the point of the work. Again, the DTI is the sort of Department that will treat the technology foresight exercise established by the White Paper in precisely the way not intended—as a mechanical device for predicting and programming the research activities of whatever remains of the basic research division of UK plc. It will bear down with increasing weight on everything that seems speculative or whose pay-off looks too long term. It will grind slowly but exceeding fine.

I utter those gloomy predictions but, like Cassandra, I hope that they will not be fulfilled. We will have to watch closely. I will conclude on a positive note. I assume that the House at least halfway understands that there is something reckless in the way that we have so quickly cast off the institutional protections that previous generations thought were so important for the welfare of basic science.

Ways can surely be found of marking out clearly not only the OST's budgetary boundaries but those of its programmes, so that any shift of resource or policy across those boundaries will rapidly become visible. The Chairman of the Select Committee spoke well on that point. I am pleased that the Committee has survived the changes. In particular, we should look for clarity in respect of Euro-PES expenditure survey attributions. The hon. Member for Cambridge was right to draw attention to that problem.

The position of the chief scientific adviser to the Government and, in particular, the Prime Minister, should be safeguarded. I was pleased to hear what my right hon. Friend the President said on that point. I should be even more pleased if the Cabinet Sub-Committee had survived the recent restructuring.

Ways should be found to involve other Departments with an interest in research councils in decisions concerning their personnel and policy. Nominations to research council boards should be made jointly by my right hon. Friend and the Secretary of State with responsibility for the universities, together with another Secretary of State if appropriate—for example, the Secretary of State for Health in respect of the Medical Research Council. Why not reconstitute the advisory board to assist the Director General of the Research Councils and to ensure a properly representative membership with a strong academic presence?

I offer those suggestions as palliatives. They would help. However, the fact is that the fundamental arrangements are wrong and the research community would do well to mobilise and apply whatever pressure it can to secure an early change.

1.50 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I am grateful for being called to speak.

When I heard the President of the Board of Trade speak about science policy, as a Scot I thought that, if he leaves science policy in the same state as he has left Scottish politics, it will be good for the Labour party but not very good for science. Currently, Scotland is almost Tory-free; the Government's policies in Scotland were completely out of touch with the consumers of those policies.

I was struck by the fact that the President spoke at great length about the development of the private science-based companies. However, the issue is not about science-based companies but about the Government's policy. I remember that in the Chamber in 1993 there was a feeling of hope across the parties, with hon. Members talking about realising potential. Many hon. Members saw it as a non-party matter—something fundamental to Britain.

The then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), put forward a scenario on which we could all agree. There was to be a science Minister, who would be fundamental to the development of science. There was a new chief scientific adviser, Professor Stewart. Everything appeared hopeful and rosy. However, the Minister responsible for science prior to that responsibility being taken over by the Department of Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), was dispensed with—a nice way of saying that he was bumped off. The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), who is in the Chamber today, also once held that ministerial responsibility.

I wonder what the role of the current Minister, the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), will be. I am reminded of an old Rolling Stones rock song called, "The under-assistant west coast promo man". It is about someone with a very grand title but very little function. I wonder whether that describes the Minister.

We have heard from some of my hon. Friends this morning a rather good analysis of the Deputy Prime Minister's involvement in science policy. Is it his responsibility or is it the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade? What scraps will be left for the Minister if it is a three-tier structure? I think that the DTI lost its heart when the Deputy Prime Minister took competitive deregulation away with him. The DTI has been given a brain to look after, but it is my analysis that the brain has already been lobotomised, because there is not an adequate budget to carry out the task of thinking through the problems of science.

The budget deficiencies were well analysed by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) in another excellent speech on science. He is becoming

noted both within and without the Chamber for advancing and debating the needs of science rather more than the Government are doing these days. I have reached the conclusion that the Government say one thing and do another. I am reminded of the time when I chaired a local government committee and every council would say, "We've got one of those," when we spoke about policies. However, when we looked at the resourcing, we realised that the policy was often only on paper.

I accept that the Government have a policy on technology foresight

"to forge a new working partnership between researchers . . . and industrialists."

However, the fact is that there are budget cuts. The President of the Board of Trade this morning accepted that the Royal Society has said that highly rated research projects are not funded, while other lower rated ones with an industrial output—a short-termism—are funded. That is to be regretted, and although he rebutted it, he did not rebut it with any facts. The vice-chancellors and principals tell us a similar tale: that university research is being distorted. Rather than being focused, it is being distorted by the Government's interpretation of what technology foresight is about.

It seems to me that technology foresight is really becoming another expression for technology transfer. It is much to be applauded, and it is something about which I have spoken in the past and of which I would like to see more, but technology foresight is about a focus, not a substitution of pure research with product development. I have an example to give. The company Biomar is about to open in my constituency. I remember the managing director, Jonathan Shepherd, when he was at university with me, and was at the Institute of Aquaculture doing basic research. I was talking to him only last week. He remembers the wonder of having his first patent for something that he had developed in the lab. He went on to develop feedstock for fish farming and moved heavily into technology transfer. That is to be applauded.

Industry came in, because of a problem with getting the pigment right in the feedstuff, because, usually, wild salmon eat prawns, which gives them the pink colour. He went to a company which developed a pigment, and it is now able to make the feedstock in such a way that we get our pink salmon from farmed salmon. It was an economic success and it has had economic growth.

On 3 November in Grangemouth, I, and one of the Ministers for Scotland, will open the Biomar plant, and I am very proud to say so. It was not technology transfer at the expense of basic research, way back then in the 60s and 70s, into the growth of fish and the biological research that led to it, but it seems that the Government's policy is going in that direction.

I would also like to mention the information super-highway policy. Yes, the Government have one of those as well. To my embarrassment, as secretary to a Back-Bench committee, I organised a teleworking and video conferencing demonstration in the House, only to find that we could not get an integrated services digital network line to run video conferencing. There is only one such line in the House, in Room 15. BT had to bring one in specially. I have just come back to my office in the upper Corridor, to find that it has been rewired. There are so many plugs that I do not know where to put all the equipment, but we cannot use video conferencing with BT software, because we do not have ISDN links.

It worries me that when I went to the cable and satellite all-party group it was full of people lobbying on behalf of specific organisations. I wonder whether this is being driven by a free market philosophy rather than, as it should be, a plan. It seems to me that competitiveness—the President of the Board of Trade mentioned that it is important—should not oppose sensible Government planning, but it would appear that competitiveness is seen by the Government as an alternative to planning. Policy should not be a wish list. I seems to me that science is a Government wish list. The Government should not only encourage but share in the development of the science base. They do not appear to do so.

We, as well as scientists and the country, shall be looking at the forthcoming Budget to see whether it will reveal whether the Deputy Prime Minister and the Treasury are running science policy or whether, as he claimed when he opened the debate, it is the President of the Board of Trade. I have a suspicion that we shall find that budgets will be cut, science will be damaged and the wish list of the Government will not turn into reality.

1.58 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak briefly before my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary gets to his feet to reply to the debate. There is not time for me to follow the points raised by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty), or develop any of his arguments, although I listened to his speech with great interest.

This has been a very high-quality debate indeed, so much so that it is quite difficult to decide which particular points to bring forward. I shall make one or two points quickly in the five minutes that I have.

I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade was able to attend this first debate on science. That was symbolically very good news to us all, and I welcome that. He made the point about communications. I was going to say more about scientists learning to communicate better, but all I have time to say is that we had a rather good example today of how good arts people are at communicating science. I am not going to mention any of my colleagues, on both sides of the House, by name, as we know who they are. We heard some excellent speeches about science from people who specialised when at university—indeed, I was at university at the same time as some of them—in the arts, not science.

I pay tribute to Government policy on science since the general election in 1992. It has been referred to by hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is no doubt that the announcements in 1992 following the general election were welcomed. The 1993 White Paper was welcomed by a large proportion of the science community. I do not believe that Labour Members would differ from that view.

However, I go along with those who have some reservations about the transfer of the Office of Science and Technology to the Department of Trade and Industry. I shall say no more than that because the point has been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. On the other hand—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology is listening—I have no reservations about my hon. Friend the Minister's commitment to science. At the press conference that he

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

held in July this year shortly after the changes, he set out his views about science policy. I certainly hope that he will take it from me that, even though I have reservations about the mechanics of the process, I have none about the commitment to science that he has declared in the intervening months.

I have received a briefing note from the Institution of Electrical Engineers. I declare an interest in that every month or so I write an article for its review, so I clearly have a special interest in that organisation. The briefing makes a point that I particularly want to emphasise. It has not been referred to often in today's debate, which is about engineering as well as science. The briefing says:

"The need for well-qualified chartered engineers has never been greater, if the United Kingdom is to remain competitive."

The institution believes that one of the causes of the shortages which are now appearing of qualified engineers

"is the widely-held belief that engineering may not offer an attractive future. Nothing could be further from the truth."

I agree with that. We know now that

"Graduates from engineering and science-based courses are finding it easier to get satisfactory jobs than many other graduates."

Only the other night on television I saw a news item in which a company managing director said how difficult it was to get young qualified electronic engineers. We have been around this course before—skills shortages and shortages of graduates. It is coming up again. It is good news for us all. It ties in with what has been said in the debate about science and engineering. It is good news for us all that our young engineers and scientists have good prospects. It is good news that the average pay of engineers in industry is now reaching much better levels. That means that the work that we have done in the House to support engineering is paying off. The parliamentary group for engineering development is just one example of a group of Members of Parliament who have promoted engineering and science over the years. The good news is coming through.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) made an excellent speech, but I differ with one point that he made. Sadly, he is not here, but I gave him notice of what I intended to say. He said that science was primarily about the creation of wealth. I do not agree with that. I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) that science is about a great deal more than the creation of wealth. Therefore, I support those who have said in the debate that the Department for Education and Employment should perhaps have a little more input into science matters.

Having made that caveat, it follows—I suspect that this is what my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey was driving at—that the creation of wealth is vital to science and vital to the future of Britain. That is why I conclude by drawing attention to the increasing opportunities for engineers. I do not mind if opportunities fall for lawyers, yuppies, accountants and media and social engineering groupies. I have insulted half my colleagues in the process of saying that.

The good news for the Government and for the country is that opportunities for engineers and scientists are increasing, according to the information that I am getting from the engineering and scientific institutions. That is a tribute to the Government's management of the economy. It means that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is now presiding, as the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) admitted, over a better manufacturing industry and better exports. That is good news which we all welcome.

2.4 pm

The Minister for Science and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor): This has, indeed, been a remarkable debate—full of thoughtful speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House—and I am delighted to have the opportunity of replying.

This is my first appearance at the Dispatch Box with the full title of Minister for Science and Technology although, as colleagues know, I was Minister for Technology in the Department of Trade and Industry for the past year and that is an important point. During my time as Minister for Technology, I dealt with many of the delivery mechanisms, which required a close understanding of what was happening within the Office of Science and Technology. At times it was frustrating that there was not a greater proximity between what I was attempting to do and what the OST was encouraging me to do.

The hon. Members for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) both mentioned the information super-highways and the policy that we have had to develop, with which I was involved, such as the importance of a research base for computing science in universities and ideas as to how one might introduce new content to the super-highways.

Content is as important as infrastructure because it is demand for the content that will pull through the upgrading of infrastructure, and not some national plan. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East came dangerously close to his leader's misconception, but I think that he is probably far too shrewd for that.

There is no need for a national plan on infrastructure. We want to encourage a diversity of content that is affordable, interesting and applicable, particularly in schools, so that we can build up people's confidence and appetite for the products of the super-highways, which will pull through the demand for upgrading from twisted copper pair—which, with compression, can already do a remarkable amount—to full optical fibre connections in some cases.

I was also responsible for the small firms merit award for research and technology and for the support for products under research scheme. Fascinating companies are coming forward, often made up of only one or two people, many having spun out of the universities. Many of the awards, especially those in the SMART category, were for professors or people who had been working in academic research schemes and had had an idea, which they were looking to develop into a commercial reality. We were providing help.

I was immensely encouraged and stimulated by the interface in many of our universities between those who were conducting the research, but at the same time realised that it should not be confined to them. They had a bursting desire to get out into the commercial world to find out whether there would be a profitable demand for their ideas.

All those aspects and many more, including technology transfer and innovation, were part of my responsibilities—as were the teaching company and postgraduate

partnership schemes, both of which I extended during my period in office. All the aspects were remarkably fascinating, but needed to be combined into a broader field. That is the logic of the merger of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Science and Technology. It was not cooked up one night after a drink at 1 am or 2 am, as some Opposition Members allege.

Mr. Battle: It was not an evening drink, but on a hot 4 July afternoon.

Mr. Taylor: Whatever time of day it was concocted, it was the result of a thoughtful process. As the former chief scientific adviser said, the OST had been a fledgling organisation when it was in the Office of Public Service and Science, but it had come of age. Once the organisation came of age—it was bursting with ideas, which the technology foresight process developed—it was a logical time for it to become part of a much more broadly based Department: the Department of Trade and Industry.

Sir William Stewart made that point, as did many other people, including the former chief scientist at the DTI, Dr. Geoff Robinson, who was referred to in the debate. In an article in "Research Fortnight" on 12 July, he said:

"Scientists have long argued that science is central to modern industrialised societies. They cannot be disappointed if the government has finally listened."

The Government listen. We understand the needs. The merger has taken place and the new system will be much more effective in delivering precisely the needs of the science base.

Mr. Dalyell: The merger was forged not after a drink, but in the heat of political necessity, on the anvil of political imperatives and very quickly, with more regard to politics than was good for science.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has always had a fluency in language. I am talking about fluency of policy, and we have achieved precisely that with the merger.

Mr. Robert Jackson: On the fluidity of policy—certainly, there was rapidity of policy—my hon. Friend says that the merger was a deeply contemplated move. I can tell him that there was never any suggestion at any time from any party or anybody who was consulted in preparing the White Paper that it would be an appropriate move.

Mr. Taylor: I was in the Government with my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) at that time in the humblest of all posts—that of bag carrier or parliamentary private secretary, to the then Minister for Public Services and Science, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Of course, the merger was not contemplated at that stage precisely because, as Sir William Stewart has said, the OST was then a fledgling organisation.

I was about to pay credit to my hon. Friend for his pioneering work then, to which he referred in his speech. It is the very success of the policies that he introduced which has given the OST the strength and capacity to be part of a broader organisation. The continuum of policy will not give substance to the genuine fears of my hon. Friend. I understand his profound concern, especially for the binary system on which he worked at the Department of Education and Science, as it then was. I greatly respect his comments and I assure him that while I cannot accept his conclusion about the need to redivide the DTI and OST, I accept his ambitions for the future of university-driven research. It is, I hope, safe in my hands—as it was in his when he was one of my predecessors.

I have a difficult task in the amount of time remaining to sum up the debate because so many subjects were covered. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), whom I follow around the country as we attend the same experiments—though I might say that he follows me around the country, too—

Mr. Battle: The Minister would have to move fast.

Mr. Taylor: I am known as "Speedy", so I can move fast. I will not give way to such jibes.

Unless the hon. Gentleman was making a series of interesting expenditure statements in his speech, his concerns for the science community are understood by the Government. We are not attempting to debase basic science. I am not sure whether he used the words "blue-skies vision" as part of his peroration or out of genuine anxiety for that activity.

The preservation of university blue-skies research is crucial to Britain's future and not only for wealth creation—a phrase that I have not found to be spat upon as dirty when I have visited universities. The understanding of the importance of the creation of wealth is as alive and well in our great universities as it should be. A failure to recognise that link has held certain universities back. In most cases, they are worried about lack of full responsiveness from the industrial community to the importance of blue-skies research. I have set as a key objective of my period as Minister for Science and Technology a strengthening of the interface between rich and productive basic science and industry.

I accept the criticisms—although not all of them, as I do not intend to be that generous—of the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell). There are enormous gaps in UK performance. That is why the research and development scoreboard has been published by the DTI. There is no point in a DTI Minister trying to pretend that things are better than they are. It is our job to stimulate industry to do better. That is why we have brought forward two competitiveness White Papers, warts and all.

The scoreboard has some frightening warts on it, given the paucity of research in some sectors of British industry, which are asking for annihilation in the competitive markets of the world unless they do something about it. Our great centres of excellence—the pharmaceutical industry is an obvious one—have thrived precisely because they understand that a strong industrial base depends on a strong basic science base. But I would also argue that a strong science base will thrive in the long term because there is a strong industrial base in similar sectors.

There should therefore be no embarrassment that we are bringing together the OST and the DTI. Indeed, I regard it as a signal achievement that we have recognised that to improve the performance of the overall economy and quality of life in Britain we must link the two.

In the fascinating lecture at the Royal Society recently—the Bernal lecture—the former chief scientific adviser said:

"My view after five years in Whitehall is that the emphasis by industrialists on the need for a strong science base has been as influential in achieving it as the concerns that allege under-funding by parts of the scientific community."

[Mr. Taylor]

That is a serious message. Too much whingeing by scientists as opposed to quiet rational thinking will undermine a broader public understanding of the science base. As I said when I was at the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Newcastle, and I have said it several times to some of the key scientists who have been to see me, my reaction is one of despair—it was also my reaction to some of the statements that were made about British science on the radio this morning—because scientists are doing the opposite to attempting to get a proper public understanding of the excellence of our science base and exactly what is being done to improve it.

Dr. Bray: Given the gaps in the research and development scoreboard, will the Minister examine in detail why the position is so much worse in British companies than in comparable companies overseas, in terms of their research intensity?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, we are analysing that because we are very concerned. The former President of the Board of Trade got into trouble at one point when he talked about a long tale in British industry of underperforming companies. Part of the reason for that is a lack of understanding of the importance of research, both applied and basic, and we are looking closely at that matter. If we are to improve this country's competitiveness, we may have to ensure that we improve the value added at all levels of our society. I entirely agree with the comments that have been made in the debate to the effect that if we are to survive we must use our wits, and our scientists' wits are as important as those of any other section of the community.

Before leaving the subject of the research and development scoreboard, I should say that the overall picture shows that we have performed better than our principal competitors over the past two years. This year, there was a net increase in research and development expenditure. However, having already talked of the flaws in taking averages because to do so overlooks the bad points, I shall not pursue that argument further.

It is important to recognise the benefits which could flow from the merger of the OST and the DTI. The current chief scientific adviser, Professor May, has written to me saying:

"The transdepartmental responsibilities of the Chief Scientific Adviser have been preserved entirely as a result of his new position."

Those are his words, not mine. He has already had extensive discussions throughout Government, including with the Prime Minister. These are early days during which the full force of the chief scientific adviser's role will need to be felt, but I assure hon. Members that he takes a keen interest in keeping the DTI up to scratch as well. Most importantly, there is no confusion in his mind about his role in relation to the DTI.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way once more, but I am conscious that I am running out of time.

Mr. Jackson: Does my hon. Friend think that the chief scientist would find it of assistance in performing his role if the Cabinet Committee, which formerly operated at the centre of those arrangements, were reinstated?

Mr. Taylor: The jury is out on that. All that I have said so far has to do with science playing an integral role in a broader committee on which the chief scientific adviser sits. I would therefore wait for him to say that he was concerned. The broader sphere of the competitiveness of the United Kingdom into which science fits is a better basis from which he can wield influence than a separate committee. As I said, one of the strengths of the position of chief scientific adviser is that he can speak out publicly, but I shall keep in close touch with him. His view and mine is that the integration of science into the influence on government is a positive step forward.

Mr. Battle *rose—*

Dr. Bray *rose—*

Mr. Taylor: I have an embarrassment of interventions, but I give way to the hon. Member for Leeds, West.

Mr. Battle: On a practical point, will the Minister inform the House what steps have been taken to get every other Government Department to respond with a plan setting out how they will respond to technology foresight? Is that being co-ordinated within the OST? Have such plans been drawn up, and will they be made publicly available?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, they have been drawn up and they are being pursued. The chief scientific adviser recently published an article in, I think, the CBI's journal pointing out that the key themes that emerged from the foresight exercise are now being examined and an implementation programme is being developed.

There were originally six priorities, but the EQUAL—extend quality life—theme on which I am keen is now the seventh. We are incorporating them into science, engineering and technology portfolios and the Higher Education Funding Council's funding methods. We are also building new partnerships with industry using the foresight challenge competition, the teaching company scheme and the LINK programme and we are co-ordinating on reporting SET developments and progress within these priorities. Equally, we are examining them in the context of every other Government Department that has a delivery function. The chief scientific adviser has made that one of his highest priorities.

I welcome the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who has done tremendous work with the Science and Technology Committee. I am delighted that the Committee is to continue and will probably gain in strength due to its ability to range more widely. I am looking forward to being with the President of the Board of Trade in the Committee next week. I am sure that we shall be cross-questioned in some detail on various policies.

I strongly welcome the report on genetics. We have not yet commented in detail on our reactions, but we shall soon do so. I agree with my hon. Friend that the subject is very important and needs to be given a full airing in the House, although that is a matter for the business managers, not for me. I have already commented on the scrutiny report, but we can go into further detail.

My hon. Friend's key question related to whether we should have a science adviser at the DTI to follow Geoff Robinson. One of the points made was that the DTI was moving the focus of its work slightly downstream, which is one of the reasons why the link with the OST is so constructive, and pushing many of the activities into the

sponsorship divisions to increase effectiveness in terms of the work of those divisions and regional policy. Science and technology activities will be fully integrated with other work aimed at industrial competitiveness. I agree that we need constantly to examine whether we are delivering the improved competitiveness effectively, and I shall bear my hon. Friend's words in mind.

Sir Giles Shaw: I take it that the fact that the Department's expenditure on science has fallen from £350 million in 1992-93 to £222 million this year in no way reflects on the absence of the chief scientific adviser. I should have thought that, had there been such a person, expenditure might not have fallen so dramatically.

Mr. Taylor: I beg to differ with my hon. Friend on that. We can consider that in Committee. Flippantly, I can assure him that that was not the salary of the former chief scientific adviser of the DTI. Seriously, there are some significant complications in DTI expenditure, largely stemming from the position of energy and the fast-breeder reactor and the problem of launch aid costs, which are considerable. Therefore the net effect has been a diminution of classified R and D spend in the DTI, not a diminution of the interest and effort of the DTI in that direction.

Many other hon. Members have contributed to the debate, which was at a high level. My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) represents a full gamut of excellent universities. The only one that he did not mention was the London School of Economics, where I did some postgraduate work—sadly, not in what we would generally call science. I am afraid that those of us who represent the dismal science nevertheless still proudly hold up our heads.

My right hon. Friend made some strong arguments. I obviously cannot comment on those that touch on the budget of the Department at this stage, but we understand his anxiety about several aspects, such as international salience.

My right hon. Friend commented about responsive mode. If one undertakes a technology foresight exercise, the conclusions of that exercise are bound to form judgments in the minds of research councils, as they consider what to fund. The principal division of funding for the research councils is between responsive mode, whereby they have a peer review process of projects that are brought to them, and directive mode, whereby they try to fill in gaps or there are programmes that they wish to engage in.

So far, the research councils appear to be very clear in their minds that the balance is about right. The foresight programme is bound to influence them, perhaps more in the directive mode sense, but not exclusively. We should not be too worried about those connections.

I say in reply to the comments of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), that controversies always arise when people inquire more deeply into research council grants. In our opinion, the grants have been made after careful consideration and consultation, and the responsive mode aspect of what the research councils do is not affected. We are speaking about directive mode. Therefore the argument that the hon. Gentleman made about someone coming up with a good idea and its then being put out to tender does not really apply.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) made an important speech about intellectual property, which is often neglected. I was responsible for that in the previous year—not only now—and I know that Lord Woolf is undertaking a wide-ranging review of civil procedure. As part of that review, a sub-committee chaired by Mr. Justice Jacob, the senior patent judge, is specifically considering intellectual property legislation.

I take all my right hon. Friend's arguments seriously. I am actively involved in the World Intellectual Property Organisation discussions and the arrangements in respect of the treaty on intellectual property in respect of integrated circuits. We must make sure that the outcome of our discussions is effective because piracy, especially in the transfer of ideas in research and in multi-media for the super-highways, is a crucial problem.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow spoke about short-term contracts. Due to the short time remaining, I shall write to him, but I reassure him that the report of the House of Lords Committee and the draft concordat of the vice-chancellors almost coincided, and therefore I do not believe that the House of Lords took into account what the concordat discussed. So far, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals appears to have reacted positively to the concordat and therefore there is not as much to be worried about as the hon. Gentleman alleges.

We believe that we are getting it about right. I understand all the problems of uncertainty arising from short-term contracts. As the President of the Board of Trade said in his opening remarks, American universities appear to have a good record with short-term contracts, but I pay tribute to some of the schemes now inquiring into ways in which we can alter that position. The university of Warwick has obtained funding for a scheme that will consider longer-term ideas.

I do not have time to go into some of the other issues, but I nevertheless draw attention to the generic research that the Higher Education Funding Council for England has started, which is likely to alleviate some of the hon. Gentleman's worries.

We could spend hours debating the subject of the budget. It is up by 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Over the past 10 years there has been a 10 per cent. increase in the science base, although clearly civilian and military research have been in decline. With just one minute left, I do not intend to go into that.

Ropy ROPAs are not ropy; the university of Cambridge is about the best. I am sure that the hon. Member for Cambridge did not mean to criticise her own university.

We have had a remarkable debate. I have been unable to do justice to all my colleagues' comments, but I can confirm that we have a profound understanding of the importance of the science base simply because we want Britain to be competitive in the world.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Kurt Frances

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Knapman.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I shall first take this opportunity to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) to his new responsibilities as Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. As I am asking for something on behalf of a constituent, I should start by saying that I hope that my hon. Friend and I will be able to work together as well this afternoon as we did for two and a half years in the Whips Office. I am delighted that he has been given his new responsibilities. The only person who will be sad about it is Her Majesty, who had her new Vice-Chamberlain plucked from her even before they had had much correspondence.

We miss from the Dispatch Box my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who is a fair and thoughtful man. I should like to thank him publicly for the enormous courtesy and care that he showed in dealing with the large number of immigration cases that I brought to his attention because of my constituency interest. I hope that we shall see him return to health and to office before too long.

Mr. Kurt Frances and his mother, Mrs. Frances, are no longer my constituents, as they have moved to the constituency of Harrow, East. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) would have wished to be here. He has been entirely supportive of what I am saying and trying to do, but it is a complex case, and it would have been foolish to hand it on from one Member of Parliament to another, so I have carried on dealing with the case.

I wish to make a number of simple points and to place a few facts on record, so that my hon. Friend the Minister can respond to them, if not today, in writing at a future date. In my judgment, the problem stems from the fact that the right of Mrs. Frances to British citizenship was refused out of hand for so long. It was described in a letter as recently as 10 October 1995 from my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North, who said:

"Although his mother"—

Mrs. Frances—

"has an automatic claim to British citizenship, Mr. Frances is not a British citizen."

It is all very well for officials to say blandly:

"Although his mother has an automatic claim to British citizenship",

but it did not seem like that from the beginning. Mrs. Frances had a battle, which I shall detail, to establish her right to British citizenship.

All four of Kurt Frances's grandparents had British passports. Both his parents were born in what was then India, because they were both serving the Crown in the Indian army. One side of the family had been serving the Crown for more than one generation. Those people did a great deal for the then British empire, and it is tragic that a grandson of those people—a great grandson of someone who served the British Crown with distinction in India—should be treated as Kurt is being treated.

My argument revolves almost entirely around the significance of when Mrs. Frances first applied for a British passport.

On 18 May 1995 I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North. It said:

"The earliest correspondence that Mrs. Frances had with the Immigration and Nationality Department was in November 1975".

That is true, but it is not the whole story. Together with her younger sister, Mrs. Frances made her first application for the British passport to which she has always had a right, in 1954 in Karachi. Her application was rejected, on the ground that she was married. In 1955, she followed up her first application by requesting information about the possibility of obtaining a Pakistani passport. That is what she had been advised to do by the British high commission. Plainly—no one maintains anything different—that was not possible.

In 1959, Mrs. Frances applied for registration for herself and her minor children, and her application was rejected on 18 February 1960. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has a copy of that letter from the United Kingdom high commission in Karachi. It is signed by the second secretary, and says:

"I am directed by the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Pakistan to say that, after careful consideration of all the circumstances of the case, he regrets that he is not prepared to authorise the registration of yourself and your minor children as citizens of the United Kingdom".

No one disputes the fact that that letter was factually wrong.

In 1962, Mrs. Frances reapplied at the consulate-general in Lahore, and she was turned down on the same grounds. In 1966, she repeated her application, but was again turned down. In 1975, as I have mentioned, the first attempt was made to correspond directly with the Home Office. However, the designated Home Office official said that he was not in a position to answer Mrs. Frances's query. The official was clearly wrong—that fact is not disputed—much to the disadvantage of Mrs. Frances, and now of Kurt Frances.

In 1984, Mrs. Frances made yet another attempt at the British high commission in Islamabad. That application had the first positive result—some 30 years after Mrs. Frances had first applied. However, that did not lead to Mrs. Frances's being granted a British passport: she had to wait another seven years. In 1991, upon contacting the British high commission in Islamabad, she was issued with a British passport. It took Mrs. Frances 37 years to establish her birthright. That is a significant fact, which must be considered.

Although my next point has never been made to me by my hon. Friend or by his two predecessors with whom I have had correspondence, it has been made to me informally, and I believe it to be true. My point is that an earlier acceptance of Mrs. Frances's right to British citizenship would have led to Kurt Frances's obtaining a visa. Other reasons have been suggested also, but that point has never been specifically denied—indeed, officials have made it clear to me informally that they believe that it is true.

Upon his arrival in this country, Kurt Frances received a letter—it is unclear whether it is dated 1991 or 1992—bearing the reference F219061 on form APP 101A, as amended. It says:

"Your mother has applied on your behalf for leave to remain in the United Kingdom as her dependant, but you are over eighteen".

That is a significant point, and the Government must explain why Mr. Kurt Frances is being made to suffer because of the way in which his mother's applications were treated for 37 years. That is the kernel of my argument.

As a former Minister with responsibility for the civil service, it gives me no pleasure to criticise civil servants, past or present. I have never done that before in this place. I have always praised, quite correctly, civil servants in general and in particular, both from the Back Benches and from the Dispatch Box. However, I do not believe that my hon. Friend or his predecessors have been well served by their officials.

The most polite way of describing the events that I have described in some detail today is as a Horlicks. Any other description would be ruled out of order. Everybody knows that the matter simply should not have reached this stage. Officials long since retired, and some promoted to glory, have made serious mistakes and, as a consequence, Mrs. Frances and Kurt Frances are suffering.

A further point concerning Mrs. Frances's right to British citizenship has never been explained. She was born in what was termed "a princely state". That clearly has significance. I hope that, at some point, that significance will be examined and explained.

I conclude by making two points. First, I repeat that the case involves the family of people who served the British empire with distinction. Kurt Frances has four grandparents, all of whom had British passports. He has been here for some time. It is difficult to state such things about another friendly country, but we all know that people of British extraction living in Pakistan today—particularly if they do not have a Pakistan passport, but whatever their circumstances—are subject to discrimination.

Life is very difficult for those people and, frankly, Kurt Frances came here as little more than a juvenile. He has lived here with his mother for a few years. He has very few roots, and no prospects, in Pakistan. I accept that is not enough to grant him a visa to remain in Britain, but it runs alongside the clear factual position that he should be granted a visa to remain.

My hon. Friend is new to these matters, and I am sure that, when he wanted to brief himself about the wider aspects of his portfolio, he had to spend a long time reading up for today's Adjournment debate; but I hope that he will leave the door ajar for the matter to be re-examined on the basis of what I have said today, and further information that I may be able to supply to the Home Office. I hope that he will show what I came to regard in our days on the Back Benches together and then as Whips together as his customary compassion to two people—one very young and one not exactly elderly, but getting on and frail—who have suffered enough because of the actions of officials in the past.

2.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Timothy Kirkhope): First, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) for his kind opening remarks. I am very honoured to have as part of my responsibilities the subject matter that he has brought before me today.

I know that my hon. Friend has a long interest in the position of Mr. Frances, and has pursued his constituents' interest most diligently, even though, as he has already told us, they are not now his constituents.

My hon. Friend first brought the case to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), then the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, in January 1993, because he was concerned that Mr. Frances had been refused leave to settle in Britain as a dependant of his mother. In later correspondence, my hon. Friend began to form the view that Mr. Frances and his mother had been treated unfairly, and that Mr. Frances had lost an entitlement to British citizenship. That view has since developed into a belief that officials made errors and omissions, and are reluctant to admit them. He is now convinced that an injustice occurred that has seriously disadvantaged Mr. Frances in his efforts to settle in the United Kingdom.

My predecessor, despite a thorough investigation, found no evidence of inordinate delays by officials, and I am assured that Mr. Frances has been refused permission to live here quite properly, in accordance with the law and the immigration rules.

I will attempt to clarify the case by taking the various issues separately. First, I will explain why Mr. Frances is not a British citizen and could not under any circumstance whatever have been a British citizen. Then I will refer to the dealings that Mr. Frances's family have had with the Home Office and our posts abroad over the years. I will also explain, as far as I am able in the time available, why there has been a delay in Mr. Frances's mother obtaining her British passport.

That will bring me to the events leading up to my hon. Friend's involvement—how Mr. Frances came to the United Kingdom, and why he is not allowed to settle here. Finally, I will describe the reason why the appeal adjudicator dismissed the appeal.

The belief that British citizenship is an issue here is based on the incorrect assumption that Mr. Frances had an inherent right to British citizenship. My hon. Friend believes that that right was lost because of a delay in his mother establishing her own British citizenship. I regret to say that that is not correct, either in fact or in law.

The legal aspects of the case are clear. British nationality law sets out precisely the requirements for being a British citizen. It explains also how a person can become British. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary does not have the power to recognise anyone as British unless they meet the requirements of the British Nationality Act 1981. Any argument that Mr. Frances might himself have been recognised as British if his mother had been issued with a British passport earlier does not hold water.

Although Mrs. Frances has an automatic claim to British citizenship, that could not pass to her son, for two reasons. First, at the time of his birth, British citizenship could descend to children born abroad only through the legitimate male line. Mr. Frances's father is not a British citizen. Although that position altered with the passage of the 1981 Act, the change was not made retrospective.

Secondly, there is a limit on the number of generations through which British citizenship may pass to children born abroad. So, even if Mr. Frances were able to derive his citizenship from the female line, his mother was

[Mr. Timothy Kirkhope]

herself British by descent—having been born abroad—and unable to transmit her citizenship further to her children born abroad.

The 1981 Act aimed at restricting the status of British citizenship, and thereby the right of abode in the United Kingdom, to persons with close connections with the United Kingdom. Mr. Frances does not have those close connections. He would not have been a British citizen had his mother established her claim earlier.

As to the dealings that Mr. Frances's family has had with the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office over the years, in response to my hon. Friend's concern over the delay in Mrs. Frances obtaining a British passport, officials were asked to make inquiries. I have to emphasise that that could not have any effect on Mr. Frances's claims to British citizenship and the right of abode in the United Kingdom. Also, the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, which took up Mr. Frances's case after his appeal had been lodged, made no mention of delays when it represented him before the appellate authority. Its case was based largely on the economic reasons for Mr. Frances wishing to settle here.

It has been claimed that Mrs. Frances has all relevant correspondence from 1959 to demonstrate the difficulties she has had in establishing her claim to British citizenship, but neither my predecessor nor I have had sight of all that correspondence. Nor have we been told the nature of the difficulties that Mrs. Frances had experienced.

Only two letters have been submitted by my hon. Friend. The first was from the British high commissioner in Karachi, dated 9 April 1959, to arrange a meeting in connection with passport facilities for Mrs. Frances and her family. The second letter, also from the British high commissioner in Karachi, dated 18 February 1960, was sent to her husband, to advise him of the refusal of his application for registration of himself and his minor children as citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies.

The first approach that Mrs. Frances made to the Home Office was in November 1976. She understood that she qualified for the right of abode in the United Kingdom, and she wanted to know whether her rights would be affected by Pakistan's withdrawal from the Commonwealth. To answer her inquiry, further information was needed regarding her place of birth, current citizenship and details about her mother and grandparents. A reply was sent asking for those details. Nothing further at all was heard until my hon. Friend wrote in January 1993 asking essentially the same question that she had asked 16 years previously. Again, insufficient information was provided, and we had to ask again for further particulars.

The British high commission in Islamabad has searched its records for papers connected with this family. Its records since 1981 do not reveal delay on its part in settling Mrs. Frances's claim. The earliest document it holds concerns Mr. Frances's maternal uncle, James Edward Torkildsen. He wrote via the Home Office on 1 December 1980 saying that he wished to settle in the United Kingdom for "financial reasons". He asked the Home Office to assist him in obtaining a British passport. That was passed to the high commissioner, who wrote on 5 March asking for further information relating to his claim.

The next paper on record is a file note dated 24 July 1984. Mr. Torkildsen had apparently visited the high commission and provided some family details. Further ancestry documents were required to substantiate his claim, and he left to make more inquiries. Supporting documentation in the form of copy passports and baptism certificates are held in the high commission records, with a note dated 29 September 1991. The note describes how Mrs. Frances and her two brothers qualified for British passports. The following day, 30 September, Mrs. Frances applied for and was issued with a British passport.

The British high commission in Islamabad cannot trace any papers for this family before 1981. All the inquiries on record there were initiated by Mrs. Frances's brother, James. It has nothing relating to direct inquiries from Mrs. Frances. Certainly, if my hon. Friend can provide me with copies of the correspondence from Mrs. Frances to support the claim of unreasonable delay, I shall ask for further inquiries to be made.

One thing that I must make very clear is that, because the British Nationality Act is so clear about the requirements that have to met for a claim to be established, there is a high reliance on documentary evidence. The outcome of a claim can be delayed if that evidence is not forthcoming. The onus is always on the claimant to provide sufficient documentary evidence to support the claim. If that is done reasonably quickly, there should be no reason for undue delay.

I now come to the events surrounding Kurt Frances. Those are the events leading up to my hon. Friend's involvement with him. To understand them more clearly, one has to know that entry to this country is by different paths. These paths determine the extent to which one might be permitted to stay here, whether one can live and work here, or is debarred from employment or state benefits.

Mr. Frances did not obtain permission to come to the United Kingdom to settle; he instead obtained an entry clearance as a visitor. It was only after his arrival here that he disclosed his desire to remain here permanently, and he is not entitled to do this. Mrs. Frances and her son may have been short of time because of the delay in establishing her British citizenship, but that should not have prevented a correct application being made—although to be fair it would have been unlikely to succeed.

Mr. Frances was born on 1 November 1973, and reached the age of 18 on 1 November 1991. He could have applied for entry clearance to the United Kingdom at any time up to his 18th birthday. Any difficulties Mrs. Frances had experienced would not have stopped her applying to bring her son to the United Kingdom after her passport was issued on 30 September 1991—a clear month before he attained the age of majority. Instead of applying for entry clearance, an application was made for a six months' visitor's visa. That was granted on 1 October, when he was still 17 years old. He stated on arriving here that he was on a two to three-month visit with his mother, who was a resident of Pakistan.

In January 1992, Mrs. Frances called at the Home Office to apply for permission for her son to live permanently in the United Kingdom. It was considered that Mr. Frances did not qualify for settlement, because he had been granted entry as a visitor and, as such, could not be treated as someone who had been granted leave to enter or remain in any capacity that could lead to settlement.

It was also apparent that, although Mr Frances had been studying in Pakistan, he was old enough to seek employment there. He was also of an age to adjust to adult life in Pakistan. His father and his unmarried sister live there, together with his elder brothers and their wives. They seemed from his own account to be socially and economically active.

There is some discretion in the application of immigration rules, and, having decided to refuse leave to remain in the United Kingdom, the Home Secretary can exercise that discretion in favour of applicants who do not meet the various requirements. To ensure that the immigration rules are not emptied of all meaning, discretion to overturn decisions made under the rules must be exercised sparingly. Sufficient compassionate and compelling factors could not be found to warrant the exercise of discretion in favour of letting Mr. Frances remain here to settle.

Mr. Frances appealed against refusal of leave to settle here, on the ground that his mother's application for a British passport was delayed by officials for more than 32 years. By the time he had applied for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom, he had attained the age of majority, and could no longer be treated as a dependent minor. However, that claim of injustice formed no active part of his case until my hon. Friend became involved. There was no mention of maladministration during the hearing of his unsuccessful appeal.

It was clear to the adjudicator that Mr. Frances had had no economic or emotional difficulties in Pakistan before he left, and that he had left not on account of any such difficulties, or any other difficulties, but only to accompany his mother to the United Kingdom on a visit and that he had a return ticket. The adjudicator tried to look at Mr. Frances's situation compassionately, but considered that, except for his mother, Mr. Frances had all his immediate family still in Pakistan. His family had been able, up to him coming to the United Kingdom, to support and accommodate him. The adjudicator was not satisfied that Mr. Frances would be living alone in Pakistan in the most exceptional compassionate circumstances, and accordingly dismissed the appeal. Although he had every sympathy with the case, he found that Mr. Frances just did not qualify to stay here under the immigration rules, and that the Secretary of State had acted correctly.

Mr. Frances has now exhausted his rights of appeal. He has no claim to remain here under the immigration rules and no entitlement to British citizenship. However, my hon. Friend and the House are obviously aware that I have only this week become responsible for the matters that we are discussing today.

I have taken careful note of the suggestion from my hon. Friend that the door should be ajar. I am certainly prepared to consider the points raised by my hon. Friend today, and indeed any further matters that he wishes to bring to my attention directly and quickly in support of Mr. Frances's case, but I hope that he will forgive me if I say that, from what I have seen of the case so far, I simply cannot see any grounds for allowing Mr. Frances to stay in the United Kingdom or to be given British citizenship.

The door may not be totally ajar, but there is a slight chink in it, and I would be delighted to see my hon. Friend on this matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 23 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Tilbury and Southend Line

1. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress made in privatising the London Tilbury and Southend line. [36458]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Sir George Young): Good progress is being made with the LTS rail franchise. The franchising director has short-listed bidders, and aims to award the franchise in December.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the bids for the franchise have to be in by Friday, will the Minister pull out all the stops to ensure that LTS becomes the first privatised line in the United Kingdom? LTS has been such a continuing disaster under British Rail control that it got the name of the misery line, so can my right hon. Friend give some information about the benefits that will accrue to the public? For example, what about the replacement rolling stock which is urgently required?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his staunch support of the Government's policy on privatisation. I can confirm that the franchising director has decided that the LTS line should be one of the first for which a contract will be let. I hope that the service will be up and running early next year and that the benefits of privatisation will shortly be apparent to my hon. Friend's constituents. For example, my hon. Friend will be aware that fare levels have been frozen in real terms as from January and that service levels will be guaranteed, which his constituents have not benefited from before. I understand that the details of the arrangements governing the provision of improved rolling stock will be agreed imminently with the leasing company. I hope that it will not be too long before the safety clearances are completed so that that new rolling stock can be on track.

Ms Short: Did the Minister see the report in *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday which said that City analysts believe that the sale of Railtrack before the spring or autumn of 1997 could lose public finances as much as £750 million? I am sure that the Minister will have noted that that estimate was not been made simply because City analysts expect a Labour Government, although they do—I warn anyone contemplating bidding for any part of the rail network that there will be no gravy train for fat cats out of that privatisation and that Labour intends that the rail system should remain in public ownership—but—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Ask a question.

Ms Short: I have already asked two questions.

Did the Minister note the serious criticism that the information provided to City analysts by his Department is so inadequate that they cannot properly value Railtrack? Will he give a solemn undertaking that it will not be sold cheaply before the election merely to fund a Tory tax cut?

Sir George Young: I welcome the hon. Lady to the Dispatch Box in her new role. I notice that the Opposition's entire transport team was so demolished by us during the debate on the railways last week that they had to be replaced and a fresh franchise secured.

As for receipts, we have not speculated about the proceeds that will be secured, but a full prospectus will of course be published in due course for those seeking to invest in Railtrack. I hope that at some point the hon. Lady will respond to the questions put to her predecessor on several occasions last week. How will the Opposition pay for their policy of buying back the railways? Will it be achieved through higher fares, higher taxes or higher borrowing?

Mr. Channon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that what he proposes for the London Tilbury and Southend line is extremely good? We are very pleased that that line will be one of the first, if not the first, to be franchised. For many years, there has been a great need for replacement rolling stock. I am glad that my right hon. Friend has said that it will be replaced, but could he give us some more detail?

Sir George Young: As my right hon. Friend may know, a number of Networker express units currently under construction by ABB Transportation are to be deployed on West Anglia's Great Northern services. That will permit what is called a "cascade" of 25 four-class 317 units to my right hon. Friend's constituency, which in turn will allow the scrapping some old class 302 units, which are more than 35 years old.

South Yorkshire Rapid Light Transit System

3. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the effect on local authority standard spending assessments of the South Yorkshire rapid light transit system. [36460]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Steve Norris): I answered a question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) on 22 May. I have had no more recent representations on this subject.

Mr. Illsley: The Minister will be aware that today Sheffield is celebrating the completion of the rapid light transit system, the supertram. In my constituency, which is part of the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority, there is considerable concern about the impact on local authority budgets of debt charges arising from the cost of the supertram system. Is the Minister aware that, despite the fact that the Government agreed fully to fund the system, the debt charges were allocated to the budget of the four authorities that make up the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority? The charges are having a considerable effect on the spending powers of the four authorities. I understand that discussions are taking place—

Mr. Sykes: Get on with it.

Mr. Illsley: Oh, shut up.

I understand that discussions with the Department are well advanced. Is the Minister able to give us any encouragement? Is he able to tell us whether the pressure on the standard spending assessments will be relieved for the forthcoming financial year?

Mr. Norris: I share the hon. Gentleman's pleasure that today marks the opening of the Hillsborough extension of the supertram system. I am pleased that it is now able to operate at its full potential. I understand that supertram is offering the residents of the area free travel for the next couple of days so that they can come to know what an excellent system is being offered.

I appreciate that there is concern about the way in which the financial arrangements impact on the capping levels of each of the member authorities of the passenger transport executive. The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter with me before. He will appreciate that it is a matter for negotiation between the local authorities and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

Dartford Bridge and Tunnel

4. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve access to both ends of the Dartford bridge and tunnel. [36461]

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): Major improvements were made in association with the opening of the Queen Elizabeth II bridge a few years ago.

We have a number of further proposals for improving access to the Dartford bridge and tunnel.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the bridge has been one of the Government's great success stories? In co-operation with the private sector, the bridge was built to relieve awful congestion at the Dartford tunnel. With the growth of developments in the area—Lakeside and now Bluewater, and the proposal that there should be a new depot at Ebbsfleet—it is reckoned by those who are running the bridge that congestion will return in three or four years. Does my hon. Friend consider that now is the time, while the bridge is making massive profits, which will soon return to the taxpayer, to reconsider the east London river crossing proposed for Woolwich, which would take a great deal of traffic and be another great Government success story?

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend will know that the east London river crossing is the subject of consultation. She is right to say that the Queen Elizabeth II bridge at Dartford is a wonderful example of a private finance initiative in operation.

RAF Northolt

5. **Sir Michael Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached about the sharing of runway capacity by civil aircraft at RAF Northolt; what discussions he has had with the Ministry of Defence on this matter; and if he will make a statement. [36462]

Sir George Young: Consultation with business aviation users this summer demonstrated a positive reaction to shared use of the newly commissioned facilities at RAF Northolt. As outlined in the 1995 competitiveness White Paper, my Department is currently working closely with the Ministry of Defence to identify further ways of enhancing the service offered.

Sir Michael Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is concern in my constituency that the sharing of runways at RAF Northolt could result in increased traffic noise? Will he give me an assurance that, in the event of sharing, there will be no increase in the permitted number of air traffic movements at Northolt?

Sir George Young: I am indeed aware of the local concern that my hon. Friend has expressed to Ministers in my Department on several occasions. The station continues to operate on the basis of 7,000 movements a year.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will there be any consultation with people in the locality with regard to further aircraft movements, particularly civil airline movements, because that part of London already suffers excessively from aircraft noise?

Sir George Young: Yes, of course; local opinion will be taken into account in connection with any plans to change the use of the airport.

Mr. Wilkinson: Local residents feel most strongly that the current limits should be maintained, as my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Sir M. Shersby) has said, and that the existing operating hours for civil air transport movements should be kept at 0800 to 2000, with no weekend operation.

Sir George Young: I am aware of the strong feelings in the area, which are well represented by my hon. Friend. As I said a few moments ago, we will, of course, ensure that local opinion is taken into account when we look at any future use of the airport.

Road Casualties

7. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to reduce road casualties. [36464]

Mr. Norris: The Department is currently considering, with other representative organisations, the next casualty reduction target and the measures needed to achieve it. The trend in fatalities and serious injuries is that they continue to fall. A package of measures is being introduced to improve the safety of newly qualified drivers and we have invited bids to participate in the safe town initiative.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister congratulate DHL, which recently removed all bull bars from its 300 vehicles? What assessment has he made of the Australian evidence that proves that bull bars represent an increased risk not only to pedestrians and cyclists but to those who are driving, and to passengers in vehicles with bull bars? Why does he not take action on the three practical steps outlined by Commissioner Kinnock from Europe, who said that the British Government could take steps to banish them? Why does he hesitate to remove these fatal fashion accessories?

Mr. Norris: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has chosen to express his interest in the subject of bull bars in the way that he has, because not only is his interest

entirely appropriate but I join him in congratulating a major company that has decided that an unnecessary fashion accessory that can also be dangerous is inappropriate in a responsible company. It is ludicrous of the hon. Gentleman, frankly, to describe the Government's attitude as being prepared to delay while Commissioner Kinnock rushes to the fore. All the proposals that the Commissioner has made rely on precisely the evidence of the survey, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are conducting into the incidence of bull bar-related accidents. He will appreciate that, to invoke any of the three measures that Commissioner Kinnock outlined in his letter to me, there is a precondition that we should have that evidence. I believe that bull bars, which make the fronts of vehicles less safe than they would otherwise be, should be removed without delay.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my hon. Friend carried out an examination of the possible impact on the number of road casualties in London of a strike on the London underground? Would he like to draw a contrast between his policy of upgrading the Northern line with that of certain trade unionists of disrupting traffic in London?

Mr. Norris: Sadly, my hon. Friend is entirely right. One of the many sad consequences for Londoners of disrupting underground services is that there will indeed be more congestion on London's roads and, indeed, inevitably more accidents. This underlines the futility of this kind of neanderthal action. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers is the only union not to have accepted London Transport's package. I hope that, even at this stage, it will see the wisdom of getting on with the job and keeping London moving in the way that any responsible trade union ought to be prepared to do.

Mr. Wigley: What progress is the Minister making on the vexed issue of cut and shut vehicles? He will recall that I brought a delegation to see him some months ago on that matter. It is extremely serious; vehicles that have been involved in accidents and should not be on the road are stitched together without any controlling mechanism. What progress does he expect to be made to control those very dangerous vehicles?

Mr. Norris: I wrote to the hon. Gentleman a couple of days ago and asked him to pass on a copy of my letter to Mr. George Austin, whom he brought to see me on this subject. It is indeed a serious matter. As the hon. Gentleman understood when we discussed it, there are some practical difficulties in implementing a system that identifies vehicles that have previously been involved in serious accidents, particularly when, for example, they may be insured only for third party and therefore the insurance company concerned is not notified when the vehicle is effectively written off.

Sadly, some of the initiatives suggested to us earlier have not proved effective, and the Association of Chief Police Officers, responding to some of our inquiries, has said that it is unhappy with some of our proposals. As I said in my letter to the hon. Gentleman, I therefore propose to continue to explore other ways in which we can deal with this serious problem.

Mr. Waterson: Is my hon. Friend familiar with research that suggests that, if we adopted double summer time, we could save more than 140 lives a year on the roads? Does he agree that the putting back of our clocks only yesterday ought to remind us that that opportunity is within our grasp?

Mr. Norris: The issue of summer time and double summer time interests a number of Departments. I speak only for the Department of Transport when I say that it is a simple matter of fact that allowing for more daylight in the way that my hon. Friend suggests has a demonstrable impact on accident statistics. For that reason, certainly, such action is to be encouraged.

Mr. Allen: No doubt the Minister, like other drivers, has felt a frisson of fear when overtaking or being overtaken by a heavy goods vehicle on the motorway lest its driver has put in far too many hours on the road. Did he read yesterday's article in *The Observer* which claimed that 200 deaths a year could be prevented if that danger were eliminated from our roads? Will he now end the Department's complacent attitude, and present proposals to ensure that tachographs cannot be tampered with? Will he also undertake some serious research into the effect of over-long hours on drivers who are forced to work those hours by bullying employers?

Mr. Norris: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the transport team as one who has managed to survive as a Front Bencher for longer than almost any other Member on either side of the House. It is a pleasure to see him join the ranks of the instant transport experts, one of whom he clearly considers himself to be.

The United Kingdom inspects more than twice the European average number of tachographs, because we are pre-eminent in the Community in recognising the problem of overtired drivers as extremely serious. The hon. Gentleman is right to identify it as a major source of accidents. Indeed, simply listing the number of fatal accidents that may have involved tachograph offences probably underestimates the true figure.

The hon. Gentleman should understand two points, however. First, the practice is much more widespread in all the other European countries, in which the issue prompts very much less interest. Secondly, only the very worst operator would recognise the description of the robber barons of the transport industry grinding drivers' faces into the dust. As the hon. Gentleman will come to recognise, being the fair man that he is, the standard of operators in this country is excellent.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware of the serious concern in my constituency about the safety record of the Birmingham A456 road from Kidderminster to Blakedown? There have been two fatalities on the road in the past 12 months, and the average speed at Blakedown—in a 30 mph area—was recently gauged at some 50 mph.

Is my hon. Friend aware that the problem would be alleviated by the construction of a Kidderminster-Blakedown-Hagley bypass? Does he realise that we have now been waiting for no less than 12 months for the Government to publish the inspector's report, and will he ensure that progress is speeded up?

Mr. Norris: I note my hon. Friend's observations, and acknowledge his consistent concern about the scheme on behalf of his constituents. I hope that he will appreciate that I can make no firm announcement today.

Woolwich Rail Tunnel

8. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the benefits of the proposed Woolwich rail tunnel. [36465]

Mr. Norris: London Transport, British Rail, Railtrack and the London Docklands development corporation continue to co-operate in their study of that proposed project and I await their further report with interest.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Will the Minister acknowledge that the proposed east London river crossing, if built, would produce increased congestion and pollution in the Woolwich, Belvedere and Plumstead regions, which already have some of the highest rates of asthma and respiratory illness in the south-east? Does he recognise that, in terms of economic regeneration, the Woolwich rail tunnel would provide enormous benefits to a region that has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the United Kingdom? In view of the support for the Woolwich rail tunnel—which is environmentally acceptable and cheaper to produce than the east London river crossing—of the London Docklands development corporation, London Underground, British Rail and local authorities, will he now get the Government to pull their finger out and start construction of that vital rail project?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to anticipate the outcome of the consultation exercise on east London river crossings in general, which was embarked on several months ago, and I cannot do so; nor can I anticipate the dedication of resources before considering the wider pattern that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will need to examine in the public expenditure settlement. As for the hon. Gentleman's point about the east London river crossing, he will know that we withdrew the original scheme for the long east London crossing, but that a number of other proposals, which interrelate in east London, are still on the table in the consultation document. There again, at this moment it would not be appropriate to pre-empt the conclusion of that consultation.

Mr. Evennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in my borough of Bexley, considerable support exists for that rail tunnel, that there is also, however, considerable support for additional road crossings between Tower bridge and the Dartford crossing, and that it is essential, if we are to develop the east Thames corridor-Thames gateway, to have them as soon as possible? When are we likely to have an announcement on those developments?

Mr. Norris: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have had a chance to consider all the consultation responses and to issue a further statement on this subject before the end of the year, but I note what my hon. Friend says. I fear that it is always convenient and, in a sense, something of an intellectual cop-out merely to assume that a public transport scheme, however desirable, will be able to absorb all the demand in a particular transport corridor. The consultation exercise points out—frankly, it is not a matter of great political disagreement—that a mixture of further access across the river will be necessary if the river is to cease to be an impediment to economic and social progress, and to be an asset.

West Coast Main Line

9. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress has been made on the west coast main line reinvestment project; and if he will make a statement. [36466]

Mr. Watts: The west coast main line modernisation programme is moving firmly forward. Tenders for the development of a new signalling system for the line have just been received by Railtrack. Railtrack expects to let a contract for the main modernisation works next year.

Mr. Banks: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and congratulate him and his colleagues at the Department on the work that they are doing in that regard. It is important that the work goes ahead as soon as possible. This is an important route that serves many communities and is so important to the business sector the length and breadth of the country, from Scotland to south England. Will he take this opportunity of telling the House how successful he has been in obtaining European moneys to add to the private finance initiative, and give me an assurance that he and his colleagues will deal with the present Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen in the same way that they dealt with the last lot?

Mr. Watts: On the latter point, we will do our best.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced during the monumental debate last Wednesday, the west coast main line upgrade project is one of the top priority projects in the trans-European network programme, being one of the Christopherson group, and we have secured a first-year allocation of £7 million from the TENs budget towards the—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Seven million pounds?

Mr. Watts: Seven million pounds is not to be sneered at. If the hon. Gentleman considers the total amount of money to be allocated to all the projects across the Union, he will find that the allocation for the west cost main line, plus the allocation for the channel tunnel rail link, are a fair share of resources for this country, as compared with other member states.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Would the Minister like to tell us simply how much has been spent—wasted—on privatisation up to this point?

Mr. Watts: No money has been wasted on privatisation.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that his announcement today about the signalling contracts and the full contract for the west coast main line upgrade will be welcome not only to my constituents but to constituents living up and down the route? Does he further agree that the successful completion of the project will once again demonstrate that the Government's policy of bringing in private sector finance to help upgrade the railways is vastly more successful than the policy that the Labour party would put in place, which would waste taxpayers' money?

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend is right. The signalling competition is being developed under the private finance initiative. In addition, the modernisation programme will bring major improvements in safety and reliability, the right quality and the capacity for more trains. The new

state-of-the-art signalling system will create potential for reductions in journey times and will, of course, provide automatic train protection.

Mr. Wilson: I am sure that the Minister agrees that services on the west coast main line depend on the reliability of the rolling stock. Will he confirm that the turnover last year of the three rolling stock companies was £800 million, with a profit of £450 million? Will not those companies have a guaranteed income stream for the next eight years? In those circumstances, does he recognise that it would be a monstrous fraud on the taxpayer if the rolling stock companies were sold for £1.5 billion, which is about half their true value? Does he accept my assurance that, under Labour, the rolling stock companies will be brought under the control of the regulator to prevent them from holding the rest of the industry to ransom?

Mr. Watts: I am confident that once the line has been upgraded there will be both operators wishing to operate the services on the line and rolling stock providers prepared to provide the necessary rolling stock.

North-west Main Line

11. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last travelled on the north-west main line. [36468]

Sir George Young: I travelled on the line to Blackpool on 9 October for what proved to be an excellent party conference.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is a funny old thing to say. Who would believe that? Will the Secretary of State have a word with British Rail and ask it to withdraw the rail passengers charter, in particular as it affects the west coast main line, so that timetables can be restored? Does he realise that, when the Government introduced the nonsense of the so-called charter, all that happened was that BR extended the journey times so that it did not have to pay compensation?

Sir George Young: I am genuinely surprise to hear the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the passengers charters should be removed. That is no part of our manifesto. Indeed, far from removing them, we want to improve them and drive up the standards so that railway passengers get an even better service under privatisation than they did under nationalisation.

Mr. Jenkin: Is not the best way to restore reliability and investment on the north-west line—and, indeed, across the whole railway system—to proceed as quickly as possible with privatisation? We no longer have questions about lack of investment in telephones, water, gas or electricity because those industries were privatised and they have access to the capital that they need—something that the amateur corporate financiers on the Opposition Front Bench would not understand.

Sir George Young: The whole House is grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he read the *Sunday Express* yesterday, as I hope Opposition Members did. It contained an interesting article by John Edmonds, Railtrack's chief executive, in which he said:

"It is unquestionable that rail privatisation will lead to more investment."

That is exactly what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Pike: The Secretary of State will know that the electric west coast main line does not go to Blackpool because the through train service has been discontinued. Does what he has just said mean that he is committed to ensuring that, when the west coast main line is upgraded, Blackpool has an electric train service running from London to Blackpool?

Sir George Young: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, it is a matter for the franchising director to decide whether to permit that service. However, I travelled via Preston, which is indeed on the west coast main line.

Mr. Brandreth: When my right hon. Friend next uses that excellent service, will he take the trouble to stop off at the city of Chester, where he will see the new improved station? He may realise that the station would have been improved some years ago, had it been privatised earlier, because the potential for investment in our railway stations is considerable. Will he also please pay tribute to the people who work on the line and are giving us an improved service of a very high standard despite the carping comments from the Opposition?

Sir George Young: Invitations from my hon. Friend to visit his constituency are difficult to resist. He invited me to visit the tax office in Chester when I was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and I am sure that my visit to his railway station will be every bit as exciting as my visit to his tax office.

Public Transport, Manchester

13. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about public transport in Greater Manchester. [36470]

Mr. Norris: Public transport in Greater Manchester is primarily a matter for the local authorities and transport operators concerned. Subject to financial constraints, the Government will continue to consider funding worthwhile public transport schemes in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister will appreciate that there has been great difficulty maintaining a reliable bus service in the Ashton and Denton areas of my constituency because of the problems of traffic spilling off the M66, which at present stops in my constituency rather than continuing to Oldham. My constituents had been hoping that the motorway would be completed so that pressure on ordinary roads would be relieved. Can the Minister assure the House that the rumours circulating in Tameside to the effect that there are to be further delays with that motorway are ill founded?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to mention to me the nature of his question shortly before Question Time began. From the inquiries that I have been able to make, I can confirm that progress on the M66 contracts is proceeding normally, so I do not believe that there is any foundation for the rumours that the hon. Gentleman may have heard.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend the Minister surprised that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) did not mention the tens of millions of pounds of investment by the Government in Manchester in support of its 2002 Commonwealth games and Olympic games bids? Does he not accept—

Madam Speaker: Order. Had the hon. Gentleman done so, he would have strayed far from the question and I would have stopped him.

Mr. Fabricant: But is not it a consequence of that investment that the tram system and other public transport systems now operate in Manchester?

Mr. Norris: Rushing to the aid of my hon. Friend, I entirely agree that the £140 million investment in the Manchester Metrolink has substantially improved the public transport scene there and put it in an even more agreeable position than heretofore to mount a very credible Olympic bid.

Madam Speaker: I call Question 14.

Mr. Harry Greenway: What happened to Question 12?

Madam Speaker: Question 12 has been withdrawn.

Mr. Wilkinson: I should like to raise that matter on a point of order after Question Time, Madam Speaker.

European Union Transport Networks

14. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet his European Union counterparts to discuss the improvement of European Union transport networks. [36471]

Sir George Young: I plan to attend the Transport Council on 7 and 8 December at which I would expect progress with the development of trans-European transport networks to be discussed.

Mr. Griffiths: When the Secretary of State attends that meeting, will he press the very strong claims being made in south and north Wales to complete the European transport networks, which are currently under threat due to privatisation? Will he also give a commitment that there will be high quality rail services from our west Wales ports to Europe?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to accept the premise on which he based his question—that privatisation poses some threat to the railway service in Wales. Having put that on one side, however, I assure him that I shall of course fight the United Kingdom's corner in the discussions as hard as I can. It is worth pointing out that of the 14 priority projects endorsed by the Essen European Council, four are projects in which the United Kingdom has an interest. As for the future programme, the hon. Gentleman is entitled to suggest some of the networks to which he referred as they are eligible under the TENs framework.

Sir Alan Haselhurst: In discussions with his counterparts in Europe, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the importance of the A120 as a strategic network? Is he aware that the dualling of that road is badly needed, not only for traffic travelling from the east coast ports, but to serve the airport at Stansted.

Sir George Young: I am happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that I am well aware of the strategic importance of the road to which he has referred.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Is the Minister aware that my colleague Robin Teverson, a Member of the European Parliament, persuaded the European Parliament to make rail links through to the west country, Exeter and Penzance the highest European priority for investment, bringing in European funding towards those improvements? It is understood, however, that Ministers are opposing that inclusion. Given that Ministers need to approve the inclusion, will the right hon. Gentleman argue for the improvement that the west country needs?

Sir George Young: My understanding of the situation is somewhat different from the hon. Gentleman's interpretation. My understanding is that at the June Transport Council the Government put forward the addition of both the Waterloo-Exeter rail line and the Taunton-Reading line to the draft trans-European networks. Those additions were approved by the European Commission and by the Council of Ministers.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many statisticians are employed by the National Audit Office. [36502]

Sir Peter Hordern (representing the Public Accounts Commission): I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 19 June at columns 15-16. The numbers have increased marginally since then. Thirty of the staff of the National Audit Office have degrees in statistics or mathematics, and there are nine full-time professional statisticians or operational researchers.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend join me in praising the quality of the work of the National Audit Office? Does he believe that the office has sufficient powers to check the accounts of agencies and organisations such as the national lottery, which disburses large sums of public money?

Sir Peter Hordern: Yes, I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend. The Public Accounts Commission and the House are extremely grateful to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the National Audit Office for the work that it does on our behalf. At present, the NAO is responsible for the audit of about half the executive non-departmental bodies. Both the Commission and the Public Accounts Committee are in favour of its being responsible for the audit of all of them and are making representations to that effect.

On the last part of my hon. Friend's question, I understand that the Public Accounts Committee would like to have the right of access to Camelot. The difficulty appears to be that the Department of National Heritage may not have the right to give it permission to do so. However, I understand that Camelot is happy to have conversations with the NAO to see how that might be done.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Llwyd. The hon. Gentleman rose earlier to put a supplementary question. Does he now wish to do so?

Mr. Llwyd: The point that I wished to make has been made, so I shall not ask the question.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that there are reports in today's paper that the Secretary of State for Social Security may introduce legislation to enable bailiffs to track down over-payment of benefits, will the Chairman seek an urgent meeting with the head of the National Audit Office and the Secretary of State to find out why the Benefits Agency makes mistakes of the order of £600 million per year? Should the bailiffs not be put on the Benefits Agency rather than the claimants?

Sir Peter Hordern: I think that that would go beyond the work of the NAO. It is certainly true, however, that the NAO has the right of access to the Department of Social Security and no doubt will continue to uncover such faults. As for the activities of bailiffs, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to table a question to the appropriate Ministry.

31. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many inquiries were undertaken by the National Audit Office in the last 12 months. [36503]

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office achieved its planned level of 50 published reports to Parliament in 1994-95, as well as a wide range of additional outputs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not about time that the National Audit Office found a way to look at organisations such as Nirex, which has so miserably failed in its research programmes? As that organisation is, in effect, owned by the general public, in so far as it has mucked up its research programme and in so far as the project that it is now promoting in the county of Cumbria is a waste of money and is upsetting the wider public, should not the NAO be allowed to move in?

Sir Peter Hordern: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will make his own point in his own way. In terms of the National Audit Office, I can at least give him this comfort. If the body concerned is a non-departmental executive body, the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts Commission are agreed that the National Audit Office should be responsible for its audit. To that limited extent only, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I do not, however, agree with his other remarks because I have no idea whether they are right or not. I strongly suspect that they are not.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Papers

33. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what plans he has to ensure sufficient financial provision to make parliamentary papers more readily available to the public. [36489]

Mr. A. J. Beith (representing the House of Commons Commission): Negotiations have been proceeding in recent months between the House authorities and Her Majesty's Stationery Office on a new agreement for the printing and publication of House documents. One of the objectives of the negotiations has been to achieve significant price reductions to the public. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the price of the weekly *Hansard* was reduced from £22 to £12 from 6 June this year at no additional cost to the House.

Mr. Bayley: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that an effective democracy demands freedom of information about what happens in Parliament and that £12 a week is way beyond the means of most ordinary people? Does he agree that the cost of parliamentary documents, even if they are falling substantially in price, is way beyond what ordinary people can pay and that this simply increases the power and influence of mercenary commercial lobbyists? Will he seek to make information much more readily available to the public, perhaps by making documents free of charge to public libraries?

Mr. Beith: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the dissemination of information is of the greatest importance in a democracy. Significant progress was made by the Commission and the scale of the reduction, especially when it was at no cost, was quite large. There is also a discount scheme which further reduces the cost to public libraries of having the information available. I hope that public libraries will continue to stock *Hansard*. Some are declining to do so on the ground of space rather than of cost. The Select Committee on Information is looking at many aspects of the matter, including the more electronic means of disseminating information, and the Commission will be ready to consider the advice that it receives.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The right hon. Gentleman has almost answered the question that I am about to put on the electronic dissemination of documents. Has he been able to establish what it would cost to allow Internet access to parliamentary electronic documents and does he intend to put forward a time scale for when this could come about?

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission has not had any detailed discussions about the possibilities of using the Internet in that way. The Information Committee is, I understand, considering it, as is a working party of officials. I know that the matter is of great interest to many hon. Members. The Commission will certainly want to consider the advice it receives as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Cycling

15. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the Government are taking to make it easier for people to cycle to work. [36472]

Sir George Young: We have taken a number of initiatives, building on the Government's policy statement last year. The most recent is our £2 million cycle challenge competition, which is designed to generate new ideas and partnerships capable of widespread application in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Khabra: Does the Secretary of State agree that this country has the lowest percentage of cyclists compared with our European counterparts and that there is, therefore, much more to be done? However much the Government blow their own trumpet about the difference that £44 million from the millennium fund will make, that is no substitute for real action across the country through Department of Transport spending. I hope that the Secretary of State, as a well-known cycling enthusiast, will back up his words with action. If he is really concerned, will he consider making new money available from his Department's budget to make cycling available to people in all our villages, towns and cities?

Sir George Young: I agree with the beginning of the hon. Gentleman's question: there is scope to increase the percentage of journeys travelled by bicycle in this country, as the percentage in many other European countries is far higher than in the United Kingdom. So far as policy is concerned, the hon. Gentleman will know that we are bringing forward a national strategy for cycling in concert with a wide range of other interested parties. On resources, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the very welcome contribution from the millennium fund, and the Department is supporting the national cycle network—particularly where it crosses roads owned or managed by the Department. On local authority investment, we are promoting the package approach by local authorities, and I shall certainly look for transport policies which make fuller provision for cycling so that the potential for cycling is unlocked.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are many ways to heaven? Will he legislate to enable people wishing to ride a horse to work to use cycle paths?

Sir George Young: This exchange has so far been exclusive to Members representing the London borough of Ealing, but I am sure that the interest in cycling goes far wider. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I say that I will take note of his suggestion about the greater use of cycle paths by horses; perhaps I may write to him when I have completed some extensive research into the possibility of combined use.

Buses, South Yorkshire

16. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the effect of bus deregulation in south Yorkshire. [36473]

Mr. Norris: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on having left a steaming cup of tea when he realised that Transport Question Time never ends—it is merely interrupted.

Deregulation has brought great benefits to bus travellers in south Yorkshire. There are now more operators providing more bus miles and better services. Competition has led to lower fares and new buses on some routes. Substantial savings in bus revenue support are still being made.

Mr. Betts: There must be two south Yorkshires in this country, because the reality is that bus fares have gone up five times since deregulation, there is no timetable to which anyone can refer and whole sections of the community are left without transport after 6 pm and at weekends. The buses on the road look more tired and worn out than Government Ministers and while there are 40 per cent. more buses in service, 40 per cent. fewer people are riding on them since deregulation. Is not the transport policy a shambles? Should not the Government give powers back to the transport authority to enable it to integrate services, not least with the supertram system which is now in competition rather than co-ordination with the bus services?

Mr. Norris: No. The reality is that subsidies have been halved, operating costs reduced by one third and the mileage run increased by nearly one third, all of which represents a substantial improvement on the previous appallingly overregulated local authority system. I can understand why that system might appeal to the hon. Gentleman and to his hon. Friends, and he is obviously prepared to ignore last week's news that Stagecoach has just ordered 1,000 brand new buses to buttress the considerable success that it, among many other bus companies, is having throughout the country. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends simply never want to see success. The bus industry is a huge success and—thank goodness—that will continue under the Government.

Traffic, London

17. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest assessment of the percentage of traffic within Greater London carried by (a) road, (b) rail and (c) river. [36474]

Sir George Young: In 1993, 80 per cent. of freight lifted in Greater London was carried by road, 16 per cent. by river and 4 per cent. by rail.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is it not regrettable that one of the least used highways in our congested capital is the River Thames? Is my right hon. Friend prepared to make a mark in his new role—perhaps to mark the millennium—by supporting proposals submitted to him by me with the Transport On Water organisation for a series of piers along the river like a string of pearls to facilitate a regular river-borne passenger traffic service before the year 2000?

Sir George Young: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that I will look at the imaginative proposition that he has put to us. I assume that it was piers rather than peers that he had in mind. I agree entirely with what he said at the beginning of his question: we must unlock the potential of the Thames as an important transport network and do better than we have done so far. My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that total freight lifted on the Thames increased by 8 per cent. from 1993 to 1994.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Given the huge imbalance between the amount of freight carried on London's roads and that carried by other means, why have the Government lifted the London lorry ban, which at least managed to keep some heavy goods vehicles off residential routes? If there is a commitment to using our river to transport heavy freight, why do the Government insist that millions of tonnes of London's waste which is normally carried on the river must be taken off that route and put back on the roads?

Sir George Young: I understand that we have not lifted the London lorry ban. The decision by Westminster council to transport most of its waste by road rather than river was disappointing. From 16 September, two thirds of the waste will be transported by road to the incinerator at Lewisham. It is worth pointing out, however, that it will be used there to generate heat and power. The remaining third—some 50,000 tonnes per year—will continue to be transported by barge and on to landfill.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Standing Order No. 143

35. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received about

the operation of Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from House). [36492]

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): None, but my hon. Friend may wish to draw any concerns that he may have to the attention of the Procedure Committee.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the mechanism of "I spy Strangers" either does not or should not have any useful purpose in this day and age? Does not this archaic procedure, which is inexplicable to the general public, lower the reputation of the House and should it not be abolished without further ado?

Mr. Newton: Leaving aside any views that I might have on that matter, one view that I strongly hold is that changes to the procedures of the House are best made after proper consideration by the Procedure Committee and consultation through the usual channels. I know when I am getting into dangerous water, so I will refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Winnick: As the procedure in question is a way for Opposition Back Benchers from time to time to cause difficulties for the Government, does the Leader of the House agree that in the next Parliament it is far more likely to be used by Tory Back Benchers than by Labour ones?

Mr. Newton: It has already been used, I believe, once in the current Session, by a Tory Back Bencher sitting not very far from me in a new capacity. However, I do not want to take any party position on the matter, which is for all of us to consider as good Members of the House of Commons.

Divisions

36. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Divisions there were in the House between January and 19 July 1995 and in the comparable period in 1994. [36494]

Mr. Newton: The number of Divisions in the House between 10 January 1995 and 19 July 1995 was 185. That period covered 116 sitting days. The number of Divisions in the House between 11 January 1994 and 21 July 1994 was 246. That period covered 118 sitting days, including an extended period during which the usual channels were blocked.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Leader of the House accept that what has really happened is that the House of Commons sits for a smaller number of hours and the result is that there have been fewer Divisions? Does it not also indicate that there is not so much clear blue water between the two Front Benches? Perhaps in future he will remind all the speakers at the Tory party conference that the clear blue water looks a bit purple at the present time.

Mr. Newton: I readily accept that there is even more clear blue water between the Government Front Bench and the Bench below the Gangway on which the hon. Gentleman sits than between the Government and Opposition Front Benches. What I suspect is also revealed is that there is a lot of clear red blue water in the Gangway.

Mr. Jenkin: May I ask my right hon. Friend to do a little further analysis of those figures? Will he enumerate the occasions on which the official Opposition Front Bench has voted against measures to try to reduce crime, to reduce Britain's competitiveness and to increase public expenditure? Will he also analyse how often the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has actually voted against the wishes of the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Newton: I think in both cases the answer is probably that the occasions are too numerous to recall.

Electronic Information Services

38. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to provide more information from his Department to the parliamentary data and video network and to improve electronic information services for hon. Members and the public. [36496]

Mr. Newton: The parliamentary data and video network is a private network exclusively for the use of the Houses of Parliament. Public access is expressly not permitted. As part of the recently installed Internet link, however, plans are in hand for the provision of a public World Wide Web server, which would allow access by the general public to limited information. Possibilities for future developments on the data and video network are considered by the relevant staff Committees of both Houses, together with the House of Commons Information Committee and the House of Lords Library and Computer Sub-Committee.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. He will have noted that I specifically asked about Members' services as well as access for the public. I welcome the fact that the public will be able to obtain more information on the Internet. However, as we are spending a large amount of public money putting in a network for the use of Members and their staff, would it not be better to move very quickly ahead with getting as much information as possible about what is happening in the House on to the parliamentary data and video network so that we can cut out an awful lot of the paper currently being created day by day?

Mr. Newton: I find myself quite in sympathy with that as a general proposition. However, as I have said, those matters would need to be considered by the appropriate Committees of the House.

Mr. Wilkinson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—relating to Question Time.

Madam Speaker: We have a statement first. I shall, of course, come back to the hon. Gentleman.

Oral Contraceptives

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to a make a statement about the steps taken last week to inform women of the latest evidence about the safety of some oral contraceptives.

In July this year, information was brought to the attention of the Medicines Control Agency by the World Health Organisation which appeared to show an increased risk of thrombosis associated with certain oral contraceptive pills. That information was discussed at a meeting with the World Health Organisation in Geneva on 10 and 11 July. The Medicines Control Agency immediately concluded that further evidence was necessary to test the preliminary conclusions from the work carried out by WHO.

The Medicines Control Agency was aware of another study on the same issue being carried out by Professor Spitzer, and requested accelerated analysis of his data. It also agreed with Professor Jick that he should conduct a further study using evidence from United Kingdom general practitioners.

Information from the studies conducted by Professor Jick and Professor Spitzer became available in early October. These data led the Medicines Control Agency to convene a special meeting of the Government's independent expert advisory body, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, for 13 October. That committee advised:

"there is an urgent need to communicate the new evidence and appropriate recommendations to the professions and to the public prior to publication of the evidence."

On 16 October, Ministers accepted the advice of the committee, and asked the Medicines Control Agency to make arrangements to release the advice later in the week.

The following arrangements were therefore put in place by the MCA. First, letters were dispatched on Wednesday 18 October by first-class mail to 190,000 doctors and pharmacists. Secondly, every director of public health was contacted during working hours on Wednesday and told that he or she would receive important health information through the chief medical officer's Epinet electronic communication system overnight and asked to make arrangements to disseminate it to GPs and relevant hospital doctors immediately. That aspect of the communication arrangements reflects the method of urgent communication between the Department and doctors that we have agreed with the British Medical Association. Thirdly, faxes were sent directly to hospital drug information pharmacists.

Against that background, the Medicines Control Agency planned a public announcement on Thursday afternoon in order to allow doctors and pharmacists time to assimilate the information being provided to them. However, the first inquiries from the electronic media were received in the Department at around 9 am on Thursday. The Medicines Control Agency therefore decided to bring forward the public announcement to midday in order to ensure that a properly balanced message was made immediately available.

The key points of that message are the same today as they were last Thursday: first, that the increased risk of thrombosis from taking the seven relevant brands of pill remains roughly half the risk of thrombosis associated with pregnancy; secondly, that women who are taking one of the seven relevant brands should continue to do so until they have seen their GP or family planning doctor.

The Government have a duty to evaluate information on the safety of medicines as soon as it is available, and to ensure that doctors and their patients are in possession of the information necessary to allow them to make informed choices about their own health. That is what we have done. Such information inevitably involves extra work load for professionals, and I am most grateful to those who responded over the past weekend to the extra work load that has unavoidably been placed upon them.

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): I thank the Secretary of State for coming to the House and making his statement. He will be aware that I do not seek to question the judgment of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, and that I entirely accept that, as a lay person, he must accept its advice. If it advises that three new studies must be acted on, he had no option but to act.

I should like the right hon. Gentleman to deal with two points that are his responsibility: first, what happened last week; and secondly, what action he will take in the future. Is not the heart of problem the fact that over 1 million women were told that they must seek advice about a serious risk to their health, but that the doctors to whom they turned for advice were themselves in the dark?

Does the right hon. Gentleman admit that it was wholly unsatisfactory that GPs and doctors in family planning clinics were not informed in advance, and had to base advice to their women patients on what they saw on Thursday's news and read in Friday's papers? Does he agree that GPs are right to be angry that they had to rely for medical advice on page 2 of *The Guardian* and the BBC's "Nine O'clock News"? Would it not have been possible, in this age of information technology, to ensure that GPs got the information ahead of the press, or, at the very least, at the same time?

The press conference was planned for Thursday, but some doctors had still not received notification by the end of Friday. The notification was so slow that some doctors are calling it "snail mail". The Epinet urgent procedure, to which the Secretary of State referred in his statement, is supposed to notify doctors on the next working day after it is activated; that did not happen. Will the right hon. Gentleman agree to review its operation?

Does the right hon. Gentleman admit that the Department of Health also woefully underestimated the number of calls to the helpline, which was swamped with calls and engaged all day on Friday?

The Secretary of State has just told the House that the Government have a duty to ensure that doctors and their patients are in possession of the information necessary to allow them to make informed choices about their own health. That did not happen; last week, the Government failed in that duty. What action is the right hon. Gentleman going to take to make sure that this does not happen again?

Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that, although he has been saying all weekend—and is saying again to the House today—that he is satisfied with what happened, GPs have been saying all weekend, and are saying again today, that they are not? As it is they who are the front line to whom patients who have been alerted

must turn, is it not essential that GPs have confidence in the system? Will he, at the very least, undertake a review, and agree procedures that restore the trust of GPs?

Finally, I would like to join the right hon. Gentleman in thanking all the doctors, nurses and other health staff who, although completely taken by surprise, laid on extra telephone lines and clinics throughout the weekend, printed their own leaflets for their patients and generally worked their socks off. Our GPs and their patients deserve better than the complacency and incompetence that the Government have shown.

Mr. Dorrell: All my hon. Friends will join me in welcoming the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) to her new responsibilities. I am grateful for the fact that she does not question the advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines. In that, at least, I entirely agree with her. We are dealing with serious information concerning the health of women. We are dealing not with the stuff of party politics but with matters that people care about, which directly affect people's lives.

The hon. Lady says that not every GP knew at the ideal moment to give advice to his or her patients. I concede that that is true, and recognise that, after any incident of this kind, we must ensure that the arrangements are reviewed to learn any lessons available to be learned.

But the hon. Lady offered me no suggestions from the Dispatch Box about how the arrangements could be further improved. She did not respond to the fact that the arrangements planned for Thursday demonstrated that we expected to be able at least to have the morning for GPs and other doctors and pharmacists to assimilate the information made available to them. The Secretary of State for Health simply cannot carry on a cosy correspondence with 190,000 health professionals. These are issues in which the public have a legitimate interest, and it is neither possible nor desirable to carry on that correspondence in private.

The hon. Lady offered no method whereby I can ensure that professionals are briefed before their patients come to see them. She talked about electronic communication—we used it; she talked about prompt use of the mail and faxes—we used them. All those procedures were used. We shall ensure that any lessons are learned, but let us not imagine that we can deliver such information to GPs and health professionals in an orderly fashion hours before their patients come to see them. That is not the real world.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): May I thank my right hon. Friend for issuing that information as soon as he received it? Had he not done so, he would, quite legitimately, have been accused of a cover-up. Does he accept that, once he knew that there had been yet another leak—goodness knows where it came from—and that the media knew about it, he had no option but to hold a press conference? We all thank him for dealing with the matter as he did.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Obviously, I agree with her. I am encouraged when I consider what the hon. Member for Peckham would have said at the Dispatch Box today, had the impression got around that the Government were somehow sitting on that information without making it available promptly to every professional and patient with a legitimate interest in the availability of the information. My first duty was to make it promptly available to every person who had a right to know.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Although I readily acknowledge that the Secretary of State found himself in a difficult position and did what he thought was right, will he give the House the benefit of his comment on Dr. Bogle, chairman of the British Medical Association's General Medical Services Committee, who remarked:

"I see no reason as to why the profession could not have been alerted to the potential risks of these drugs well before alarmist statements were issued to the press"?

In that context, although Dr. Bogle's comment may not be justified, will the Secretary of State undertake to consult the profession to ensure that such issues can be dealt with more professionally in future, including the need for doctors who receive information to maintain confidentiality so far as possible for whatever time is needed?

To reassure women following this episode, will the right hon. Gentleman embark on a campaign of public information about contraception and the risks associated with it, including the problems arising from different types of contraceptive and further information on the much higher risk of taking oral contraceptives and smoking at the same time?

Mr. Dorrell: The responsibility for reaching clinical judgments about which contraceptives satisfy the standards required by law rests on me, subject to the advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines. I do not propose to seek to interfere in its assessment of clinical risk. It is qualified to make such assessments, and its advice is that on which any sensible Secretary of State will rest.

The hon. and learned Gentleman asked me to look again at the procedures and to learn lessons. Of course it is true that we have a continuing dialogue with the medical profession and with pharmacists. We will seek to learn any lessons that are to be learned, but the hon. and learned Gentleman cannot get away with quoting Dr. Bogle and then seeking to distance himself from Dr. Bogle's remarks.

The question for the hon. and learned Gentleman is whether he agrees with the view he attributes to Dr. Bogle. Does he think that it is possible for us to carry on a correspondence with Dr. Bogle and the medical fraternity in secret from their patients, or does he recognise that, in the real world, information on such issues is almost bound to be provided simultaneously to health professionals and their patients? That is the real world in which we live, and it would be nice to have a clear answer to that question from the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I assure my right hon. Friend that he has the full support of the Conservative party for the action he took, and for coming to the House as soon as he possibly could to make a statement. Once furnished with the information, he clearly had a duty to bring it into the public domain. Once that information had been leaked, he had no alternative either but to call a press conference.

Can my right hon. Friend assure me that he took every possible step, not only via the mail, but through electronic or other means, to communicate with all those who should

[Mr. Roger Sims]

have had the information? If those lines of communication were subject to delay by some means or another, can he assure me that the fault does not lie with him?

Mr. Dorrell: I told the House about the steps we took to draw the relevant information to the attention of health professionals and their patients. I believe that we took all the steps that were open to us to make that information efficiently and promptly available. I have given the House the only rational answer: following an incident of this nature, we will, of course, review what happened and learn any lessons that are available to be learned.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Does the Secretary of State think it might have been better if he had come here this afternoon and said sorry for the real distress he caused to many millions of women who were absolutely frightened out of their lives by a half-perceived threat? When obvious chaos and consternation has been caused, is it not a Minister's responsibility to come to the House to say that he will ensure that that does not happen in future, and to apologise to the doctors and, above all, to the women concerned?

Mr. Dorrell: As for the hon. Lady's proposition that millions of women were upset and rang up to seek advice, I can give the hon. Lady the relevant figures. We set up an information service to make available the information to all affected women, in fact to anyone who rang us up over the weekend.

Ms Harman: The line was engaged.

Mr. Dorrell: I heard the hon. Lady try to ring up that line when she appeared on "The World Tonight" on Friday night, but it was engaged. The problem for her was that the presenter had rung up before her appearance and had got through, so that tack did not work so well. As for callers seeking information, on Saturday 1,174 calls were received, and on Sunday 1,658 calls were received. This morning, I took the precaution of asking about the tone of the women who rang, and I was told, frankly, that they were a great deal more calm and more sensible than many of the people who have commented on the subject in the past few days.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Family Planning Association, to which many women turn in such circumstances, said that there was very little panic, and that women were asking simple and sensible questions? It said that my right hon. Friend behaved perfectly sensibly in making the information known. As has been said several times, the panic was on the part of members of the Labour party and the press in pursuit of some story to fill their papers on a Friday afternoon.

Mr. Dorrell: I agree entirely. The evidence, not just the impression, is clear; most women, when given information about the health risks associated with oral contraceptives, understood the message clearly. The message was straightforward. It was that the thrombosis risk associated with pregnancy is almost exactly twice the thrombosis risk associated with the seven brands of pill.

It clearly follows, first, that a woman on a course of these pills is better advised to continue to take them, as the Committee on Safety of Medicines said. Secondly, she should continue to take them until she has have received advice from her doctor, general practitioner or family planning doctor. Those were the messages that were put out on Thursday. The evidence is that they were understood by almost every affected woman. The only people who seem to have difficulty understanding them are a few commentators, some of whom are in the Chamber now.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): May I assure the Secretary of State that the women who contacted me in Halifax were not in the category that he has described? Will he accept that women were confused and frightened when Professor Spitzer came from Canada to reassure women that everything was all right, and then the Committee on Safety of Medicines said that there was a slight risk?

Would it not be in the best interests of all women if they were given a clear answer and complete reassurance about taking the pills in question? Never mind messing about with statistics and saying that it is safer if women do not get pregnant. Surely it would be better if the pills were withdrawn if there is any risk to women's health.

Mr. Dorrell: The thrombosis risk associated with pregnancy is a relevant consideration if we are talking about a contraceptive pill. Professor Spitzer must account for himself. My responsibility is to form my own judgment, based on the evidence available to me from the Government's independent advisory committee. The hon. Lady describes it as confusing, but the evidence is that most women do not find it confusing. There is a clear piece of advice from which I quoted. It was given to me by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. That led the Government to act, and I believe that the Government were right to act.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My right hon. Friend was right to castigate the Opposition for putting fears among people about a perceived threat. He is right that the matter is far too serious for political slandering, which the Opposition are doing. I believe that the evidence that has been made available is still in the hands of the Department of Health. Will he make the evidence available to other medical experts and to the manufacturing companies involved, which are still very much in the dark about it? They should be told, and should be able to make their own defence, if need be.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. Arrangements are being made for publishing all three of the courses of evidence on which the advice was based. I remind the House that our decision of last week was based on the explicit advice of the CSM that there was an urgent need to communicate the new evidence and appropriate recommendations to the professions and the public prior to the publication of the evidence.

The reason for that was to ensure that the advice was available promptly, and that it did not filter out as a result of the publication of a scientific paper in a scientific journal. The key priority is to ensure that the conclusions from that data are acted upon by health professionals. The data themselves will follow at the appropriate time in the appropriate place.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Surely the Secretary of State is aware that general practitioners and family planning clinics, for more than

25 years, have been scrupulous in inquiring into a patient's family history. If there has been any history of thrombosis, blood clotting or varicose veins, they have advised against, and in many instances refused to prescribe, oral contraceptives. Therefore, the statement that referred to seven such drugs caused especial concern among women who believed that they were not at any risk because of their genetic make-up.

It would seem that the Department of Health was lamentable in not realising that, in placing an embargo on any sort of press release and in not involving the press, it was failing to make it clear that there was perhaps no real reason for panic among the majority of women.

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with the last comment that the hon. Lady made: that there is no need to panic. I ask the House to consider what the reaction in the House this afternoon would have been—and, I venture to suggest, that of the hon. Lady—if there had been a report in the Sunday papers to the effect that the Government had received the advice from which I have quoted from the Committee on Safety of Medicines and had decided to ask for am embargo. I wonder how many newspapers would have observed at my request an embargo on information of that nature about the safety of women.

Ms Jackson: Did you ask them?

Mr. Dorrell: No, I did not, and I do not expect that any newspaper editor would have acceded to the request if it had been made.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Is this not a classic case, in which my right hon. Friend is damned if he does something and damned if he does not? On balance, would he not prefer to be damned by the men and women of straw on the Opposition Benches, whose fitness *[Laughter.]*—unfitness—for government becomes daily more apparent?

Mr. Dorrell: I think that what my hon. Friend meant was their relative fitness for government.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We are faced this afternoon with the fact that some Members of the House who have read a few newspaper reports over the weekend are looking for a way of causing trouble by allowing the story to run. What we have heard from none of them is a considered view about what it is right for the Government to do in circumstances in which they have been given advice of this nature. Not one of the hon. Members on the Opposition Benches has offered a conclusion to that question.

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): If I may assist the Secretary of State in two regards, it seems to me that one thing that went wrong last week in the handling of what has become a panic was that the GPs, who were to be the first port of call for the women who were taking one of the seven brands of pills, were informed of the dangers in the least effective way. What I fail to understand, and I ask the Secretary of State to consider this, is why he did not use electronic mail or faxes to communicate with those GPs. [HON. MEMBERS: "He did."] He did not; he wrote to them. That was in his statement.

What further steps are being taken to ensure that all the women who take one of those seven brands of pill will be written to, so that they can have a consultation with their GP to see what appropriate action should be taken for them?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Lady asked me about the use of fax and electronic mail to communicate to GPs—and, indeed, to other hospital doctors and pharmacists; we are not just talking about GPs. Yes, we did use faxes and electronic communication to GPs, because the approved system for cascading the results of the electronic communication from directors of public health to GPs is to use faxes where GPs have faxes, which is not in every case.

Fax machines were used. Electronic communication was used. First-class mail was used. The hon. Lady has not suggested a form of communication that was not used. However, I repeat to the House that we will, of course, consider the experience of the past few days, and if there are lessons to be learned, we shall learn them.

As regards communications between doctors and their patients about the conclusions to be drawn from this evidence and the way in which women should react to the evidence that was made available last week, that is primarily a matter between the doctor and the patient. The information is now in the public domain, and the advice has been given clearly that women should consult their GP or family planning doctor before embarking on the next cycle of any one of these seven brands of pill. The advice has also been clear that, if for any reason that is not possible, the health interests of the woman are best served by starting the next cycle of the same pill.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): Does my right hon. Friend agree, in the light of what he just said about communication, that the bogus waffle from Opposition Members should not be allowed to overshadow the real achievements of last week, including the ability to dispatch simultaneously 190,000 letters from the Medicines Control Agency, and should it not be congratulated and praised for that?

Mr. Dorrell: I agree with my hon. Friend. A number of different communication modes were used, and the fact that they were all used together and over the same extremely short period is a tribute to the commitment and professionalism of the MCA and the people who work in it.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): The Secretary of State asked for practical suggestions of what could be done to make such situations easier to manage if they occurred again in future. Given the present state of medical infomatics, there is no reason in principle why all GPs should not be able to use their computers to dial into an electronic database—basically, an electronic British National Formulary—which would give them the most up-to-date information.

Having spoken to both fundholding and non-fundholding practitioners in my constituency, I know that, since fundholding started, the lion's share of money for computers in GPs' surgeries has gone to fundholders. I have raised cases of individual non-fundholders who have not been able to secure the money. When the Secretary of State considers how improvements could be made, will he take account of the proportion of fundholders and non-fundholders with whom he has been able to communicate electronically, and then give the House a guarantee that computer resources will be put into all practices—those of both fundholders and non-fundholders?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman forgets that GPs are independent contractors. It is not up to me to go into a general practice and put in a computer system; what I

[Mr. Dorrell]

do—or, rather, what the national health service does—is reimburse the expenses incurred in the installation of information technology. The initiative properly rests with the independent contractor—the general practitioner. It is for him or her to decide to use information technology for what seems the most appropriate purpose.

The NHS, through the system of fees and allowances, has a clear commitment to develop information technology as an important resource available to GPs. We shall continue to do that, but it is not up to us to impose it on them.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) made a ludicrous suggestion, which would lead only to hundreds of thousands of women traipsing into their GPs' surgeries and clogging up the system? It is much more sensible for my right hon. Friend to stick to his well-established method of communicating such facts to the public.

Mr. Dorrell: I agree with my hon. Friend. Amid all the excitement here, we need to keep in sight the key relationship between the health professional—the GP, hospital doctor or family planning doctor—and the patient. That is the channel through which advice should be given. A Secretary of State for Health should be extremely chary of intervening in that relationship, or seeking to impose himself on it.

Responsibility for using the information that is now in the public domain rests with doctors, pharmacists and patients. The Government have ensured that that information is made available to those with a duty—in the case of professionals—and an interest—in the case of patients—in using it.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): First-class post is not considered good enough for every hon. Member to receive the Whip each week; we must use special delivery. Was special delivery considered a more efficient way of sending documents to doctors?

Mr. Dorrell: No. As I have said, we shall review the arrangements, and if there are better ways of ensuring that information is available promptly, we shall seek to learn any lessons that can be learned. We must not, however, set ourselves the objective of conducting a private correspondence between the Department and doctors whose time scale is different from that governing the provision of information to patients. Our objective should be to ensure that such information is made available to all health professionals who need to use it in a timely and efficient manner, at roughly the same time as it is available to their patients—preferably a few hours earlier.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Can my right hon. Friend think back as far as last Thursday, when his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was at the Dispatch Box defending himself from incorrect accusations that he was interfering with an agency and exceeding his powers? Does my right hon. Friend accept that complete humbug is today coming from the Opposition Benches?

Perhaps we are missing the major point in all this, however. The electronic and printed media did a wonderful job, albeit somewhat prematurely, in ensuring that all women who were taking the seven brands of pill took action to find out whether they should continue. Indeed, the information that was printed and broadcast by the BBC and ITV was clear about the real risks. We politicians often condemn the media, but they did a good job on that occasion.

Mr. Dorrell: I agree with my hon. Friend. When questions about the electronic media are posed to people at this Dispatch Box, it is not every time that the person answering feels inclined to offer generous praise. All the programmes I saw and heard on Friday gave a clearer and more balanced report of the advice that was coming from the Committee on Safety of Medicines than we have heard from the Opposition Benches this afternoon.

Any woman listening to the television and radio reports on Thursday and Friday last week was clear that the advice was, first, that it was safer to use the seven brands of pill than to get pregnant; secondly, that the course should be completed; and, thirdly, that, during its completion, medical advice should be sought. That was the message that was put out last Thursday. It was carried on all the electronic media, in clear language. It is only since then that some people have been trying to stir up excitement.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Further to the last question, does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the press announcement had not been brought forward as it was, a media scare story would have been running wild, with no official, definitive version of the facts available to the general public?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right. That is precisely why the timing of the announcement was brought forward on Thursday from afternoon to morning, to ensure that the first major coverage of it by the electronic media on the lunchtime news on Thursday carried a balanced message, not a leaked half-message.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. Friend please be kind enough to remind the House why, in principle, any form of contraception is offered on the NHS, which was never anticipated when the health service was set up with all-party support in the 1940s? As it is not an illness to have a baby, why should the prevention of a baby be regarded as a health measure?

Mr. Dorrell: The answer is partly that that has grown up over the years, and partly that the delivery of the objective of every pregnancy being a wanted pregnancy is an important objective of social policy. We cannot bemoan the problems associated with single-parent families and with parents who are not interested in their children, and remove the wherewithal for family planning and planned pregnancies; so the objective of every child being a wanted child is a desirable one that is served by this policy.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Listening carefully to what the Secretary of State has had to say today, I have two quite straightforward questions. First, will he tell us exactly the proportion of GPs who had faxes and were therefore faxed on Thursday, Friday, Saturday or whenever? Secondly, given that, during those three or four days, some of the women may have been out of the country, either on holiday or on business, will he take up the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) that all the women who are prescribed these brands should be written to with a careful explanation of exactly what has been going on?

Mr. Dorrell: I do not have the answer to the first of the hon. Lady's questions, but if she puts down a written question and the information is available at acceptable cost, I will be glad to provide it. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) laughs. I put in the qualification because I do not know whether I have the information in the Department on the number of GPs with faxes.

Ms Judith Church (Dagenham): How did the Secretary of State know which GPs to fax, then?

Mr. Dorrell: It was the responsibility of the local directors of public health, not of the Department of Health.

On the second question of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice), let us just be clear what she is saying. We are talking about 1.5 million women taking these pills. As she rightly says, it is possible that some of those 1.5 million—a few thousand, perhaps—were outside the country last weekend. Is she really suggesting that we should circulate the information to all 1.5 million of them to cover the possibility that a few thousand were out of the country?

I rest my case on the proposition that the responsibility for giving advice on the health effects of these pills rests with the clinicians who sign the prescriptions. That is their job. We have provided them with the information that allows them to do that effectively.

Points of Order

4.9 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It relates to questions today, in particular Question 12 in my name, relating to crossrail, and Question 5 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Sir M. Shersby).

You will recall that I wrote to you at the end of last week intimating that Question 5 related to matters at RAF Northolt that are of acute concern to my constituents, because that RAF base is in my constituency. I said that, if possible, I would seek to catch your eye to ask a supplementary question. Your secretary, with great courtesy, did me the favour of telephoning me this morning to suggest that, were I to catch your eye for a supplementary to Question 5, I would not have the opportunity to ask a supplementary to my primary Question 12 on the crossrail project.

As you know, I was lucky enough to catch your eye, and I asked a supplementary about RAF Northolt. However, I was surprised when you judged that I had withdrawn my primary Question 12 about crossrail. That most certainly was not the case.

Is it not a fact that an hon. Member can withdraw a question only if he writes to that effect to either you, Madam Speaker, or the Table Office? What I suggested to your secretary—and there may have been a misunderstanding—was that I was quite happy to forgo the opportunity to ask a supplementary to my Question 12. Would it not be the case that, in those circumstances, the primary question would be put?

Whether an hon. Member exercises the option, which is entirely his, to ask a supplementary is for him alone. No precedent can be set in this matter, because it would be wrong for hon. Members not to be able to put a supplementary question relating to matters in their constituency if doing so deprived them of asking any primary question that they might happen to have on the Order Paper on that day.

Madam Speaker: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has raised this matter. He did have Question 12 to the Department of Transport on the Order Paper today. He let it be known to me that he wanted to ask a supplementary to an earlier question which he said had a bearing on his constituency, which indeed it has. I let it be known to the hon. Gentleman that I did not look favourably upon hon. Members asking two questions within a 40-minute question period when there was great pressure at Question Time.

Therefore, I let it be known that it was a question of choice—we hear a great deal about choice in this House—and that either the hon. Gentleman asked a supplementary to the earlier question, in which case his Question 12 would be unstarred and would receive a written answer, or I would not call him on the earlier question and he would put his Question 12. The choice was his.

If there has been some misunderstanding, that is to be regretted, but I believe it right to uphold the system that I have always adopted, which is that hon. Members put only one question during Question Time. That is especially the case with the pressure during a 40-minute question period from Members who want to ask two questions.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Just over 18 months ago, when this House was debating the Sunday Trading Act 1994, the Sunday Hours Reform Council—which includes all the major retailers—gave an unequivocal commitment to the House that it would maintain existing premium payments, including double payments on Sundays. That commitment clearly influenced and persuaded many hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the Bill.

Asda has just announced that it is unilaterally reneging on that commitment for newly employed workers after 1 November. As that flagrant breach of promise means that many hon. Members were deceived, I ask for an opportunity for this House to re-debate the matter and to secure whatever regulation is required, if the retailers cannot be trusted to deliver their promises.

Madam Speaker: From what the hon. Gentleman says, I am not certain whether anyone has acted illegally, but if so, it is a matter for the courts. The hon. Gentleman may be anxious to raise the matter again, but it is a question of the Government allowing the necessary time. On Thursdays, business questions can be put to the Leader of the House; the hon. Gentleman may find an opportunity then to ask for time to debate the matter.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We are talking about Sundays, and last Sunday, the lamp posts outside the House of Parliament were festooned with advertisements pointing out that apartments were available for sale in county hall. Surely it cannot be in order for a firm to have used the immediate environs of the House for that purpose. I borrowed a penknife from a courteous police officer and cut down the advertisements, of which I have sent you an example.

While on the subject of how the flats are being advertised—I am not questioning whether county hall should have been made into flats—I notice that, in the advertisements being circulated, in this country and abroad, constant use is made of the Houses of Parliament's icons. For example, something approaching a portcullis is used on the advertisements, and there is a superb view of the Houses of Parliament, purporting to have been taken from one of the flats.

I know county hall like the back of my hand, and I know that one would have to be suspended from the roof to have got such a picture. It is rather like the old east London song which states that one could see the Hackney marshes

"if it wasn't for the houses in between."

Surely such use is wholly improper. I hope that you will tell the firm involved that it should not use the Houses of Parliament to sell its flats.

Madam Speaker: I know that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the future use of county hall. I have seen the notices to which he referred, as he sent me one, but as they were not attached to parliamentary buildings, it is not a matter for me. I have also seen the logo to which he refers, which is, in fact, quite distinct from the Crown portcullis, which is the emblem of the House. I think that it is in rather bad taste; nevertheless, I do not consider that its use can be interpreted as reflecting adversely on the House.

Even so, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that I have asked the Serjeant at Arms to point out to the firm involved that, to avoid the possibility of any misunderstanding, it would be preferable that it discontinued the use of that particular logo. I have high hopes that it will do so.

Mr. Wilkinson *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I do not usually allow hon. Members to make a further point of order, but I shall of course allow the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) to do so.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am grateful for the opportunity to ask a supplementary. As guardian of Back-Bench interests, Madam Speaker, I am sure that you are concerned about this.

When an hon. Member tables a question, he has no idea what other questions may be found, perhaps with one's own, among the first 12 or so on the Order Paper. If it so happens that a question tabled by another hon. Member, but relating to one's own constituency, is among the first 12 or so, one is on occasion honour bound to ask a supplementary question. In those circumstances, is it not entirely wrong that one's own primary question should automatically lapse?

Is it not the case that, for a question to be withdrawn, the hon. Member involved must write to inform the House authorities—the Table Office and/or you, Madam Speaker—that he is withdrawing it? I did neither of those things, happy in the knowledge that, were I to forgo my supplementary, the Minister's reply would be on the record. As it related to hybridity, it would be of interest to the House as a whole, and other hon. Members might or might not have been able to catch your eye thereafter.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I had always understood from your predecessors that it was considered most inappropriate for an hon. Member ever to lobby the Speaker about being called to ask a supplementary question to another hon. Member's question at Question Time. Frankly, I think that that should be your ruling.

Madam Speaker: Let me respond to the first part of the question asked by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). At Question Time, many references are made to other hon. Members' constituencies. There is no way that the Speaker can pick up those hon. Members in order to allow them to ask a supplementary question. It is reasonable for hon. Members to discipline themselves: if they are keen to ask a supplementary question to another hon. Member's question, they cannot ask a primary question further down the Order Paper. The wise thing to do is to unstar the question, because, by that method, hon. Members get a written answer from the Minister. That is the reasonable way to do it.

As for lobbying me, I am lobbied by all sorts of people and hon. Members in the House. I listen to them all, but I make up my own mind. Without commitment, of course, I listen to hon. Members. I want to be helpful if I can. I have been a Back Bencher myself. Anyone can lobby me, but the bottom line is that I make up my own mind what to do about it. I think that we should now move on.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I just wanted to help.

Madam Speaker: Help from Mr. Skinner—thank you.

Mr. Skinner: Next time anybody rings you up like that, Madam Speaker, you want to look at the number on

the Order Paper. The question of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) was No. 12. Anybody who knows anything about this place knows that, if the question is No. 12 and Question Time finishes at 3.10, the chances of being reached are on the margin. So if Members are smart, they think that, by ringing up the Speaker, they can get a commitment on No. 5 and play both horses in the race. That is roughly what happened: he wanted his cake, and he wanted to eat it as well.

Madam Speaker: I am well aware of what takes place, believe me.

Orders of the Day

Public Accounts

4.20 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the 40th and 42nd to 51st Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1993-94, of the 1st to 40th Reports of Session 1994-95, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm 2732, 2739, 2754, 2757, 2786, 2825, 2832, 2906, 2921, 2988, 2990, 3013), with particular reference to the following Reports of Session 1994-95:

First, Ministry of Defence: The Major Projects Report (1993);

Second, The Sports Council: Initiatives to Improve Financial Management and Control and Value for Money;

Fifth, Council Tax Valuations in England and Wales;

Twenty-eighth, Severance Payments to Senior Staff in the Publicly Funded Education Sector;

Thirty-third, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Overseas Representation: Irregularities at the Sana'a Embassy;

Thirty-fourth, Lord Chancellor's Department: Qualification of Audit Opinion and Alleged Frauds on the Green Form Scheme.

The Public Accounts Committee is presenting 51 reports to the House; 11 from the Session 1993-94 and 40 from the Session 1994-95. The number of reports indicates the amount of work that the Committee does—it is a large number and the Committee has been extremely busy, as is normal.

My first pleasant duty is to welcome the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to his post. We were very grateful to his predecessor, now the Secretary of State for Transport, for the way in which he welcomed the Committee's eighth report, on the proper conduct of public business. His welcome was of enormous help. The report paved the way, as we know, to some of the Nolan recommendations, which we watched with some interest. I look forward to the new Financial Secretary's contribution and I shall welcome him, in due course, to an early meeting of the Committee.

My next pleasant duty is to thank the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn; the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland, John Dowdall; and the Clerk to the Committee, Ken Brown, for helping to bring about the 51 reports which are being brought to the attention of the House.

Producing such reports is a burdensome task for members of the Committee, but it is essential. It is unquestionable that Gladstone got it right 130-odd years ago when he decided that the Public Accounts Committee should be set up. Surprisingly enough for those days, as well as for these, he decided that the Chairman should be an Opposition Member. I doubt whether that would have happened in any subsequent year. The choice of Chairman from the Opposition is central to the work of the Committee because it ensures that the examination is conducted with a more open mind than might otherwise be the case.

The evidence that the Committee gathers from accounting officers is of enormous importance. It monitors Government expenditure and looks for economy, efficiency and effectiveness. When permanent secretaries—accounting officers usually are permanent secretaries—come before the Committee, its members

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

have in mind the assessment of their abilities and standing. I suppose that that in some way makes the PAC almost unique—I think that it is unique—among Committees of the House. Accounting officers come before the Committee again and again and we are able to assess their value to their work.

I know how much we depend on those servants of the country to prepare for their meetings with the Committee. I am aware that it is a great burden on them, but the result must be to ensure that their responsibilities are scrutinised properly.

Unanimity is the most important aspect of the roughly 500 reports we have produced since I had the honour of becoming the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in 1983. We are utterly dependent on that unanimity which, strangely enough, is not difficult to obtain. We get it because, at the end of it all, we are there to protect the taxpayer. Anyone who came to our meetings would find it difficult to know, on most occasions, who was an Opposition Member and who was a member of the party in government—we are united in the defence of the taxpayer.

Even when we have discussed matters such as privatisation, which most divides the House, we have come up with unanimous reports, not fudged reports in which we try to show that we are agreed when we are not. We say that it is not for us to look at policy, but to examine how policy has been implemented. Although we may disagree with policies—very strongly, in many cases—we want to ensure that the taxpayer gets value for money once a policy is accepted. We have come out with important points even on issues on which we are obviously divided.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the key point is that, over a number of years, perhaps going back to 1981, many lessons, which have been taken up in subsequent privatisations, have been learnt from Public Accounts Committee reports?

Mr. Sheldon: That is undoubtedly correct. Some of the most important lessons were set out by the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who I am pleased to see in his place. He pointed out the need to sell the issues in tranches. That was a valuable point. Why did the Government sometimes insist on trying to sell everything off at one go? They do not do that with Government debt. Sensibly, at the beginning of the year, the Government study the situation and try a billion pounds here or half a billion there—they test the market. Government brokers become expert in testing the market; that is what they are for.

When it came to selling off public assets in the privatisation procedure, however, the Government did not proceed in the same way. We should have had the expertise that Government brokers have in gilts so that we could have got the best price at any time. The Government could have saved themselves much of the strong argument that they experienced on the Floor of the House and elsewhere. We have welcomed the changes—there have not been enough in my view—that have come about as a result of that useful part of our reports.

We have also considered many other aspects of privatisation, such as brokerage fees and advertising. Even in the areas that divide us most as individuals—this is a most important matter—we are able to come to unanimous conclusions.

The National Audit Act 1983 gave us legislative rights to propose matters to the National Audit Office for investigation. Our success—and the success of the National Audit Office—is not only what we uncover, important though that is, but what our presence as a Committee prevents. We act as a deterrent to what would incur our displeasure.

We have the recruitment by Sir John Bourn and his staff of those who have a much better reputation than was the case years ago. In the old Exchequer and Audit Department, they were civil servants who were usually recruited as executive officers at the age of 18 and given training which amounted to not a great deal more than book-keeping.

Now, the civil servants involved are proper auditors. They have Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy qualifications and chartered accountancy qualifications. The enormous difference is that now, when they go into Departments and have discussions with senior officers up to the level of permanent secretary, they are seen as equals. Previously, they used to be seen as executive officers. Firms in the City now want their services and angle for them. Some have been made tempting offers but, fortunately, we have been able to retain their services. When they go into Departments, they are much more hightly respected as a result.

There have been considerable changes during the past 20 years since the days of the old Exchequer and Audit Department. Almost without exception, institutions—including the universities, the judiciary and the civil service—have been under attack and pressure, and had criticism levelled at them, but the National Audit Office's reputation has steadily improved, year by year. The reports of the old Exchequer and Audit Department were perfunctory compared with those produced now, as were the initial reports of the NAO itself.

In its 12 years of existence, the NAO has developed. Whereas in the beginning it produced tentative reports, it now displays a mastery of the subject. It has impressed us all. I am visited regularly—far too often for my poor battered diary—by people from different countries who want to see what we are doing and how they can learn from us.

Parliament should be proud that the Comptroller and Auditor General is now an Officer of the House—that was not the case previously—as that does more to maintain standards of probity, as well as those of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, than anything else that we could have done. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) realised that Gladstone's ideas had been whittled down, and he showed how they could be reformed.

I should like more changes in the work of the NAO. One of the areas it is to examine—it is starting to do so already—is the regulatory framework of the public utilities. There is a range of methods of regulating the utilities; the NAO will want to ask whether they are the most suitable. It will ask what lessons can be learnt from the successes of each regulatory operation.

Another success was our important report on the proper conduct of public business. I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Transport who, as Financial Secretary to the Treasury, gave the report a great welcome. The PAC report showed that there were great weaknesses in certain methods of dealing with fraud. Normally, fraud does not take up a great deal of the Committee's time—although it takes up more time now—but when it appears on the scene, it must take priority over everything else in our discussions.

I was pleased to see that, as a result of our eighth report and the evidence that I gave to the Nolan committee, the Treasury accepted that notes of dissent should be made available to the PAC. If a permanent secretary disagrees that an expenditure is correct, he can write a note of dissent. Previously, if the permanent secretary came before the PAC, the note could be held up as evidence that it was the Minister, not the permanent secretary, who had instructed the accounting officer with regard to the expenditure, but the Committee would know about the note only if there had been an investigation or if there was a question of fraud. In the case of the Pergau dam, the Committee was fortunate in that an examination, which allowed us to learn about the role of Sir Tim Lankester, was being undertaken. I note that he is to be moved. I hope that that has nothing to do with his notes of dissent. I wish that I could be completely happy about that one.

The safeguard that we now have is of great importance. Even if a note of dissent does not relate to a question of fraud, the Public Accounts Committee will now be able to receive details of it. I am a little worried that notes of dissent will become less common because people who might write them will be uneasy that details will come before the Public Accounts Committee and that that might prevent their having the success that they might otherwise have had if the matter had been dealt with between the accounting officer and the relevant Minister. I should like to offer some guarantee that that will not be the case. We will not seek to capitalise on notes of dissent. Such matters should be open, perhaps to the Comptroller and Auditor General, to ensure that notes of dissent are not handled in that manner.

I know that a number of notes of dissent have been written, and that even more are written at night but, in the cold light of morning, are not delivered to the Minister. There are some good reasons for that. The relationship between the Minister and the permanent secretary would obviously be weakened or even damaged by such a note of dissent.

Fraud and probity in the civil service represent a continuing aspect of our work. Value for money and saving money are important, but most important are standards in public service. We pride ourselves on those standards. The need to prevent any fraud arises from the fear that there can be collusion between a number of people. The great help that we have is the enormous reputation of standards of conduct in public life. The greatest protection is the honest person who is feared by anyone who tries to commit such acts.

The task of the Public Accounts Committee is essentially simple with regard to value for money. What is required—I made this clear when we first started with the National Audit Office—is to compare the objectives with the achievement; the input with the output. It is simple. There is a certain amount of monitoring, so if people get it wrong at least they are able to stop it. We want monitoring phased so that, at any one time, we can see where we are. Sometimes it is not easy to quantify things, but almost always it is possible to quantify in some way. It is a wonderful discipline. That is what we try to achieve.

Many of this year's reports have lessons of one kind or another for us. The Committee's first report in the Session 1994-95 was "Ministry of Defence: the Major Projects Report (1993)". In paragraph 19 we say:

"We are concerned that some 80 per cent. of major projects were unlikely to achieve their in-Service date. We note that the Department have in the past tended to take an optimistic view of the in-Service date and that they are now taking initiatives to improve realism, such as 'three-point timings'"—

the three points being the best case, the worst case and the most likely case. The report continues:

"The Committee intend to monitor the outcome of this initiative closely."

The report deals with 25 projects totalling more than £25 billion. Although that is a small proportion of the total number of projects, the amounts of money are very large. Except on Trident, the overspend on each project was just less than £1 billion. What worries us most is the slippage, which is more than 30 months.

Mid-life updates occur when, half way through a programme, it is decided that improvements can be made in the weapons system. That creates a danger of slippage and cost overruns. We note that there is a five-year slippage, which is unacceptable. In paragraph 41 we say:

"Most of the upgrade programmes examined by the National Audit Office have been ambitious in scope."

They have a

"wide variety of proposed enhancements."

We used to call that "gold plating", meaning improvements that exceeded what was essential.

The danger of being at the front end of technology is that one does not know how much that technology will cost or how long it will take to produce. If one continues on that basis year by year, one will seek further improvements and, in theory, never obtain the weapons system at all.

A line must be drawn somewhere, and we say that we must be sensible about drawing it. We say that that process has

"led to the scope of programmes being reduced during their implementation to make them affordable."

The Department starts off with great plans to improve the weapons system. Some way through, it realises that it has overdone the cost and starts scaling down the project. There is not only slippage, but a poorer result.

We say in paragraph 44:

"there had been very little dissemination of experience between the project officers involved in such programmes."

We understand and hope that the Department will improve matters in that respect.

The Eurofighter is one of the most serious of our expenditures. The National Audit Office detailed a cost overrun at 29 April 1994 of £573 million. The latest overrun is £1.25 billion for the development programme alone—44 per cent. over estimate. Cost overruns of the whole project will probably be about £2.2 billion. That is phenomenally expensive, and it leads us to embark on a fresh examination of the way in which collaborative projects are undertaken.

[Mr. Sheldon]

Collaborative programmes involving several countries—in that case, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom—unquestionably cost more than single-country programmes. At one time, it used to be reckoned that collaborative programmes cost 10 per cent. more. That figure is being revised. Language difficulties and pressure to obtain work in certain places add to the costs. We need to get that one right, because there will be much more international collaboration.

Ideally, one would have wished the smaller and well-defined programmes—the things that can be done more easily—to have come first, enabling us to learn lessons that would help with larger-scale expenditures. The trouble with smaller, well-defined programmes is that they can be done by individual countries, so there is less need for them, but we need to undertake some of them in collaboration. I believe that savings can be made there as well, because one obtains the advantages of scale and experience. That might be an approach to the large developments somewhere near the frontiers of technology in due course.

I shall now discuss our second report, "The Sports Council: Initiatives to Improve Financial Management and Control and Value for Money". We point out that the Sports Council receives £48.8 million grant in aid, which is 95 per cent. of its income, from the Department of National Heritage. We were worried about standards of propriety. In paragraph 24, we said:

"We are particularly concerned that the former Director General and Accounting Officer and the former Finance Director had conflicts of interest".

They arose from the setting up of a private subsidiary company, which happens in several Government Departments. For good reasons, they set up subsidiary companies to deal with, perhaps, the marketing of one or two aspects of their work—and very good they are, too—but there must be a clear distinction between the work of the Government Department or Government-funded body concerned and that of the private organisations.

We say that there were conflicts of interest

"despite numerous reports by this Committee drawing attention to such dangers."

Clear dangers exist. At all stages there is a need to establish an arm's-length relationship.

We discovered that there was not an arm's-length relationship, and we noted specifically in paragraph 42 that, on the retirement of the director general of the council,

"the Trust Company appointed"

him

"as their part-time Chief Executive without the post being advertised."

He went from director general of the council to chief executive of the trust company without the post being advertised. It is obviously very dangerous to act in that way.

We say in paragraph 52:

"We are very concerned that the Council awarded a contract to Blenheim SportsCo Limited"—

another subsidiary company—

"for twenty years to manage the Council's annual exhibition as this does not allow the Council regularly to test the market."

There was no testing of the market, and preference was given to certain people.

Although commercial spin-offs are desirable, they must be handled with great care. We have the enormous advantage of the standards in public life, which we must do our utmost to protect. The Committee fully accepts that.

The fifth report is entitled, "Council Tax Valuations in England and Wales". The council tax came into effect on 1 April 1993. Properties were placed in eight broad bands from band A, for properties worth less than £40,000, to band H, for those worth more than £320,000. The bands were slightly different for Wales. The responsibility for valuing properties rested with the Valuation Office Agency of the Inland Revenue.

It is important to get the banding right. The major problem that we have had with the council tax—as with the poll tax—is the weakening of the discipline of taxpayers. We must do our utmost to return to the position in which people did not, in the main, try to avoid their responsibilities as taxpayers. People's respect for the system is enormously important to us. It is important, for that reason also, to get the bandings right. Accuracy is important.

The banding was undertaken. We found that 2 million properties might be in the wrong bands—that slightly fewer than 1 million might be too high, and that slightly more than 1 million might be too low. When we examined the situation, we found that many appeals would not be resolved until more than two years after the introduction of the council tax.

The "Treasury Minute on the Fifth and Sixth Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts 1994-95" says:

"the aim is to settle appeals within 12 months",

which is better, but there is a serious problem with the wide variation between the level at which the bands were set in different parts of the country.

Some bandings by the private sector were undertaken at 19p a valuation. That might appear to be a good deal, but if there is an appeal it is likely that it will cost 70 times as much to correct, so it could prove to be a rather bad deal. We note that the Valuation Office Agency has not yet analysed the number of appeals it has received to determine whether they relate to the private sector or to Valuation Office Agency valuations. We recommend that that be done to provide further assurance that common standards are adopted.

We note that the Valuation Office Agency was not able to record the time spent by its staff on the banding exercise, but it tells us that it intends to introduce a better time recording system to allow the work to be fully costed. We welcome that.

I shall now discuss two aspects of our report, "Severance Payments to Senior Staff in the Publicly Funded Education Sector". The first is the university of Huddersfield and the vice-chancellor's severance package.

There are 151 higher education institutions in England, 21 in Scotland and 16 in Wales. They are independent bodies that manage their own financial affairs. We are concerned at the way in which the whole undertaking was conducted. The root cause of the problems with the original severance agreement at Huddersfield was the decision made at the end of 1993 to exclude staff and student representatives from the membership of the

university council there. That led to considerable upset among staff. In consequence, there was a breakdown of trust between the governing council, the vice-chancellor, staff and students.

As a result, although the university is independent, the Higher Education Funding Council objected when a severance package amounting to more than £411,000 was given to the vice-chancellor—let us be open about this—to shut him up and get rid of him in the easiest way. The university used our public money to satisfy its own purposes. We cannot accept that.

Worse than that, there was a gagging clause in the agreement which insisted that the vice-chancellor should not say anything about the reasons for his dismissal or the amount of money that was involved. Luckily, we heard about it indirectly, partly from my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and partly from elsewhere. As a result, I stated clearly that gagging clauses cannot be justified. We cannot spend public money to enable people's positions to be changed on the basis that nobody will ever know about it.

The package included additional compensation and we understand that leading counsel for the HEFC advised that the settlement arrangements were irrational and excessive and could be ultra vires. As a result, we have agreed that, in nearly all cases, gagging clauses will not be allowed and that we must ensure that severance packages are justifiable and acceptable.

The second case involved the university of Portsmouth. The vice-chancellor there resigned after a no-confidence vote by the staff following an investigation into his expense claims. A settlement of £52,000 was paid to avoid possible legal action. We regarded that action as being similar to the first case and argued that public money cannot be used to keep people quiet. It might be done in private industry—that is its business—but taxpayers' money as voted by the House cannot be used to settle such matters.

Purely as a consequence of that case, we came across the surprising fact that the former vice-chancellor had been paid an annual salary of over £17,000 as chairman of an NHS trust. The rate had been in accordance with a scale relating to the size of the trust and based on a notional time commitment of three and a quarter days a week. He got £17,000 for three and a quarter days a week and the rest of the time he was a vice-chancellor, for which he was paid £90,000. We stated:

"We are also surprised at the University's decision to pay the former Vice-Chancellor a salary of £90,000 a year while allowing him to continue with another important public sector job which had a notional time commitment of 3 1/4 days a week."

It is important that the National Audit Office should have the right to examine all such organisations.

We examine just over half of the non-departmental public bodies. I would want us to examine all of them. The National Audit Office should be able to examine them all. That does not mean that private firms of auditors would not be involved. There would be many cases, perhaps almost as many as there are now, where the National Audit Office could contract with the private sector to carry out the audit, but it would remain in charge. That way there would be more consistency between audits. In addition, the National Audit Office has the standing to which I have referred and its involvement would give the House reassurance.

There is the problem that many private sector auditors make a fair amount of their money through consultancies. It is difficult for them if their efforts are not well received by companies and they fear losing the audit contract and the profitable consultancies that go with it. By all means let auditors keep those consultancies if they wish, but at least let the audits be undertaken under the auspices of the National Audit Office.

The next report with which I wish to deal is the 33rd report, which deals with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and irregularities at the Sana'a embassy. "Irregularities" is a wonderful word for a disgraceful, scandalous fraud—one of the worst for some time.

A Mr. Ryan, who was a member of the diplomatic service, had access to a sterling account from which he could draw money and convert it into Yemeni rials. The money was changed at the black market rate. The report states:

"During 1993 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office became concerned about possible contractual and current irregularities at their post in Sana'a, in the Yemen. The existence of these irregularities was confirmed in November that year . . . Mr. Gerald Ryan . . . former Second Secretary, Management Officer/Consul in Sana'a was arrested.

Mr. Ryan admitted to the police that he and the [illegible] accountant . . . had been involved in these irregularities."

He said that his share of the gains was about £[illegible],000 at the current exchange rate and he was released on police bail while under suspicion of false accounting and theft. The police discontinued the investigation after Mr. Ryan died on 24 December 1994. Mr. Ryan accepted that he made $50,000—about £30,000.

The Yemeni rials were

"drawn from the post's sterling account at the official exchange rate. Enough of that was then converted at the higher market, or 'parallel' rate to replenish the . . . account and the rest pocketed by Mr. Ryan"

or his associate.

The report continues:

"The 'parallel' exchange rate was up to four times higher than the official rate.

The Department estimated the potential for profiteering in this way to have been between £607,000 and £677,000."

We will never know the exact amount.

That was not all that Mr. Ryan did. He was involved in other irregularities, such as issuing visas without following established procedures and interviewing clients and completing application forms, apparently without the receipt of a fee. That is serious because 405 visa applications were made and it can reasonably be assumed that he did not deal with them without any financial recompense. The report states:

"we find it astonishing that the management at Sana'a also allowed their staff to use public money to gain up to £670,000 from manipulating the local currency markets. And we are concerned that the Department did not inform us of other possible irregularities at Sana'a, possibly involving the use of Overseas Development Administration funds until after the evidence session."

That is a serious matter. The report says that we were concerned that

"there were no job specifications for locally-engaged staff, that Mr. Ryan was able to recruit local staff known to him and that those appointed may not have been the best candidates."

Mr. Ryan might have got his accomplices in that way.

The report then deals with the role of the ambassador. Mr. Ryan arrived in Sana'a in January 1989 and returned to the United Kingdom just over four years later, but there

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were two ambassadors during that period. We asked why action had not been taken, because failures had been reported by internal auditors, but the warning signals had not been appreciated immediately. The report says:

"The Department told us that, although there had been much visiting, action subsequently taken had not been sufficiently decisive. Management of the post by the Ambassador, Mr. Marshall, had been defective."

We therefore asked why he had not been removed, or some other pressure brought to bear. We were told that the Department knew about the management weakness in the initial period and about serious shortcomings in Mr. Marshall's performance, but that they were not judged to have reached an unacceptable level. One and a half years later, in January 1994, a visiting officer from the overseas accounts section found that many of the deficiencies reported by internal audit still existed. The report singled out several weaknesses.

The report says that the management by senior officers at the embassy was "appalling"—that was undoubtedly the right word to use—that that was the root cause of the problem, and that we looked forward to receiving information from the Department on the outcome of disciplinary proceedings as soon as it was available. I hope that we shall hear from the Financial Secretary about that when he responds.

The next report is the 34th report on the green form scheme. The criminal legal aid concerned amounts to £432 million. The accounts have been qualified for the fourth year in succession, which is an extremely serious matter. That part of the operation of the Lord Chancellor's Department had its accounts qualified year after year without proper action being taken. Payments to solicitors on green form schemes amounted to £141 million. We say:

"the Department has failed to resolve satisfactorily the problem of inadequately completed statements of means."

Justices' clerks are supposed to have statements of means, which are used to decide whether legal aid should be granted. In our report, the justices' clerks say that, in too many cases, they are still failing to comply with regulations that have the force of law. We go on to say:

"We find this inexplicable given the Department's assurance about the continued co-operation of the Justices' Clerks Society."

We strongly believe that that failure to carry out the law and comply with the regulations should not be allowed to continue.

We know that, in many ways, this is a blank cheque and that the Government do not carry out a proper investigation of the green forms. Moreover, an increasing number of solicitors advertise their services—that is perfectly sensible and no one is against it—knowing full well that the green form system is available. It therefore occurs to some of us that the two can be brought together: the green forms as a blank cheque and advertising for those blank cheques. This is a serious matter.

The idea behind the green form system is first class because people with limited means are helped to understand the law and to deal with certain matters, but the scheme cannot continue in that way. Either the law must be changed or we must insist that the justices' clerks obey the law. If justices' clerks in a court of law cannot obey the law, one wonders who can. The matter is totally absurd. There is a legal requirement and they must follow it. If for some reason which I fail to comprehend they cannot, we must change the law.

We note that a system of franchising is being set up, which will be available to firms whose control systems have been rigorously audited. We understand that, by March 1996, the board hopes to have between 1,200 and 1,500 firms, accounting for one third of the expenditure, in the franchising system. I hope that the Financial Secretary can tell us how that is proceeding.

On the wider question of legal aid and the high fees paid under it, I note that the Lord Chancellor is urging, in a Green Paper, a fixed rate for lawyers. That matter deserves further examination and, in the light of public expenditure constraint, that area cannot be left untouched. The Public Accounts Committee may wish to examine it in due course.

Time allows me to deal with just one or two other reports. I wish to comment on more reports this year than in most previous years, which makes it difficult to bring out the issues. Even if I picked out one of our less contentious reports, we could have a whole day's debate on it, but the very number of reports frightens people off a little and, as a result, the reports do not get the examination that they deserve.

I should say a word on a few of the other reports and, if I hurry through them, it is only because I think that the issues that concern us should appear somewhere on the record.

The third report deals with the Merseyside development corporation, which was set up in 1981 to secure the regeneration of the designated area. In August 1992, tall ships went to Merseyside, there was a grand regatta of Columbus, a splendid programme was held to commemorate the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's trip to America and there was a gala concert and fair for the new world. In the event, neither the regatta nor the concert recovered its costs. Some £1 million was spent and the net cost was some several hundred thousand pounds.

The aspect that concerned us most was that there were major overruns on hospitality and publicity. Certain firms gained advantages from that expenditure and public money was used to purchase and distribute, free of charge, concert tickets worth more than £100,000. We say in the report:

"We note the Corporation's explanation of the terms of the additional £150,000 payment to a separate company formed to stage the concert . . . four days before the concert. However, we find it astonishing that the Corporation were . . . required to bail it out at such short notice"

by purchasing sponsorship tickets and rights. That was an obvious and notable failure.

Another failure to which I should draw attention was raised in the 19th report on business sponsorship of the arts in 1994-95. The programme director in charge of the scheme authorised payments totalling £175,000 to fictitious organisations. That is a serious matter. Mr. Nick Wood, an association programme director in charge of the scheme, authorised that programme having first constructed elaborate fraudulent documentation. He was prosecuted, found guilty of fraud and imprisoned. Some of the money was recovered, but some was not.

Our sixth report deals with the Wolds prison. A contract was given to Group 4 on the basis of best value for money, although it was not the lowest price. We have no objection to that, because contracts are sometimes not given on the lowest price, but one of the eight members

of the panel that recommended Group 4 left the Prison Service nine months after the contract was placed—to join Group 4.

Although the final decision was that of Ministers, a full explanation about why Group 4 was awarded the contract was not given. The Committee advised that, to avoid any question of impropriety,

"detailed reasons should always be recorded whenever a contract is not awarded to a tenderer who submits the lowest bid and is judged capable of meeting the key performance criteria. This would also provide a basis for informing the other short-listed firms why their bids had been unsuccessful, a practice we would recommend the Prison Service to consider."

That applies to many cases. The award of a contract should be subject to greater openness and, when it is not given to the lowest bidder, the reasons for that decision should be given.

The Welsh Development Agency has caused the Committee a great deal of concern and has been the subject of lengthy discussion. Our 29th report on the WDA for 1994-95 is not as serious as some of our earlier ones on it—it has an exceptionally serious history. We note that Mr. Michael Scholar, from the Treasury, is now permanent secretary at the Welsh Office, and we look forward to his putting the Department into somewhat better order than it used to be in.

We were concerned about the acquisition and sale of a site in Aberdare to Tesco plc. We were concerned that, in a number of key areas, the WDA did not know what was going on when it should have done. The PAC's particular concern involved the sale of the Gadlys road site to Tesco plc. The agency received a late and unsolicited offer from Tesco and it did not notify that fact to other interested parties. We questioned whether it was wise that two directors of Tesco should have been directors of the agency with responsibility for deciding on matters such as the disposal of the Gadlys road site. We were deeply concerned that that action was not fair to the other offerers and that the agency appeared to have given preferential treatment to Tesco. The PAC noted:

"We consider that the assessment by the Welsh Office that the disposal of the . . . site was badly handled severely under-estimates"

the serious matter of probity in the public sector. We considered that the disposal had been handled in a totally unacceptable manner. I hope that we will not hear any more about the WDA and its failure to carry out its responsibility for the proper conduct of public money.

I must also mention Dr. O'Connell, a consultant who was paid for 11 years because no one could bring himself to dismiss her or to bring her case to a satisfactory conclusion. That consultant was paid year after year until the matter came before the PAC and we saw what had gone on. I hope that we will not discover any similar examples.

Hospital catering was also the subject of one of our reports. We discovered that people inherit the catering requests of the previous occupant of their bed. In the week after the previous patient left, the new person in the hospital bed has to have the same meals that his predecessor ordered. That is nonsense. Some hospitals manage to change the catering orders on computer on the same day. I could detail a few more nonsenses, but time is pressing and colleagues would like to speak. Such matters deserve further attention.

This year, the PAC has had to deal with more questions of fraud than in most other years, and I hope that they will take up less of our time in the future.

5.13 pm

Sir Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I join our Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), in paying tribute to Sir John Bourn and his colleagues at the National Audit Office for the splendid work that they have done during the year and to the Clerk of our Committee, Mr. Ken Brown. I also pay tribute to our Chairman for the great assiduity he displays in his work and the impressive tour d'horizon of the reports of the Public Accounts Committee that he has given hon. Members.

This annual debate provides us with the opportunity to consider the PAC's outstanding reports, of which, as we have heard, there are 51. As I listened to the right hon. Member's speech, I could not help thinking that perhaps few members of the public realise what is involved in producing 51 reports. It might be appropriate to mention that the Committee meets twice a week when the House is sitting and sits on average for about two and a half hours. Any member of that Committee who is doing his homework will spend at least two hours preparing for each of its sittings. It is probably the busiest Committee of Parliament and, as the senior Select Committee, it carries considerable clout.

As usual, today the Chamber is populated by colleagues who are members of the PAC, including the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, whom we are pleased to see in his place. Also listening to our deliberations is that distinguished parliamentarian, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission and a former member of our Committee.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to the 34th report of the PAC, which deals with the Lord Chancellor's Department and the qualification of audit opinion and alleged fraud on the green form scheme. The Chairman of our Committee has already referred to it, but such is its importance that I should like to mention one or two other aspects.

Expenditure on criminal legal aid in 1993-94 comprised £194 million paid for legal proceedings in magistrates courts and £238 million for proceedings in the higher criminal courts—a total of £432 million. By any measure, that is a huge expenditure of British taxpayers' money and it is absolutely essential that it should be properly accounted for. Most awards of legal aid, which provide the authority for payments to solicitors and counsel, are granted in the magistrates court. It was in the light of the audit findings of those courts that the Comptroller and Auditor General qualified his opinion for the fourth year in succession. He did so because of the limited evidence available to ensure full compliance with the regulations relating to the granting of legal aid.

Grants to the legal aid fund total the staggering amount of £975 million. As hon. Members know, the fund is administered by the Legal Aid Board under the general guidance of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. One of the schemes offered by the Legal Aid Board—the well-known green form scheme—relates to legal advice and assistance. Payments to solicitors under that scheme amounted to £146.6 million in 1993-94. The Legal Aid Board and the police are investigating allegations of fraud in claims for legal advice and assistance.

Given the serious nature and possible implications of the alleged frauds, the Comptroller and Auditor General reported the facts to Parliament. It was on the basis of his

[Sir Michael Shersby]

report that the PAC took evidence from the Legal Aid Board and the Lord Chancellor's Department about the alleged frauds. We say in our report:

"we are dismayed that, after four years in which the Comptroller and Auditor General has qualified his opinion of the accounts and eight separate initiatives, the Department has failed to resolve satisfactorily the problem of inadequately completed statements of means."

Despite all the efforts of the Department, in too many cases justices' clerks are still failing to comply with the regulations which, as the Chairman of the PAC has pointed out, have the force of law. To me, and I dare say to any hon. Member, that is an extraordinary situation. Justices' clerks, surely the most thoroughly respectable and upright citizens, are failing to comply with the force of law. The Committee considers that failure inexplicable

"given the Department's assurance about the continued co-operation of the Justices' Clerks' Society."

It is still not possible to find out whether legal aid should be granted and, as a result,

"irregular expenditure is likely to result".

The PAC is seriously concerned that the Lord Chancellor's Department has no means of enforcing the regulations. It is a matter of urgency and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House whether the legal aid regulations are enforceable.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are two tests before someone can obtain legal aid? First, one has to ask whether it is in the interests of justice that the individual should do so. Secondly, there is a means test. As the Lord Chancellor's Department and the justices' clerks seem unwilling to deal effectively with means tests, is it not about time that the responsibility was taken from them and given, perhaps, to the Benefits Agency or another body that is more familiar with implementing means tests?

Sir Michael Shersby: My hon. Friend is right. I have considerable sympathy with his suggestion. There is much concern about the matter in my constituency and in my hon. Friend's. I can say that about my hon. Friend's constituency without a shadow of doubt because I am one of his constituents. There is general concern, however, that stems to some extent from the publicity that has been given to some high-profile cases such as those of Jawad Hashim and the Maxwell brothers. It is unacceptable to most ordinary citizens that grants of legal aid were made in some cases, given the large sums of taxpayers' money that were involved. Contributions were assessed on insufficient information about the applicants' claims to financial resources. We must remember the huge sums of public money that are at stake and the anger that has been expressed in certain newspapers—especially in the London *Evening Standard* but in many others—about a scheme that seems to most people to be extraordinary in its implementation.

I put several questions to the distinguished civil servant who is the permanent secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Sir Thomas Legg is also the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. In one instance, he replied that he could not say why grants of legal aid were made improperly because

"these assessments, or the lack of them, were made by the courts and here we are talking about 500 magistrates' courts that are dealing with over half a million applications a year."

I asked Sir Thomas if the Lord Chancellor has responsibility for the operation of the magistrates courts. He replied in a fascinating way. He said that it was "yes and no." He told me that my question required a two-part answer. I wondered whether I was listening to one of those wonderful Gilbert and Sullivan operas all over again. I was told that the magistrates courts are undertaking an essentially judicial function in granting or refusing legal aid and that they are not in any sense part of central Government.

It seems that members of the staff are not civil servants. They are not part of Sir Thomas's Department. They are not subject to the Department's direct control. Central Government, in the form of the Lord Chancellor's Department, grant-aids 80 per cent. of the expenditure of the courts, but it does not control the courts' administration in any detail. That is done by more than 100 local magistrates courts committees. According to Sir Thomas, they are fiercely independent of central Government. There we have it. Fiercely independent people are responsible for an extremely important job that is not, unfortunately, being done very well.

We are told that the Department and the Legal Aid Board have together produced a comprehensive guide that sets out what they consider to be the proper application of the interests of justice criteria, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) referred. It seems, however, that the various sets of guidance have not yet proved to be effective, bearing in mind the huge sums that are involved. I was assured that the Justices' Clerks Society is well aware of that view. I was told that

"if the present system, by which legal aid is granted by the magistrates' courts, cannot be seen to deliver propriety and regularity then the Lord Chancellor will have to consider taking that function away from the courts and vesting it in other hands."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will tell the House about the progress that the Lord Chancellor is making. Has he considered recently taking the responsibility away from the courts? If not, why not? After all, the record to date cannot be said to be very good. Public concern must be responded to urgently.

The PAC was told by the Legal Aid Board that over the past three years, there have been 12 prosecutions following alleged fraud on the green form scheme. It appears that 90 firms of solicitors have been reported to the police and about 90 to the bureau dealing with complaints about solicitors for abuse of legal aid. That is an unhappy situation. After all, we are dealing with an important profession.

The Legal Aid Board told the PAC that it has recovered £250,000 and was withholding £550,000 pending the outcome of inquiries. It appears that it has secured agreements with individual firms to refund a further £85,000, which has not yet been paid. Of all the cases investigated over the past two years, the board estimated that the loss through fraud would be between £1.9 million and £3 million. That is a significant sum. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will expand on the Treasury minute, which we have studied, which takes the matter a little further forward.

The 30th report, entitled "Entry into the United Kingdom", is one of the most important to come before the House. It deals with issues that affect almost every citizen. The decisions of the immigration service of the Home Office, which turn on whether many millions of passengers arriving each year at airports and ferry ports have valid

documents and are entitled to enter the country under our immigration laws, are of the greatest interest and concern. The report is of especial interest to my constituents because my constituency is adjacent to London airport. The House will know that Heathrow is in the borough of Hillingdon. That fact brings some special and expensive problems to the local authority, especially in caring for unaccompanied child refugees at a cost of much more than £1 million a year to council tax and income tax payers.

When the PAC examined the permanent secretary at the Home Office on this and other matters he told me, in answer to my questions, about the steps that are being taken to ensure the detection of child refugees when they leave the airport or vessel. Their entry into the United Kingdom appears to be a growing problem. He made the important point that the problem rests not so much with unaccompanied children but with such children who claim asylum. There were 357 in 1994. The rate at which they came in increased during the year. It was 69 in the first quarter of 1994, rising steadily to 109 in the final quarter. Heathrow is the principal port of entry.

After a good deal of correspondence with the Home Office, I was glad to be told that surveillance officers will be operating at the gates of airports and that closed circuit television will be used to detect young people when they arrive by aircraft. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell us what financial assistance can be provided to the borough of Hillingdon. As I have said, substantial sums are at stake.

I strongly believe that it is important for the House to approach the question of unaccompanied child refugees, bearing in mind the considerable problems that it poses for them and for those who have to care for them. I am glad to know that steps have been taken to investigate the possibility of the young persons concerned being repatriated to their country of origin—only, of course, where it is safe to do so—so that they can be cared for there instead of in the United Kingdom.

On the more general question of preventing illegal entry, I am glad that the immigration service has introduced a computerised suspect index at major ports. It provides the immigration service with almost immediate access to some 340,000 entries. It will even allow for the different way in which foreign names are spelt, so it looks as though we shall have some fairly sophisticated equipment to help with the difficult problem that is faced by the immigration service at Heathrow and elsewhere.

One or two of the comments in the Treasury minutes deal with these particular problems. The first is that on unaccompanied minors. In minute No. 84 of the Treasury minutes, which were published in Command 3013, we are told:

"The Immigration and Nationality Department continues to address the issue of children abandoned in the United Kingdom. A specialist section was established in May 1995 in order to consider asylum applications from unaccompanied minors. The Immigration and Nationality Department has agreed to co-operate with the British Red Cross Society in its project to establish a register of unaccompanied children to facilitate the restoration of family contacts and eventual reunion with their families. Additional measures and options to combat abuse of the immigration control, such as improved surveillance, procedures for documents/visa issue and extending the Airline Liaison officer programme are being considered and, where appropriate, pursued with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office."

I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that the investigation that is being carried out includes co-operation with the London borough of Hillingdon, which has unique experience of dealing with that difficult problem.

I just want to say how much I, and other members of the Committee, support the work that the immigration service is doing to build up its intelligence work so that it is able to detect the changes in the method used by people to gain illegal entry. The increasing use of forged documents is becoming a significant problem, which must be tackled with all the sophisticated technology that is available. The measures that have been taken have led to a significant increase in the number of immigration offenders detected, but there is no room for complacency. It is necessary for the service to use all the resources at its disposal if this illegal flow is to be stemmed.

The Committee also recommended that the immigration service keeps the size of the detention estate under review so that sufficient places are available to meet any increase in asylum cases and the number of passengers detained for further inquiries. Therefore, I was pleased to see from the Treasury minute that action is being taken to enhance the quality and size of the immigration service's detention estate, and to make more efficient use of available facilities. The Treasury minute tells us that there will be an increase in the total number of detention places available by mid-1997. It also tells us that it is intended to replace the 95-bed detention centre at Harmondsworth with larger, purpose-built accommodation. That move is very good, and long overdue. The immigration service also shares the Committee's concern about the use of police cells, which, as everyone who has studied this matter knows, are unsuitable for the detention of immigrants while their cases await examination.

Visa regimes are another important way of preventing illegal immigration. Pre-entry controls are supposed to transfer the problems back to the originating country. The PAC heard evidence to the effect that, out of 1 million applications for visas in 1994, 60,000 were refused. The controls that operate on entry into the country form the second line of defence, but the visa regime will, in my opinion, be effective only if our high commissions and embassies overseas are adequately staffed and entry clearance officers have sufficient time to interview each applicant properly. There also need to be adequate intelligence staff to investigate the information that is obtained, quite frequently from local sources.

Two weeks ago, I was in Sri Lanka for the annual general meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and took the opportunity to visit our high commission in Colombo and to discuss those matters in some detail with the visa officer. I was concerned to find that there is no intelligence officer in post in Colombo. Sri Lanka is a comparatively small source of illegal immigrants to the United Kingdom—there are about 1,000 a year, which is pretty small compared with a number of other countries—but if forged documents are to be detected, it is vital that adequate entry clearance and intelligence officers are in post overseas. I hope very much that my hon. Friend will look into that matter. I pay a warm tribute to the work of those entry clearance and intelligence officers overseas. A number of them are young officers, who have a difficult job to do in deciding that very emotive and personal question of whether a person should be granted a visa.

It is interesting to note that, between 1989 and 1993, the number of immigration offenders identified has steadily increased. Between those dates, the figure rose from 7,000 to 10,300. The Home Office told the Committee that, in 1994, the figure had gone up to 12,727.

[Sir Michael Shersby]

The proportion of people who were subject to further examination and subsequently refused leave to enter has also risen. The figures are quite dramatic. In 1992, 16,937 out of 60,623 passengers stopped for further examination were later refused leave to enter. In 1993, the respective figures were 19,000 and 63,000. In 1994, they were 23,000 and 66,000. Therefore, I hope that the Government will continue to make available to the immigration service the resources that are clearly necessary to deal with this rising trend.

The 27th report, dealing with general practitioner fundholding in England, is an important report because it is the first time that Parliament has, through the PAC, examined closely and at first hand the work being done by GP fundholders, and most important of all, the impact of the scheme on patients. It might be of some interest if I mention briefly to the House the evidence that we received from the national health service executive about the effect on patients. The report said:

"Many GP fundholders taking part in the National Audit Office survey said that they had achieved a wide range of benefits for their patients."

The report went on to say that GPs

"would not have said services had improved as a result of fundholding unless they believed this to be the case; GPs have been amongst the biggest critics of services provided by hospitals and other health services. They told us they had found that GPs had painted a realistic picture of the level of services provided and had demanded improvements in service, and that GPs had been quite successful in doing that . . . there was evidence that the impetus of GP fundholders had often led to faster turnaround times on pathology results and faster response times on discharge letter . . . The Executive stated that GP fundholders were often leading the way in relation to open access to physiotherapy, X-ray and reduced waiting times."

All the evidence that we received from the executive was very impressive, and led us to conclude that the fundholder service was working extremely well.

We also asked the executive

"whether all non-fundholding GP patients received all the benefits that patients of GP fundholders received. They considered that the fundholding scheme had not operated to the detriment of people who were registered with non-fundholding practices."

That, too, is important evidence.

The Committee was concerned about value for money; so we asked the executive

"whether the extra costs of administration would yield better value for money. They told us that GP fundholders were out performing non-fundholders in terms of coping with the ever increasing pressure on the drugs budget and that over the three years 1991-92 to 1993-94 they estimated that GP fundholders had saved in the order of £70 million on the costs of drugs."

That report should certainly be taken into account in consideration of the organisation of the national health service.

We also took account of the executive's view that

"fundholders have been achieving a faster delivery of patient care and improving the range and level of care; but that other initiatives, such as the Patient's Charter, will also have contributed to downward pressure on, for example, waiting times for hospital appointments."

There we have it: the GP fundholding scheme has not operated to the detriment of patients of non-fundholding GPs. It is working well, in conjunction with the patients charter, to achieve shorter turnaround times, shorter waiting lists and a better standard of medicine in our country.

As this is a highly political matter, I make no apology for stating that the PAC's work is not party political. One of our great attributes is that we try to examine impartially all the matters that come before us. I hope that all politicians who must decide whether the GP fundholding scheme is a good idea will pay attention to the interesting and useful report from which I have quoted.

I regard it as a great privilege to serve on the PAC. It is the one parliamentary Committee whose members have access to precise, factual information, and to an agreed report from the National Audit Office on which we can question witnesses. That is a powerful means of ensuring effectiveness, economy and efficiency in Government, and value for money for the taxpayer. When things go wrong, we can identify the mistakes and ensure that the Departments concerned learn the lessons. We always look forward to the Treasury minutes, which usually accept our recommendations. It would not stretch the figures too much, I think, to say that the PAC's work saves the taxpayer an average of well over £200 million a year.

5.43 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on his tour de force in opening our annual debate. As he said, we are considering 51 reports, which shows the depth and extent of the Public Accounts Committee's work in ensuring probity in the spending of money by the authorities to which Parliament has voted that money.

The report on general practitioner fundholding, referred to by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Sir M. Shersby), reveals a number of problems to which the hon. Gentleman did not draw attention. It shows, for instance, that fundholders currently have nearly £100 million in their balances, which they are not required to spend for four years. That is a great deal of money, which would be much better spent on patient care. The report also points out that 20 per cent. of fundholders have underspent their 1993-94 allocation by more than £100,000. That money, too, would have been much better spent on patients.

Mr. Langlands pointed out in his evidence to the Committee that the establishment of GP fundholding had cost the NHS £150 million—money that would have been better spent on health care than on bureaucracy. I am glad that Mr. Langlands placed that information on the record, especially for the purposes of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn).

In opening the debate, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee mentioned the 33rd report, which concerns irregularities at the Sana'a embassy in the Yemen. Those irregularities concern me, as they have clearly cost the taxpayer a great deal of money. The financial transactions carried out by Mr. Ryan probably imposed a direct cost of £300,000 on the taxpayer, and Mr. Ryan's profits were probably of the order of £600,000, although the amount is difficult to quantify. The cost of the investigation of the fraud was some £41,000, and 17 visits were paid to the Yemen at a cost of some £100,000.

Another part of the report draws attention to the fact that while Mr. Ryan was in the Yemen he negotiated the lease for the ambassador's dwelling in Sana'a. The

embassy is the most expensive in the diplomatic service. For a five-year period, it will cost the British taxpayer £1.35 million. It is clear that Mr. Ryan received what is known as a backhander for the contract. I find it astonishing that such an amount of taxpayers' money should be spent on an embassy, but I am even more astonished that a five-year lease cannot be renegotiated to save money for the taxpayer. That in itself is a disgrace.

We were not helped by the evidence of Sir John Coles, the permanent under-secretary of state and head of the diplomatic service. Just before the hearing, he submitted a note to the Committee saying that issues involved in some of the disciplinary hearings were sub judice, which made it impossible for the Committee to follow certain lines of questioning. I considered the attempt to constrain the PAC's role undesirable and criticism was made by the Committee itself.

The evidence given by Sir Jones Coles began straightforwardly: one ambassador had been removed from his post with no enhancement. By the time we finished taking evidence, however, two ambassadors had disappeared with enhancements at a cost to the public purse of £221,000 for the first and £131,000 for the second. They were given those enhancements so that they would take early retirement because they were incompetent at the job that they had been charged to do. That cost to the taxpayer could clearly have been avoided.

When we asked Sir John Coles why it had taken rigorous cross-examination to extract information from him, he came up with a number of less than convincing answers. He apologised for slightly misleading the Committee, saying that it was simply due to his "own poor memory": he did not set out to mislead the Committee, but his memory in regard to pension enhancement was defective and the facts had slipped his memory. He said that he was sorry if his evidence sounded evasive and stated:

"I appear to have misled the Committee".

That was an unconvincing body of evidence, and the report is damning. I believe that the two ambassadors involved in that pitiful example of poor expenditure of public money should have been sacked rather than being told to take voluntary retirement or compulsory redundancy.

Out of that inquiry, 153 recommendations for improvements to the internal audit of the diplomatic service have been brought forward. I hope that every one of them is being carried out and that when the Financial Secretary sums up the debate he will be able to give us that assurance.

The 23rd report of the Public Accounts Committee was published on 17 May 1995 and entitled, "Value for money at grant-maintained schools in England: a review of performance". It contains the second set of evidence that the PAC has taken on the issue of grant-maintained schools. Clearly, a number of issues remain to be resolved in the GM school funding sector. The PAC has drawn attention to the double funding of GM schools, where the Government overestimate the central service charges of local education authorities and underestimate the amount of money that they delegate in their local management of schools budget. That means that when the Government recover the annual maintenance grant paid to GM schools from LEAs they take more money than necessary from the LEAs and give it to the GM schools.

That inflated payment to GM schools is made at the direct expense of other schools in the LEA. That is robbing Peter to pay Paul. In Tower Hamlets and Lambeth, two regions of high deprivation in London, state schools were badly affected by that double funding. The PAC has called straightforwardly for

"the central services element of annual maintenance grant . . . to reflect accurately local education authorities' delegation of central services to schools."

We are pleased to note that the Government have taken that on board. Clearly, earlier action would have allowed authorities in Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and elsewhere to have the right level of funding available for schools remaining with the local education authority.

If we have a state system of education, it is essential that all schools in that system are treated fairly, and that all pupils receive a fair amount of grant per head in each school. The example that the PAC has identified has been reluctantly taken on board by the Government and we hope that within the next two years the practice will have been removed. We are assured that new schools coming into the GM sector will not benefit from such double funding.

One of the other problems with grant-maintained schools is the lack of declarations of pecuniary interest by governing bodies. In 22 of the 70 schools visited by the National Audit Office, there was either no register of pecuniary interest or the register had not been kept up to date. The Public Accounts Committee is charged with ensuring probity in the expenditure of public finances. One of the best ways of doing that, where school governing bodies are involved, is to ensure that each individual member declares a pecuniary interest, so that when a governing body awards a contract there is no conflict of interest and no question mark over the probity of those schools' actions.

I have been told that a number of hon. Members are lining up to participate in the debate and to ensure that my remarks are succinct and to the point. To go back to pecuniary interest—

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): More.

Mr. Hall: I am sure that that echo of encouragement will reflect on the points about pecuniary interest. Wherever contracts are awarded, whether it be in state schools under the local education authority or in grant-maintained schools, it is essential that a register of pecuniary interest should be maintained so that people who could be involved in the contract do not take part in decisions to award contracts to companies for which they work.

Clearly, we are concerned about some aspects of that matter in the incorporated and further education sectors. That approach is recommended by the PAC and its adoption by the Government would be a positive step. I look forward to hearing an assurance from the Financial Secretary that under the regulations of non-departmental public bodies it is a requirement to establish a register of pecuniary interest to ensure probity in the administration of public affairs.

Another example to which the Public Accounts Committee drew attention in relation to grant-maintained schools was their ability—or, currently, their lack of ability or legal power—to borrow money. We are assured that, where money has been borrowed or leased, its

[Mr. Hall]

legality may be questionable and that the Government are examining the matter. In evidence, the PAC has been told that when GM schools are given permission to borrow money, so long as the governing body has acted properly, within the scope of its functions and procedures, with honesty and without ulterior motive, and it has reasonably carried out its business in a commonsense way, it will be protected from the risk to its assets. That is straightforward. If the governing bodies have done it properly, there will be nothing for them to worry about.

I am still concerned about what will be used as security for the loans that GM school governing bodies may take out. Will it be the school buildings? Will it be some other form of security? If a loan is not paid back but defaulted on, what will happen next? We want some assurances from the Government that they have followed that aspect through. If GM schools start to take out large loans on school buildings, the value of the school playing fields or some other asset, and then default on their loans, we shall start to experience problems with the delivery of education. We want to be sure that that will not be the case. I do not want to be a member of the PAC in the future, to be asked to sit in judgment and to find out that loans have been defaulted on and that the Treasury has underwritten them and paid them off.

Another aspect of grant-maintained school funding that is of great concern involves evidence given to the PAC by the chief executive of the Funding Agency for Schools. Under cross-examination, he conceded that if they opted out of the national pay scheme head teachers and deputy head teachers in GM schools would be entitled to have what is commonly known as a company car and private medical health insurance as part of their remuneration.

Having spent a lifetime in education before coming to this place, I think—and I cannot be faulted for believing—that if money is available for company cars and private health care for heads and deputy heads, the money involved would be better spent directly on education provision. It is not the state's role to provide private health care for head teachers in the state sector. That is a totally inappropriate use of public funds. I look forward to the Financial Secretary saying some words about that when he responds to the debate.

Clearly, we want confirmation that double funding has now ended, that the annual maintenance grant is calculated accurately in relation to the LEA's expenditure on central services and takes into account how much money it delegates to its schools, and that schools which remain within LEAs are not disadvantaged by preferential finance going to schools in the GM sector. It is a straightforward view that schools in the state sector should all be equally and adequately funded.

The 40th report of the PAC has already been mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. It deals with the suspension of Dr. Bridget O'Connell and it is a woeful tale of inadequacy. The sums involved are quite substantial, given that one individual is involved. The final settlement will have cost the taxpayer just short of £600,000—a total of £593,409, which includes £439,259 in pay for doing nothing for more than 12 years, £105,000 in settlement of the legal case out of court, and £11,000 in legal expenses and enhanced superannuation benefits assuming that Dr. O'Connell will live to the age of 75.

Dr. O'Connell was suspended in 1982 by North East Thames regional health authority because she did not get on with the staff in the paediatric unit where she worked and in the hospital generally. It took 12 years to resolve that personal difference in the hospital. It is astonishing that things could get so far and that the chief executive of the national health service management executive, Mr. Langlands, had to settle out of court. Clearly, the NHS management executive did not have a leg to stand on.

In my cross-examination of Mr. Langlands, I suggested that he "sued for peace". He did not agree with my analysis of what had happened, but said that he thought that the settlement was the best value that could be gained for the taxpayer after the case had gone on for so long. The case should have been resolved a great deal earlier.

The other extraordinary aspect of the case is that the evidence from Sir Duncan Nichol, the former chief executive, and from Mr. Langlands himself shows that the NHS does not like gagging clauses in severance contracts. However, under examination Mr. Langlands confirmed that there was a gagging clause in Dr. O'Connell's contract. He said that he did not like it, but that he was not too concerned about it because he knew that the case would hit the headlines. He was certainly right about that. In all fairness, it was not the NHS executive that asked for the gagging clause, but Dr. O'Connell's solicitor. It would have been better if the NHS executive had resisted that request and published the details in full. It would have saved the Public Accounts Committee a great deal of time and effort.

I hope that the case will prove to be an isolated one. We have received an assurance from Mr. Langlands that he has trawled the NHS to ensure that there are no other examples of people receiving full pay for 12 years and enjoying the full benefits of pay increases year after year without turning a tap for the health service. There has been poor management and weak procedures. We want an assurance that the weak procedures have been sufficiently strengthened to ensure that nothing like this case could ever happen again at the expense of the taxpayer.

I wish to refer next to a report that I have mentioned previously in the House, entitled "Merseyside Development Corporation: Grand Regatta Columbus and Fanfare for a New World Concert"—the third in this series of PAC reports. I am extremely disturbed by the report and astonished at the amount of taxpayers' money that has been lost through the incompetence of the MDC. The concert and the regatta were the brainchild of the chairman, Sir Desmond Pitcher, who is coincidentally also chairman of North West Water.

As the PAC Chairman has already said, the two events cost the taxpayer and private business £1.1 million. They actually exceeded the permission on expenditure granted by the Department of the Environment. A letter from the Merseyside task force dated 3 March 1992 stated:

"Further to my letter of 23 January, my Headquarters have now agreed to MDC's proposals as set out in your letter of 20 December. However, they do not consider MDC to be underwriting expenditure but rather estimating a potential financial contribution."

There is then the key sentence:

"My colleagues have been reassured by your having estimated the maximum possible contribution in a worst case scenario, by your recognition that MDC expenditure will have to be met from within the EFL, and by the scope that exists for MDC to prune costs if necessary."

The cost referred to was about £200,000. The letter then said that if the MDC expected to spend any further money on the regatta, approval from the Department of the Environment should be sought first.

That was a clear instruction about the maximum that the DOE expected the MDC to spend or lose. The letter clearly said that if further contributions were required, approval should first be sought. The warning was clear even before approval was sought because the MDC had spent money on the regatta and the concert before it wrote to the DOE seeking permission.

On 12 July 1992, in an estimate of what the two events would cost, the MDC in a handwritten memorandum estimated the loss for the concert to be £187,840. The MDC knew that the event would lose money, yet it proceeded with the concert. It did not cancel it, nor were strict measures taken to mitigate the losses. The MDC carried on with the concert, but in a rather peculiar way. Four days before the concert took place it signed a deal with a private shell company, with a share value of £2, to take over the whole of the financial responsibility for the concert and the regatta.

With the stroke of a pen, the MDC transferred the losses from the public purse to the private purse. That was deplorable. It knew that the events would lose money, so it moved the debt from the public to the private sector. Private business on Merseyside was left £375,819 out of pocket. That is a phenomenal amount of money which the MDC wrote off with the stroke of a pen for an event that was the brainchild of its chairman.

Questions must be asked about the clear lack of supervision by the Department of the Environment. Questions must also be asked about the role of the Merseyside development corporation, which has played fast and loose with public money. From the response by the Treasury to date, it appears that nothing is to be done.

In addition to those losses, the MDC gave away £100,000 worth of tickets. Hospitality was overspent and the whole thing was a complete shambles. However, three and a half years later, not one member of the board has been removed from office and the chairman is still in place. The time has come for action. First, the private sector should have its losses reimbursed. Secondly, disciplinary action should be taken within the MDC so that future activities will be kept within the terms of its charter to oversee the economic regeneration of Merseyside, rather than fall in blindly with the wishes and whims of its chairman to produce glossy brochures about fanfares which prove to be a heavy cost on the taxpayer.

I end with the report entitled, "The Proper Conduct of Public Business", the eighth report of the 1993-94 Session, which draws attention dramatically to the failures identified by the PAC. It states:

"In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years. This was the period following the publication of the Northcote and Trevelyan Report".

The PAC has considered 51 reports this year and it is obvious that there are still serious problems with the proper conduct of public business. However, it is not the final tale of the PAC's work over the past 12 months because a number of reports are yet to come before the House. There are to be reports on fraud in the Metropolitan police, the royal palaces, the Mount Vernon sale, the sale of county hall and the incompetencies of the Child Support Agency. Those are five major reports that we can look forward to debating in 12 months' time. I hope that there will then be a far better picture of the proper conduct of public business within the United Kingdom.

6.8 pm

Mr. Chris Davies (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me this early opportunity to complete the last of the three key initiation rites required to become a fully fledged Member of Parliament. It is almost three months since I passed the first and most important test, when the people of Littleborough and Saddleworth elected me to represent them.

I want to begin my speech with a few words about my predecessor, Mr. Geoffrey Dickens. In a parliamentary career spanning 16 years, he became a familiar figure on the Conservative Benches. For 10 of those years, I was his political opponent locally, and, in truth, found that our views rarely coincided—but I always knew that he was not a man to underestimate.

From the moment of his election, Mr. Dickens made his home in the constituency. His total commitment to the area that he represented was never in doubt, and he will long be remembered locally as a Member of Parliament who served his constituents well and as an individual who had the ability to mix comfortably with people from all walks of life and all backgrounds.

Mr. Dickens was literally a larger than life figure. His opinions made him a popular speaker at Conservative party conferences, although they were perhaps not always welcomed by some hon. Members. I understand that, from time to time, the views that he expressed here were heard with amusement, but Geoffrey Dickens possessed a most important virtue—that of being able to tell a joke against himself. It was a characteristic of the man's humanity which was much to be admired.

We should not forget that Mr. Dickens also became known as a leading parliamentary campaigner against the sexual abuse of children, helping to bring the issue to public attention more than a decade ago. His campaign gained support across party lines, and his efforts deserve full and proper public acknowledgement. For seven months, he fought cancer with cheerfulness and courage, and his death robbed his family of a much-loved husband and father, and the House of one of its real characters.

A hard-fought by-election projects a constituency into the spotlight. I am sure that most of my constituents will have been pleased about the way in which their local area was portrayed, as visiting journalists found that their impressions of Oldham and Rochdale, which were perhaps perceived as grim, dark and oppressive places, were proved false, and that the towns and villages of Littleborough and Wardle, Milnrow and New Hey, Shaw and Crompton and Lees and Saddleworth, all proved to have a distinctive character.

Far from being dark, grim and oppressive, those places proved cheerful. Journalists discovered that, from a doorstep in almost every part of the constituency, one can see over the rooftops to the south Pennine hills.

My constituency is indeed an attractive area. That fact was brought to the fore by television coverage of the by-election. I admit to nursing a desire to see its further

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enhancement by the removal of the electricity pylons which mutilate some of its finer views and the replacement of the barbed wire fences with restored stone walls, but with up to 10 million people living within an hour's travelling distance of the constituency, and especially the south Pennines, the countryside is fragile and under constant threat from those who seek to use it for commercial advantage.

Activities that were once acceptable when the area was part of the cradle of the industrial revolution are no longer acceptable when the population grows and the open countryside recedes. Those activities must now be curbed.

I cite, for example, the problem of the planned recommencement of quarrying in New Hey, which I strongly believe is no longer an appropriate activity now that traffic density is so much greater and lorries are so much larger. I seek greater protection for the countryside from such developments, and in particular, for our sites of special scientific interest, a topic partly dealt with by the Public Accounts Committee in its 11th report, on which I shall comment later.

Our hills and moorland are beautiful and precious and deserve special protection, but they are bereft of people, and it was the people of Littleborough and Saddleworth who elected me. During the by-election campaign, I spoke out strongly for change, for investment in public services—especially education—for those in politics to be more honest about the problems we face as a society, and for all hon. Members to look more to the long-term needs of our country—and, indeed, of our planet.

The House provides opportunities—many opportunities, perhaps—for individual Members to raise matters of concern on behalf of their constituents. I certainly intend to use those opportunities to the full, but I have long nursed the gravest doubts about whether the institution itself is capable of performing the essential functions that my constituents and others have the right to expect from their legislative assembly.

Parliament should ensure that legislation is sensibly considered and emerges clear and effective, but few of my constituents believe that the chaos of rail privatisation demonstrates for a moment that it succeeds in doing that. Parliament should ensure that it provides real challenges to the policies and practices of public and private sector organisations when that is needed.

Although I greatly admire the work of the PAC and the Select Committees, I fear that they are exposed as toothless tigers in the face of even the slightest Government resistance. Parliament should be able to challenge the Government when Executive power is abused, but that will never be the case so long as the whipping system prevails in the larger parties, and there is no proper separation of powers. My first few days in this place have done nothing to dispel these concerns.

To walk into the inner sanctum of the Members' Dining Room and look up at the pictures of Gladstone and Disraeli is to be reminded that so much of the present House of Commons was moulded in their day; but that day was 120 years ago. Those Prime Ministers in their time were reformers who worked to broaden the franchise. I wonder whether they would be pleased to know that in the last years of the 20th century, the people of Britain still do not possess votes of equal value, and that our democratic system is so flawed that, for 16 years, it has kept in place a Government opposed by 57 per cent. of the voters, and denies millions of Liberal Democrat, Green and even true socialist supporters the representation in the House to which their votes should entitle them.

I found from the Library that I am the 68th—only the 68th—person to be elected as a Liberal or Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament since the end of the second world war, yet the votes that my party won at the previous general election alone would have entitled it to more than 100 Members of Parliament under any system that genuinely purported to be democratic. It means, I fear, that the very basis of representation in the House is a sham and a disgrace.

The House of Commons may be a cosy club for those who are here, but radical reform is needed if it is once again to do the job for which it is intended, and to wipe away some of the cynicism with which it is now regarded by the majority of people in this country.

As we have heard, however, there is much to admire in the work of the PAC. I am pleased that it has turned its attention to matters such as the protection of sites of special scientific interest. Of the almost 3,800 such sites in England, just four are in Oldham, and one, I understand, in Rochdale, covering the south Pennine moors. They represent the basic minimum area of habitat that needs to be conserved if the range and distribution of plants and animals in this country is to be maintained. It must therefore be a matter of great concern that nearly a quarter of these exceptional areas have been damaged in the past seven years alone. That is on the basis of English Nature's figures, which I think are generally accepted to be an underestimate of the true situation.

Within its limited remit, the PAC report makes some reasonable suggestions. Although I have some doubts about recommendations that, for example, English Nature should be finding ways to reduce the average payment made in return for a management agreement, I generally endorse them. However, surely more consideration should be given to the promotion of positive conservation measures within such agreements, rather than simply paying owners not to cause damage in the first place. I commend to the House the ideas for the protection of SSSIs in the draft wildlife Bill being prepared by Friends of the Earth.

The PAC's 42nd report deals with renewable energy research. The PAC is absolutely right to ask rigorous questions about the way in which public money is being spent, even though the £20 million a year spent on such research is tiny in comparison with the money poured into nuclear research and subsidy for many decades. I fear, however, that the Committee's narrow remit prevents it from taking the wider and longer-term view which should be so essential in energy matters. The basis of our economy continues to rest on the exploitation of finite resources laid down over millions of years. We continue to use that precious asset as though it were infinite, with no attempt in our national accounts to make allowances for depreciation. The present exploitation of our limited gas reserves demonstrates that short-term approach only too well.

The potential for energy conservation in this country is still said to be immense: sufficient to reduce energy consumption by 50 per cent., I am told. Such a programme would conserve the country's resources, generate employment and reduce energy costs. But so long as our finite energy resources continue to be treated

as infinite, market forces alone will never encourage such investment and energy conservation measures to take place.

In recognition of the fact that the protection of our environment and the earth's resources is a duty for all of us in elected positions, many enlightened local authorities are now including environmental impact statements in reports, so that councillors may take account of the full long-term consequences of their actions, which so often fall outside the narrow scope of a local authority's balance sheet. The metropolitan borough of Rochdale is one authority which now conventionally makes use of environmental impact statements. Indeed, the metropolitan borough of Oldham, of which I am still a member, is starting to do the same.

I would feel happier about the PAC's recommendations if its conclusions took account of environmental impact in the same way. I hope that the Committee will consider such a course in future. It would be a step which might well influence its future judgments, and would deserve a warm welcome.

6.21 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Davies) on surviving the ordeal of the maiden speech. Everyone who comes to this House says that it does not matter how experienced one is in public speaking or in broadcasting, making one's first speech in the House is a very intimidating experience. The hon. Gentleman spoke with great clarity and strength of feeling. There is a tradition that one is non-controversial in maiden speeches—and he almost managed it—although I think that it is observed more in comment than in practice.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth on the graciousness of his comments about his predecessor, for whom there was great affection in the House. His predecessor was one of the personalities and characters of the House. All of us, especially those of us who are a little longer in the parliamentary tooth than others, would say that it is one of the sadnesses of Parliament that there are fewer personalities today than the history books lead us to believe—perhaps—that there were in the past.

I remember when I had to make my maiden speech—it is relevant to the party of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth because I was sitting in its corner of the Chamber—on the first motion of censure of the 1964 Wilson Government. I go back that far, so there is hope yet for the hon. Gentleman since I too won a marginal seat.

The Speaker got in touch with me in the morning, with the kindness that Speakers and Deputy Speakers always show to hon. Members who are about to make their maiden speeches, and said, "I just thought that I would let you know, you will be speaking fourth this afternoon." I said, "Oh really. It is a motion of censure. What does that mean?" I was told that Alec Douglas-Home would open, Harold Wilson would speak second, Jo Grimond would be third and I was fourth. I immediately volunteered to make my maiden speech the following week. However the Speaker of the day was rather adamant about such things, and as I had put in to make my maiden speech, I had to make it.

In the end I need not have worried. That is not meant in any derogatory way. I sat there listening to the first vicious attack by Alec Douglas-Home on the Wilson Government, followed by Harold Wilson making a rather humorous reply, and became increasingly depressed. But when the Speaker stood up as Harold sat down and called Mr. Jo Grimond, I am sorry to tell the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth that about 600 Members stood up and walked out.

That happened not because there was not great affection for Jo Grimond—there was—and it was not due to lack of respect for him. He was a good questioner and a delightful colleague, but he was not noted for making the most stirring of speeches. So I congratulate the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth on commanding an audience approximately four times the size that I was able to command on that particular day.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth made an important point when he referred to the need for us to have regard to finite resources and not to treat energy sources as though they are infinite. History will show that the great tragedy of this century, and the great opportunity of the post-war era, was the period of energy plentifulness in the 1980s, which was sadly squandered. Energy cannot be made infinite, but we could have reinvested the surpluses, the profits, the returns to the Exchequer from the North sea, which could have given the country further earning power through a second industrial revolution. None the less, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and wish him well. I hope that he has many more years in the House and I look forward to hearing him when he is in a more confrontational mood, when I shall remember not to sit too near.

I want to make only a couple of main points—I am sorry to depress my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo). The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth referred to Select Committees as being toothless tigers. Most of us would recognise a great deal of truth in that. That is not to underestimate what they have achieved. The innovation of the Select Committee system, based on shadowing individual Departments, is probably one of the most important innovations of the past quarter of a century. They have done a great deal of good work, but the problem for Parliament and members of the Committee is shown by today's debate.

Here we are, with a massed audience in the House and an even fuller Gallery—I am talking of course about the Press Gallery *[Laughter.]* We are trying to discuss 51 reports in one day. Yet in doing that, we are privileged because the other Select Committees have great difficulty in finding any time in which to consider their reports. The Government are only too happy to put the reports on a shelf and leave them there. So the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth is quite correct in saying that if parliamentary accountability means anything, we have to consider the next stage for Select Committees to ensure that they have more bite and more power.

For the PAC and the House—if I may return to a particular hobby horse: the process of parliamentary accountability—regardless of the rights and wrongs of the development of agencies and trusts, such bodies present a problem in accountability, in that they create increasing numbers of accounting units. There has been a proliferation of accounting units which have to be monitored and audited, on which the NAO may need to

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report, and on which we as members of the PAC have to deliberate. I know that the following viewpoint commands support from just one member of the Committee at this stage—myself. We shall have to consider whether, at some stage, we go down the route of some of the other Select Committees and break down into a Sub-Committee system because inevitably, the Public Accounts Committee is the bottleneck in the whole system. Any Government can create extra accounting units as they wish. The National Audit Office can expand, given the manpower which, in fairness, it has had and the resources it has had, to accommodate those extra accounting units. What cannot expand under the present format is the capacity of the Public Accounts Committee.

Hon. Members who have served on the Committee and anyone who has been acquainted with the Committee will confirm that it is extremely hard working. One of the difficulties and joys of the Public Accounts Committee is that unlike other Select Committees which consider the same subject week after week, pursuing it in great depth, we have the problem that on a Monday, we consider something to do with the Department of Health and then on Wednesday, we consider major capital projects in the Ministry of Defence. Sitting as a whole, as we do at the moment, we could not accommodate a larger work load from the National Audit Office. I return, therefore, to my suggestion to my right hon. and hon. Friends that at some time, we must consider whether a Sub-Committee system would be appropriate.

I join in congratulating our Chairman, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), on the diplomatic and assiduous way in which he manages to keep the Committee together and to keep the consensus which marks the Committee. That does not mean that we do not have different viewpoints. It does mean that when we produce reports, they are unanimous simply because individuals have made concessions—I am talking about all Committee members—when they disagree with various points and because they regard getting the main report out as the most important objective.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has carried out his work in a way that has won admiration from hon. Members on both sides. I also pay tribute to the National Audit Office and to the Clerk—I should say Clerks—of our Committee. I use the plural because we have had several Clerks. The Committee is a good training ground for hon. Members. Indeed, for Opposition Members, it seems to have become almost an essential part of progress towards Front-Bench service. The Public Accounts Committee has become for us what the Whips Office has been, for many years, for the Conservative party. I notice a smirk of pleasure on the face of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), the Government Whip, in anticipation of the logical consequence of what I have just said about the Conservative Whips Office. The Opposition treat the Public Accounts Committee as somewhere where one can get good experience of how Governments work, how Departments work and how the Committee system works.

One of the most interesting of our reports this year—I shall not deal with it in great depth—is the report on the Trident base. The project was important not only because it was the biggest civil engineering programme, second only to the channel tunnel, in this country, but because it was fascinating as a case study of how not to go about managing a capital project. One could hardly find a more perfect example of many errors bundled together.

There was an £800 million overrun on the Trident base. We must be fair to the Ministry of Defence. I am not saying that an overrun is the same as being wasteful and I am not saying that money was squandered or used improperly. The overrun happened because despite the scale of the project, it was devised as it was being built, day by day. Some 7,200 variations were introduced in the design of a ship lift alone. There were as many as 10 variations a day throughout the life of the project. Anyone who has experience of a major construction will know that that is a contractors' paradise because every variation means a renegotiation. In effect, the Ministry of Defence completely lost financial control of the project, and it is worth mentioning for just that reason.

I understand the strategic reasons and we well understand that the Government said that a policy decision was being taken which had to be implemented as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, although the errors may have been made as a result of a desirable objective from the Government's point of view, as they may concede, it is important that we as a House of Commons do not overlook the lessons that, clearly, should be learnt.

With some regret, I now turn to matters Celtic. I am glad to say that despite a rather bad press at times for some of the Welsh quangos, the reality is that almost all the organisations at which we look in the Public Accounts Committee and which have problems are London based rather than based in Wales or in Scotland. We must be careful not to get one or two instances that relate to Wales, to Scotland or to Northern Ireland out of proportion. However, that does not alter the fact that one cannot condone what happened at the Welsh Development Agency.

It is a matter of sadness to anyone who cares for the future of Wales that an agency on which we depend for inward investment and for the strategic development of our economy fell into the hands of people who did not understand the public ethic and who did not necessarily share the civil service attitude towards probity and standards of conduct. We had a fly-by-night period at the Welsh Development Agency and, I am sad to say, one particular individual who was responsible for appointments, from outside politics, made appointments in his own likeness.

Unfortunately, the cutting of corners, which may or may not have been well intentioned, led to the first report on the WDA. Again, we had the gagging clauses, the free cars for private use as well as for business use, redundancy schemes that had never had Treasury approval and did not conform to Treasury rules and, above all, the case of the operation known as Wizard. A group of senior members of the WDA connived at using public funds, through three consultancies, to try to devise a package for management buy-outs—that is really what it was all about—of the most lucrative parts of the WDA. So that the Treasury and the Welsh Office would not know what was going on, the three consultancy projects were spread into different parts of the budget. It was hoped that no one would realise that an attempt was being made to undermine the standing of the WDA.

Again, it is salutary to realise—we have referred to this before—that even the National Audit Office, for which we all have enormous respect, did not discover Wizard, so well was it buried. We came to know about Wizard only because we were contacted by a couple of whistle-blowers within the Welsh Development Agency who were appalled at what they saw and came to meet three members of the Committee in one of the small Committee Rooms next to the Great Hall to tell us what was going on. The Chairman of the Committee could confirm that, for the first time in a PAC report, we praised people for leaking, and we stated in the report that had it not been for those whistle-blowers, we would not have been aware of what was going on.

I say to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth that, while I am aware of the courtesies of the House, he may want to make comments to the press and—I mean this nicely—I do not want him to feel that he has to sit through my tedious speech as a courtesy. The hon. Gentleman should by all means feel free to leave the Chamber, because most of what I shall be talking about will not be familiar to him.

I am sad to say that the Welsh Development Agency reappeared on the scene in another matter when its conduct was utterly unacceptable, as the Treasury itself indicated. There was a virtual conspiracy between one senior member of the Welsh Development Agency and other parties in a joint venture set up with local authorities to promote a property deal in the Aberdare area, and to deliberately try to sink an existing project that was being developed by others in which a great deal of money had been invested.

Prior to the joint venture with the Welsh Development Agency, Tesco had been in discussion with another company called Landare relating to a site elsewhere in the valley. Landare had not only achieved planning permission for the development from the local authority, but had reached an agreement on planning gain in which the council would receive a sports hall and transport facilities as part of the project. But the project needed one more thing. The two councils that owned the property had agreed to sell a narrow strip of land which blocked the access from the site to the main road, as this was crucial to the project.

The joint venture between the Welsh Development Agency and the councils was chaired by a director of the WDA, and the WDA board decided that Tesco would not be allowed to bid for the site which the WDA was developing as part of that joint venture. A deadline was set, and tenders were invited. The tenders were received, and the councils and the joint venture team decided to have further discussions on the final details of the proposals with the bidders. Then, out of the blue, Tesco—which, we understood, had been banned from bidding in the contest—came in with a bid after the final date for bids which, lo and behold, proved to be the highest.

Understandably, the Committee was deeply concerned, and the Chairman pinpointed the fact that Tesco had two representatives on the board of the Welsh Development Agency—the then chairman of the agency, Dr. Jones, was a director of Tesco, while another member of the board still is a director of the company. After the bids had been opened, and when one would have thought that the last financial offer had been received, in came Tesco whose bid won the day. There were delays to allow Tesco to get its bid in, and meetings were postponed to ensure that the company could make its bid.

We received assurances from Mr. Scholar, the permanent secretary—who, in fairness, was not the permanent secretary at the time this happened—that the two directors of Tesco had declared their interests and had taken no part in the making the decision. But the crucial point was made by the Chairman, who said that although the two gentlemen may have taken no part in the decision-making process, who can say what information was passed from them to other people? The Committee felt, and this was a point with which the Treasury agreed, that such conduct was utterly unacceptable and way below the standards we would expect from a public body.

Having received the bid from Tesco, the parties involved then set out calculatedly to sabotage the other side. In questioning Mr. Scholar, I quoted a minute of a meeting of the joint venture in which a letter from Chestertons, the agents and advisers for the sale of the site, to the Welsh Development Agency was read. The letter said that Chestertons was "facing untimely competition" from an alternative site, and went on to say:

> "The scenario outlined above is of great concern as it may prejudice or even possibly prevent the successful disposal of the Gadlys site . . . The answer to this potential problem is to minimise any opportunity for an operator to swap sides. In this particular case . . . this is possible, given that the Joint Venture partners control the access to . . . the alternative site".

The parties involved then tried to ensure that the councils—which had offered to sell to Landare land that was crucial for access—withdrew their offer, which would completely blight that site. The site would then cease to be an attraction to the retailer Landare had in mind, or to anyone else. I am sure that Conservative Members who have not been involved in this matter would admit that if they were being treated in such a manner by a governmental body, they would feel that that body was stepping way beyond its powers.

I received at my house one Sunday a copy of a report by Vernon Pugh QC. He said in the report that the Welsh Development Agency was guilty of half truths and untruths, had acted ultra vires and was guilty of serious omissions.

The report by the QC had been delivered to the Welsh Office, but the Welsh Office did not deliver it to the office of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne so that he was aware of it before our hearings. So, with the hearing on Wednesday, there was a ring on the bell at my home in Swansea and, to my surprise, on the doorstep was my predecessor as Member of Parliament for Swansea, West. A Conservative represented the seat until 1964. He was acting for Landare in a professional capacity. He brought me a copy of the QC's document. It was devastating.

What followed was even worse. Not only did the report show that there had been conduct by the WDA which was unacceptable by any standards, but the way in which it was subsequently ignored revealed that there was a wish to pretend that it did not exist. There was a wish to bury it. In fairness, Mr. Hugh Rees, who was a Government Whip from 1959 to 1964 during the Conservative Administration and a former director of the WDA, did not try to embarrass his party. Instead of making a public fuss about the matter, he started writing letters to try to get things dealt with on the basis of sensible discussion.

Mr. Rees wrote to the then permanent secretary at the Welsh Office. The permanent secretary did not write back to him directly, but telephoned and suggested that Mr.

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Rees might see someone from the WDA rather than himself. This Mr. Rees agreed to do. He also wrote to various Ministers, including the then Minister of State, Welsh Office, the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), and the then Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). He also wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister, who was originally a Swansea man. No one really wanted to know. Indeed, the sort of answer that Mr. Rees received was summed up by the brief letter from the Minister of State, which said:

"As you know, the new Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency has looked into the Agency's involvement in the Tir Founder Fields case very carefully. His conclusion is that, while he believes matters might have been handled more tactfully, the complaints made against the Agency are in the main unjustified."

Anyone who read the Pugh report would find it impossible to say that the complaints were unjustified. No Minister has made the slightest attempt to respond to the points that were made in that report. For that reason, I believe that my ex-opponent and his commercial colleagues have a legitimate grievance to air against the Government. I believe that Ministers should answer to the House for the way in which they, rather than behaved, have failed to behave.

The last report with which I wish to deal is on the occupied royal palaces. It was inevitable that I would refer to it in view of my special interest in the subject, but I shall be brief. The report is important because it is the first time that Parliament has examined in detail any of the money that is spent on the royal household. I must admit that I could not carry my colleagues on the Committee with me. I wanted to examine the whole £50 million that is spent by the various Departments. I could get agreement to examine only the £25 million that was then being spent on the occupied royal palaces.

Even more worthy of examination would be the £20 million that is spent on royal travel. I have had to do a great deal of the work on that myself, through parliamentary questions. The occasion was interesting because Parliament is incredibly sycophantic about matters royal. I do not understand for the life of me why we should apologise for asking why a family which has two palaces of its own needs five palaces of ours. It seems legitimate for me to ask that question. It is appropriate to seek answers as to why five palaces are needed.

It emerged that the palaces were not needed to house the royal family. I question whether we have a duty to house the wider royal family. The palaces were needed for 280 grace-and-favour apartments. We would not quibble about some of the apartments. They are for people working on the estate—the equivalent of a tied cottage. No one begrudges someone such accommodation. However, it is a different matter when it comes to lavish accommodation in Kensington palace and so on, occupied by people who, as I see it—I recognise that this is not the way the Committee necessarily sees it—are protected by the aura of the Crown and the deference which is shown in the House to anything royal. They have escaped for many years the sort of attention that should be paid to the benefits that they enjoy at the taxpayer's expense. I am referring now to the royal civil service—the royal household.

The Committee called as a witness Mr. Peat, formerly of Peat Marwick. He put up a spirited defence of the grace and favour system. Towards the end of the hearing, the impact of that defence was somewhat diminished when my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) was discourteous enough to ask him whether he had a grace-and-favour house. He said that he did not, but he hoped to move into one in a few months.

Mr. Hall: He has achieved that ambition.

Mr. Williams: Indeed, he has now moved in. It strikes me as incredible that we should sanguinely accept that more than £250,000 was spent on furnishing, fixtures, fittings and decoration for that one apartment so that someone who already had a house in Battersea could live in Kensington palace. In order to be near his work in Buckingham palace, he had to be housed in Kensington palace. It is the most nonsensical case I have ever heard.

I must be careful not to go into too much detail because we are producing a second report on the matter. What worries me is the obstruction that one comes up against from the Department and from the palace when one simply tries to obtain information. For example, 46 of the senior members of the royal household—not the royal family, but the royal civil service—enjoy lavish accommodation because, or so we were told, it is necessary to facilitate their work and increase their efficiency in carrying out their work for the palace.

I ask two simple questions. May we know whether those 46 staff work part time or full time—not exactly a dangerous question—and may we have a job description for each of them? I have been told no—that Parliament is not entitled to that information because those people are paid from the civil list.

We cannot ask even general questions about the civil list, as I know that a Clerk of the House would confirm—such as whether, in the most general sense, the civil list has been exceeded—so we cannot ask detailed questions. The royal household continues to refuse to provide the information that I have asked for about the work that those people do and whether it is full time or part time.

Yet there is a flaw in the argument of the royal household, and it should be important to the House. We were told that part of those people's salary is the accommodation. We were told that they cannot be offered the salaries that they might command elsewhere. In evidence we were told that therefore the accommodation makes the job more attractive to them. However, that accommodation is not paid for from the civil list; it is paid for from grant in aid. If it was paid for from grant in aid from the Department of National Heritage, I am entitled—Parliament is entitled—to know what work those people do and whether they work full time or part time, in order to judge whether the public receive good value for money in allowing them to have that accommodation in addition to the salaries, whatever they may be, that they receive from the civil list.

To the best of my knowledge, unless the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, has heard anything since I last discussed the subject, as yet we have had no firm decision as to whether that information will be forthcoming.

In the same way, I found out that, during the five years before the £0.25 million was spent on Mr. Peat's accommodation, the six directors of the royal household

had £325,000 spent on decorations and furnishing. I am now trying to find out how much they have had since the provision of furnishing and decoration and so on started in 1982. Every obstacle is being placed in the way.

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am horrified at that lack of transparency about matters relating to taxpayers' money. Some of my constituents survive on housing benefit; some must sign away their homes to obtain care in old age. Yet I am not allowed to obtain the information that I need about people who live in the grandest housing benefit scheme that anyone has ever devised. The royal household is not willing to provide us with the information that I want.

I apologise for going on for so long. I apologise especially to the Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), who I know is deeply concerned that my comments should be as succinct as possible. I hope that, if I voluntarily sit down now, I shall have done my share to facilitate a 10 o'clock Division.

7.2 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) that it was most enlightening for members of the Committee to hear someone with such knowledge, especially of what I would call the housing benefit scam for the elite, which the Government do not appear to be worried about tackling.

Obviously, several Public Accounts Committee reports are of interest to me as a Scottish Member. I look forward to the final report on the Health Care International (Scotland) Ltd. inquiry. We have the minutes of evidence of Wednesday 21 June 1995 with us. If a private investor had subsidised a company to the tune of £27.6 million and a further £9.4 million, and that company had gone into receivership in less than a year, there would have been a scandal and a serious investigation.

We have evidence before us, in paragraph 3 of page 1 of the report, that Health Care International (Scotland) Ltd. built a hospital in Clydebank in the Clydebank enterprise zone, that expenditure of £9.4 million was incurred by the Scottish Office to make the site safe and capable of development, and that further various forms of public assistance totalling £27.6 million were provided to that company.

The subsidies were within the budget until July 1994, but, by February 1995,

"the receivers announced that a new company, HCI Holdings Ltd, which is wholly owned by the Abu Dhabi Investment Company, had taken over the HCI project"

and that the money that we had put in had been lost to the country.

There was serious talk of further subsidies going to the Abu Dhabi Investment Company to entice it to take over the project. That was a private hospital that said that it would gather money by bringing patients from throughout the world to use top world-class surgeons in Scotland, and thereby bring a great deal of money into Scotland's economy. What happened was that more than £36 million of public money went into that project, to be lost for ever.

I shall not speak at length about that, because I hope that we have a chance to debate the final report, and that the Government will be seen to be so obsessed with the private sector in medicine in Scotland and throughout the country that they are willing to throw public money at it without any thought for proper corporate governance.

I wish to discuss the 48th report of the Public Accounts Committee, entitled "Management and Sale of Houses in Borders Region". I am often told by colleagues that, when one discusses Scottish matters in the House, one speaks a foreign language, because there is not a great deal of interest in them, but the following case translates well into the experiences of public housing authorities in England and Wales.

The anxieties expressed in the report are many. On page v of the report, in paragraph 3, the Committee states:

"We are disturbed that the Department allowed the contract to manage these houses to be awarded without competition."

That is the Government who said that we should have open competition, that competition was good for us, and that the market was the way to clean out the bureaucracies. Yet they were found in that case to have awarded the management of the houses in the Borders to a new housing association, the Waverley, without any other competitor being allowed to bid. As will be seen if one continues to read the report, the Waverley did it in such a way that serious questions arose about whether it even offered to do so efficiently.

The houses in what became the Waverley housing trust had been managed directly by Ettrick and Lauderdale council on behalf of Scottish Homes for 13 years, and the management costs were considerably less than those that were in the bid for management by Waverley Housing. In fact, the report states that Waverley Housing, in the management contract, offered to manage the houses for £2.5 million and spend a further £1.1 million after the sale of the houses as a result of improvements—basically improvements in the fabric of the buildings. However, Ettrick and Lauderdale council had been able to manage the houses for considerably less than the sum that Waverley Housing bid.

One would suppose that the Government would have considered the Ettrick and Lauderdale bid, and said, "They are able to manage those houses for much less than Waverley, so let them continue to manage them." That would have made sense to anyone. However, the Government, in the context of the United Kingdom and of Scotland especially, are obsessed with trying to destroy public sector housing in Scotland and trying to force a false third sector into existence.

In spite of the wish of the tenants of those houses to have Ettrick and Lauderdale council as their landlord, they were not allowed the choice of a public authority that had proven itself to be efficient. They had to take what the Government called the only bidder in town—Waverley Housing.

That is in spite of the fact that we see on page vii, paragraph 5 that

"an experienced housing association (Eildon Housing Association) had also expressed an interest"

in those houses. It was not just a matter of debarring the public sector and the local authority, which had managed the houses so efficiently; the Government debarred anyone else who was in the third sector—the housing association sector—from even putting in a bid. That is unacceptable.

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

The Government's stated purpose in allowing competition is given in paragraph 3(iv) of the report:

"This is not only to secure the best possible value for the taxpayer but to help ensure that the public bodies concerned can demonstrate a clear arm's length relationship with those wishing to bid for the provision of services."

That cannot be achieved only by examining public accounts.

The feeling of the people of Scotland is that people in the Scottish Office were under ministerial instruction or persuasion to cosy up to certain senior public officials who had previously worked for local authorities and who had put together the concept of Waverley and ensure that the way was smoothed for Waverley to get the contract to manage the houses in 1989. The Scottish Special Housing Association, which was the predecessor of Scottish Homes, gave the management contract to Waverley in February 1989.

The Scottish Special Housing Associations's costs for managing 1,800 houses had been £1.2 million yet the Government accepted a bid, without competition, from Waverley to manage 1,300 houses—not 1,800, but 1,300—for £2.4 million. How can the transfer of those houses at twice the cost be justified? It cannot be justified. People are therefore deeply suspicious of the management relationship that was set up by the Scottish Office.

The Government went further in March 1992, when they sold 1,191 houses to the Waverley housing association, once again without any other competitor being allowed to bid. The local authorities and Eildon housing association were debarred from bidding and so Waverley had a free run. Not only did it obtain a lucrative—and expensive—management contract, but it was then allowed to buy the houses without competition.

The Public Accounts Committee asked many questions and found many faults. In particular, its report states:

"It is unclear to us how, in the absence of competition for the contract, the Department have reached"

the conclusion that £2.5 million for the management was a reasonable cost. No test was made against any other valuation, and there was no evaluation of any outside bid.

The problem is that the Government were—and continue to be—obsessed with the destruction of the public housing sector in Scotland. In my constituency, there are some 1,200 Scottish Homes houses. The Government have said that they must be put up for a bidder to take them out of Scottish Homes' hands. The choice before tenants is, again, Hobson's choice. They can either stay with Scottish Homes, or they can go to the new housing association.

A survey has been carried out in Grangemouth and Bo'ness. The tenants showed by a vote of over 90 per cent. that they wished to have a local authority landlord as an alternative to Scottish Homes, but they cannot have that. That is why, back in 1989 and 1992, the Government twisted, bent or broke the rules of good government and sensible finance by selling the houses to Waverley without competition.

Scottish Homes, we are told, is to become only a builder of houses and mainly for people with special needs, not the bulk of the population. As local authorities in Scotland do not have the funding, or permission to spend from the Government, no one is building houses for mainstream public need. There is a distortion in Scotland in respect of the sort of housing being built by the public purse. That all started back in 1989 with this sorry, dubious affair, in which the Government allowed a single bidder to manage, and then purchase, a substantial number of houses in the Borders. That has been the theme ever since.

The criticisms in the report of the Public Accounts Committee are stark, but it would appear that Scottish Office Ministers are not listening, because the only choice before the people of my constituency and the rest of Scotland is still Hobson's choice. It is take it or leave it. Usually, one housing association is cultivated by the Government and civil servants to tee itself up to take over the housing. It is strange that, in the cases that I have dealt with recently, the people involved were ex-employees and managers of Scottish Homes in the areas where the houses are being put up for sale or transfer.

People say that they do not want Scottish Homes or a housing association; they want to have a public authority landlord. Just as with Waverley in 1989 and 1992, that option is not being allowed. I hope that the Public Accounts Committee report will be read by people in the rest of United Kingdom, because what happened in Scotland and the Borders can happen anywhere when the Government put ideology before good management and good government.

I may disagree with the Government about whether there should be a third sector or a large public sector or private housing, but I hope that all hon. Members would agree that the Government do not have the right to give a management contract that costs twice what the previous management cost just because they favour the new managers for personal or political reasons. They cannot be allowed to give away those houses to that same management without allowing open competition. We must be able to see whether the people who are going to pay, through their economic rents, the debts incurred by Waverley have been robbed of better value that could have been achieved had another bidder been involved.

If a Government do not stand comparison, they must stand condemned. In the report, the Government stand starkly condemned by the people of the Borders, by the former tenants of Scottish Homes, and I hope that they will stand condemned by people who read the account of tonight's debate.

It is not right that a Government should do deals in such dubious circumstances. The report says that there were six meetings between senior Government officials and the people who were to become Waverley housing association at which no minutes were taken. It was clearly a little behind-the-door arrangement—and a lucrative one for the people who set up Waverley. If the Government are willing to bribe their ideology into reality, then, as far as I and the people of Scotland are concerned, they are not to be trusted with the running of any Department and not only the Scottish Office.

That is why the Government's popularity stands so low in Scotland, with the massive bribes to private sector health involved in the Health Care International affair and the dubious arrangements that they set up to allow Waverley to take over the houses in the Borders. There is also their continued determination to force people not to have the landlord they want—the local authority—but another one, usually a housing association whose

managers were previously managers at Scottish Homes. It seems to me that the Government and their policies are sick. That is proven starkly by the report.

7.17 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Davies), who made a fine maiden speech this evening. The generosity of his tribute to his predecessor was noteworthy, as was the—perhaps controversial—forcefulness with which he put his case. I am sure that it will be the first of many sizeable contributions from him.

I was struck by the clarity and authority with which the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), presented his case. I know that there is a wealth of information to consider, but the way that he dealt with it was excellent and clear to all concerned.

Many subjects have been touched upon in the debate, and, I fear, many subjects will not be raised.

I should like to deal specifically with what the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) euphemistically referred to as the "Celtic problem". I shall confine myself to the 29th report, which deals with the Welsh Development Agency.

Despite the fact that the Welsh Development Agency alleges that the Grant Thornton report was independent, it was neither independent nor impartial. Its terms of reference were tightly drawn, and it was instructed and funded by the Welsh Development Agency, so I do not accept for a moment that an arm's-length investigation has been made into the matter.

I shall not repeat the facts of the case, which were more than adequately placed before the House earlier this afternoon by the hon. Member for Swansea, West. The Grant Thornton report has been described by one eminent Queen's counsel, Mr. Vernon Pugh QC, as "selective" in what it decided to investigate. That is a damning condemnation of the report and its terms of reference.

That things were not right during that period in the Cynon valley goes without need for emphasis. At that time, the Welsh Development Agency had two directors, who were also directors of Tesco and who profited royally from the whole deal. That cannot be right. Even if it was not illegal, it calls into question the veracity of the matter.

To deny, as has been denied by the agency and the council, that a formal partnership existed between Cynon Valley borough council, the Welsh Development Agency and the county council is plain folly. It is misleading, and an outright untruth. The association, which I would call a syndicate—a partnership for one specific purpose—which is to deal with the land in question, was formed in April 1991, so any denials are unfounded.

The Public Accounts Committee's report into the matter has been heavily critical, and rightly so. In paragraph 74, it says:

"We note that the Grant Thornton Report found no evidence of improper pecuniary gain or collusion but . . . that the Agency had been over-zealous and had left itself open to allegations of undue influence. We note that disciplinary action has been taken . . . and . . . trust that the . . . revised procedures will prevent"

such actions

"in the future."

Given that two members of the WDA board were also members of Tesco plc, the words "over-zealous" and "undue influence" are not strong enough.

The Department agreed that the agency's handling of the matter was unacceptable. It drew attention to the code of practice, which sets out the principles to be applied in such circumstances, including integrity, objectivity, accountability and openness.

What happened in Cynon valley was justifiably open to criticism. The leading counsel, Vernon Pugh QC, said that the activities constituted a joint venture or syndicate, and that the moneys expended by the local authorities were ultra vires, and could now validly be claimed back, because no sanction had been obtained under the relevant legislation from the Welsh Office. I therefore suggest that other matters need to be examined, perhaps in another forum, in the coming months.

The Welsh Office was firmly of the view that the disposal of the land was badly handled. I should have thought, therefore, that some form of in-depth and arm's-length inquiry would have been set up by the Welsh Office. Although the Welsh Office has accepted in several parts of the report that things were wrong, it evidently intends to do nothing about it. In the interests of open and fair government, via the quango system or whatever, this matter deserves a full, independent, arm's-length tribunal of some form, with a broad remit to investigate the whole matter from beginning to end, and to make positive and real recommendations in due course.

I echo what previous hon. Members have said: that the Welsh Development Agency has not been the flavour of the month with the PAC, and rightly so. Matters have improved of late, and we are now looking back some two or three years to this set of incidents. Despite a considerable improvement in the running of the WDA, this incident is serious and calls for a full, powerful, arm's-length inquiry into the matter.

7.25 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): As always, this afternoon's debate has been informative and interesting. The work of the Public Accounts Committee is extremely detailed and I commend to all hon. Members a careful reading of its reports, for they teach us much about the actions of Government.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his explanation at the beginning of the debate. He described clearly and precisely many important points in the key reports. I pay tribute to the work of the Public Accounts Committee. It is a hard-working Committee, which has paid a great deal of attention to its work. I also commend the excellent work of the National Audit Office, which has a great deal to do in trying to pursue public money wherever it finds itself and to ensure that it is accountable and transparent in its use.

For the record, I congratulate the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Davies), who made his maiden speech today. He was generous in his tributes to his predecessor, Geoffrey Dickens, who was a hard-working constituency Member. He was much respected on both sides of the House and will be greatly missed. His courageous fight against his illness was an example to us all in the dignity of life and the confrontation of such a dreadful and debilitating illness.

[Ms Dawn Primarolo]

The speech of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth was controversial, but none the worse for that. He talked about the importance of the countryside, its fragility and the pressure on it. In particular, he referred to sites of special scientific interest. He spoke out clearly and strongly about the need for long-term planning, not only for this country but for the planet, if we are to discharge our responsibilities to younger generations. He criticised the House's procedures, and I look forward to him participating effectively in the process of legislation in the House and to his contribution to challenging the Executive. He said that he was the 68th Liberal Democrat to be elected this century. Perhaps there is a message in that for him, which I shall not dwell on tonight. He also spoke about the important issues of alternative energy sources and energy conservation. I am sure that we all look forward to his rigorous participation in debates on those issues.

The 51 reports of the PAC consider the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness; compare input and output and consider the work of Government. Having looked at those reports, I was relieved and consoled that I did not have to pay such close attention to the 500 reports that have been produced by the Committee since 1983.

As has been said, those reports are passed unanimously by the Committee. Their purpose is to examine the implementation of policy; they do not necessarily question it, and they are none the worse for that. Today's debate has referred again to the relationship between the workings of the National Audit Office and those of the Audit Commission. It echoes last year's debate, when we considered the Committee's important eighth report on the proper conduct of public business. That report stated:

"In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within Departments and other public bodies which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. Those failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

I note that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said that although fraud still represents a small proportion of the Committee's investigations, it is a growing problem. Today's debate has focused again on how the fragmentation of so much of the Government's structure has led to a lack of accountability in the expenditure of public money. We need to reconsider how to ensure that that money is not wasted and is accounted for.

In last year's debate, the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), now the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service, and no longer a member of the PAC, referred to a number of major Government initiatives. He said that the Government had made

"major improvements in the way in which public spending is controlled and managed."—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 926.]

He said that he was thinking in particular of market testing and competitive tendering. It is a shame that he is not present to discuss those improvements because two of the reports deal specifically with the conflict between market testing and value for money in the privatisation process. I refer in particular to the 39th report on the sale of Forward Catering Services and the problems created for the Treasury in trying to deal with market testing and privatisation, and the loss of revenue as a result.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne spoke about the need to consider expanding the role and work of the NAO. He referred specifically to the regulatory structure governing the public utilities. Much has been said about the role of those utilities, the huge profits that have been made and whether value for money for the taxpayer has been exacted. I do not intend to continue to debate that now as I am sure that you would rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I reinforce my right hon. Friend's argument about the urgent need to look again at that structure.

My right hon. Friend also identified, correctly, weaknesses in certain areas as a result of ever-increasing fraud. He raised the important issue of accounting officers and their role. I wonder whether the Financial Secretary can give us an assurance that notes of dissent are now available to the PAC. My right hon. Friend referred in particular to the Pergau dam and the role of Mr. Lankester. He also said that Mr. Lankester may be moved—

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Jack): He has been moved.

Ms Primarolo: In that case, can the Minister assure the House that that move had nothing to do with notes of dissent and will not act as a disincentive to civil servants writing such notes in the future?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the Eurofighter project and the enormous overspend on its development. He was right to ask whether collaborative programmes, which by their nature tend to be more expensive, will be subject to better controls in the future, because it is inevitable that such programmes will continue to develop as our partnership in Europe strengthens. I hope that the Financial Secretary will be able to provide the answer.

My right hon. Friend referred to the Sports Council and the problems still emerging throughout the public sector because of conflicts of interest in the administration of public finance and the fact that regulations governing that public finance are not properly met.

My right hon. Friend also referred to council tax valuations. He was right to point out that although it may have cost 19p for the average valuation, if 2 million properties are incorrectly valued—75,000 of my constituents believe that they are—the appeals cost for correcting those valuations will be extremely high.

My right hon. Friend also spoke of the irregularities at the embassy in Sana'a in the Yemen. Questions surrounding that amazing episode have still not been properly answered—it is worthy of an episode of "Yes, Minister". The financial irregularities included trading money on the black market; a lease that was too expensive and included a bribe; staff recruitment to cover up errors; no checks on proper financial transactions and problems with the issue of visas. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office explained away all the difficulties at that embassy with the words, "There were also personality problems and the Yemen was not an easy country to live in."

When those financial irregularities came to light, the FCO assessed the management skills of the then ambassador and described them as "totally inadequate".

In its judgment, however, those skills had not reached the level of being unacceptable. I would like the FCO to give us its definition of unacceptable because it is obviously different from that understood by the rest of us. After that assessment, the FCO encouraged the ambassador to make several changes. Some time later—several expensive visits later—it was decided that he was not the appropriate man after all. He was given early retirement and more money was paid out of public funds. The problems at the embassy were not, however, sorted out when the new ambassador was appointed, the problems continued.

That raises a series of questions about the role of Government Departments and their stewardship of public money. The Financial Secretary must understand that we are seeking undertakings that there will be changes in the difficult environment that apparently exists only in the Yemen to ensure that public funds are not fraudulently removed.

There is an important report on the green form scheme—legal aid—and the problems that result from incomplete statements of means. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Sir M. Shersby) referred at length to those important issues. The green form scheme is a vital method of ensuring that those whose financial position may prevent them from receiving the legal advice that they require can receive that advice, following assessment. The report makes it clear, however, that something is going extremely wrong. We must give further consideration to improving the necessary controls, but not with a view to reducing access to the scheme to those who need it. Instead, we must ensure that funds are properly spent.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge referred also to the report on fundholding. Having listened to his comments, I thought that I had read a different report. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) took up the issues. The report is inadequate when it comes to making judgments on the fundholding scheme. The reason for that is made clear by the report; there are no quantified objectives. There has not been a full assessment of the impact of the scheme. The NHS executive has its views but there has been no independent assessment. There is still a case to be answered. I am sure that the PAC will return to it.

Important arguments have been advanced about value for money in grant-maintained schools. There is unacceptable double funding and a need to ensure that all schools in the state sector are funded equally. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South talked about head teachers being provided with health care insurance and questioned whether that was acceptable.

The 40th report deals with the suspension of Dr. Bridget O'Connell. She was a paediatrician, a profession in which there is a national shortage. Indeed, there is difficulty in treating children in certain areas. The outline report is a catalogue of the ineptitude of the internal market and of a lack of direction. I fear that these shortcomings have not yet been resolved. I understand that a consultant within the North Durham trust has been suspended for three years. I hope that another seven or eight years do not pass before the case is resolved.

It remains the fact that Dr. O'Connell was suspended for voicing her concerns about standards of care. She then struggled through byzantine procedures involving disciplinary action in a health service that is breaking ranks with national agreements and procedures. Although guidelines have now been issued by the Department of Health to trusts on the disciplinary procedures that they should follow, the guidelines cannot be, and are not being, enforced. As trusts develop their own contracts with their consultants and as local pay bargaining moves apace, the problems illustrated in the Dr. O'Connell episode will continue to arise and cause problems.

The British Medical Association made it clear that the NHS executive has been moving in a direction opposite to that which has been taken by trusts. Hospitals are persuaded to break or abandon national agreements, including disciplinary procedures, at the very time that we are told that the Department is trying to persuade them to return to a national agreement.

The report on NHS hospital catering in England is truly fascinating. The Department of Health issued a press release on 4 September in which it stated:

"Food is at the heart of everybody's life and its quality is even more important when ill in hospital. Meal times bring interest to a boring hospital stay and nourishing food aids healing and recovery."

I wonder whether the Department read the 49th report of the PAC when it issued its press release. The release adds that nutritional guidelines for hospital catering are to be issued because food, and nutritious food, is vital to the recovery of patients.

The 49th report makes it clear that some of the catering departments surveyed expected patients to order their meals more than a week in advance. That contradicts the trend within the NHS—unless a patient is seriously ill, his or her chances of staying in hospital for a week are pretty slim. If someone is that ill, he or she is probably receiving sustenance through a drip, not through the hospital's catering department.

The report questions the costs of meals, which range from £2 to £15 a day. I am sure that all hon. Members know that hospital catering is often complained about by our constituents. Indeed, they complain at length about its quality. The report states that over 25 per cent. of patients surveyed aged younger than 35 years said that the quality of the food was either poor or very poor. Many of those patients would be women in maternity wards, who would be in need of a proper diet.

It would seem that the promise does not meet the practice. After agreement with the National Audit Office, some Departments are not able to deliver or implement policy. There is sometimes a conflict between what is said in the House and what is delivered outside.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made some challenging points about the functional structure of the PAC and how it might deal with an increasing work load. He referred also to the Trident base, lack of financial controls and the Welsh Development Agency and the Aberdare sites. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) referred to the same problems in Wales.

In his contribution, my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) highlighted the problems in the 48th report of privatisation clashing with value for money, and the lack of proper tendering arrangements in the dealings with the Borders region sale of homes. He rightly pointed out that in this case the deal was very poor.

I was intrigued by the fourth report of the 1994-95 Session, entitled "Inland Revenue: Getting Tax Right First Time and Dealing with More Complex Postal Queries". I thought that it may be addressed to the Chancellor and his failure last year to get the whisky taxes right, so that we ended up collecting less tax than we had anticipated.

[Ms Primarolo]

The debate has been about the importance of public money, of value for money, of ensuring that that money is accountable, that its use is transparent and that waste is eradicated. Although the reports from the Public Accounts Committee are excellent, as they always are, the challenge to the House is that we ensure that the recommendations are implemented. How do we ensure that they are delivered and that the waste and, unfortunately, the fraud, is eradicated? How do we ensure that all public money, and the complex structure of Government now, with their quangos and unaccountable bodies, is still accountable?

The new Labour member of the Treasury team, my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), is to join us in the task of pursuing the Government on waste and on the undemocratic nature of much public spending, and we look forward in the coming months to discussing, through the Budget and the Finance Bill, and into next year's election campaign, the waste of the Tory Government and the probity of a Labour Government.

7.52 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Jack): This has been a very interesting and wide-ranging debate, and it has certainly covered a vast number of topics. For one brief moment I thought that I had come to the wrong debate when I saw a number of my former colleagues who used to attend debates on the subject of fishing coming into the Chamber. I thought that a time warp had occurred, until I realised that the debate on the work of the Public Accounts Committee was running a little longer than some had expected.

I, too, add my thanks to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and his colleagues for the dedicated work that they have undertaken in their onerous task. He reminded us in his own remarks of the considerable volume of work, and that fact was supported by other hon. Members.

All who have spoken represent the bipartisan nature of the work of the PAC. That is a very proper approach and I shall in no way seek to challenge it. The starting point for the Committee's examinations and deliberations is the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff, through the good offices of the National Audit Office. We should also not forget a further dimension to this: the work of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. A few days ago, it struck me that I really should visit the NAO, as it was some time since I had been there. As a new Member of Parliament I had been there and was inculcated as to the ways in which it is Parliament's office, being there to protect the interests of Parliament in monitoring the expenditure of public moneys. I went to meet the team again and to refresh myself as to the work that it was undertaking.

One interesting point that has come out in all that we have said is that, by and large, many of the problems that we have talked about today result from basic human frailties. We sometimes look at each report as though it were a new discovery when in reality it reflects on that frailty. Although in so many cases we look to systems to try to solve those frailties, it is the role of human beings, in what they do in following rules, procedures and codes of practice, which can make the difference between a proper system operating, giving value for money, being run in terms of probity and correctness, and that same system becoming the subject of a report by the PAC.

It is quite right that the NAO and the Committee criticise Departments when they deserve it. I very much hope that the Committee and the NAO see part of their role as drawing attention to examples of good practice, which can be used as a guide by other Departments and, indeed, working with Departments to ensure that the highest standards of financial management are achieved and maintained. I was struck in my discussions with some of the audit team by the fact that that is precisely what they are now doing. I very much welcome that development.

I see that as a natural remark from a Minister in Government, a Government who have made improvements in efficiency in the public sector such a central part of their policies. The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) derided, perhaps, some of our attempts through privatisation and its associated works within government, but we have taken some £500 million in costs out of the running of government and reduced the size of the civil service, against many people who said that government should be reducing their costs if the private sector is being asked to do the same.

For too long, the debate has overlooked another aspect of this audit. I put on record my appreciation of the work of the Audit Commission, which is responsible for the audit of many billions of pounds of public money, including expenditure by health authorities and NHS trusts. The latter was touched on by some Opposition Members in their comments. One of the interesting features of audit is the fact that the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission are increasing their contacts together, to bring in a cross-Government view of auditing procedure.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne went through a number of key reports, which he drew to our attention. Before turning to those, I hope that he and the House will understand if I say a word about a maiden speech which formed part of our proceedings today—that of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Davies). Like other hon. Members, the hon. Gentleman properly and with great humanity mentioned the work of our dear friend Geoffrey Dickens. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bristol, South remarked on Geoffrey Dickens' bravery in his fight against cancer. He was a politician who brought humour as well as a campaigning spirit to the work of the House. I know that all hon. Members will miss his unique contributions.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth spoke with passion and vigour, as I would expect anybody new to the House to do, just about staying in order in terms of controversy. Although I wish him well during his time as a Member of Parliament, and in serving his constituents' interests, I fear that many Members on the Conservative Benches may wish that stay to be limited. He mentioned the sites of special scientific interest, and the Government welcomed that report. If he wishes to see more on that subject, a reading of the rural White Paper may be to his advantage.

In his opening remarks, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne discussed the very important subject of the Ministry of Defence, and major projects. He rightly drew our attention to some of the complexities and

difficulties in dealing with matters connected with complex major projects. I reviewed that particular matter with the National Audit Office during my time there. Listeners to Radio 4 may have heard the diaries of Samuel Pepys and will have been attracted by what he had to say about the costs and complexities of running a naval department, when his mind was not on other things, whether his diaries or his personal affairs.

Three things came out of my discussions at the National Audit Office which were central to addressing some of the concerns that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned. First, there is the need to get the specification right for the intended purpose at the outset: that is a central issue in the complex matters to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. Secondly, there is the need to stick to logical stages in the project and not to rush into later stages before preceding stages can be adequately implemented.

Thirdly—this emphasises an important, to me crucial, part of the human dimension—there is the question of continuity of personnel in senior management in such major projects. There may often be a desire to put a new person in to move something along, but the combination of new vigour with wisdom and experience can mean much when such complicated issues are being dealt with.

The right hon. Gentleman cited a number of specific projects. There is no doubt that the Ministry of Defence has taken account of the Committee's advice about, for instance, the mid-life update programmes that he mentioned, but the report also noted progress. The Government welcome its acknowledgement that the MOD is seeking to adopt procedures for better estimation of programme costs and in-service dates. The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned timing, which is crucial to the achievement of those objectives.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to a project dear to my heart—the Eurofighter. He may not know that the prototypes are currently being assembled in my constituency. I have been acutely aware of many of the concerns expressed from time to time about cost overruns, but I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that this is a collaborative venture, for the very reason that it is doubtful whether any one nation could pursue it and achieve the same value for money. I believe that the MOD would argue strongly that in overall terms this arrangement ultimately constitutes a better buy for the British taxpayer. It will, however, have noted the important points made by the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned fraud, which was dealt with in the report about the Sana'a embassy. When I discussed fraud with Sir John Bourn, he told me that he had recently been reading a book about accountancy which had tried to collate a list of fraudulent happenings in an attempt to show where risks of fraud were occurring. Those happenings, apparently, conform to 40 basic models. Sadly, fraud has been around for an awfully long time, but the accountancy profession has now narrowed it down to that short list.

Organisations can find themselves at risk of fraud when there has been too little change for too long, when there has been too much change too quickly and when there is an over-concentration of responsibilities in the hands of one person. Perhaps that covers some of the concerns expressed in the report on the Sana'a embassy.

I draw comfort from the fact that it is possible to apply disciplines learnt from other areas such as health and safety, in which there is a continued process of challenge to accepted procedures. I believe that part of the audit trail, and part of the excellent professional audit work carried out by the National Audit Office, relates to a desire to challenge accepted systems and never to accept that work is being done correctly.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly referred to the Sports Council and the need for a separation of powers and responsibilities. The council recognises that need; a financial memorandum has been agreed between it and its trust company for the purpose, and the company's structure is to be simplified as part of the remedial work involved. The report makes an important point about the need to separate responsibilities in organisations which may operate at arm's length from central Government.

Hon. Members have raised the question of notices received by accounting officers in respect of the PAC. The right hon. Gentleman rightly said that accounting officers now need to inform both the Treasury and the Comptroller and Auditor General if they have been given an accounting officer direction in relation to a course which gives poor value for money. That is a useful way of securing proper accountability and indicating the respective roles of Ministers and accounting officers, and an important further discipline in dealing with how to respond to the work of the PAC.

Both the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bristol, South mentioned council tax valuations. I listened carefully to what they had to say, but I think that anyone viewing the arguments the other way round, as it were, would see that the report could have been interpreted as describing the success constituted by the accuracy of 94 per cent. of the valuations, as opposed to making an important observation about the relationship between achieving a particular value for money and the quality of the work undertaken. There was clearly a lesson to be learnt from the costs of remedial action if the original work was not done as it should have been done, but it should sometimes be pointed out that work can be done effectively, which the report attempted to do.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly drew our attention to some of the difficulties associated with severance payments in publicly funded education. That underlined the importance of good information. In fact, both the Department for Education and Employment and the Higher Education Funding Council have responded positively to the PAC report and will be working together to encourage good practice and to ensure that public expenditure is seen to be both open and accountable.

The HEFC and other funding councils share the PAC's views about the undesirability of gagging clauses, which were mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman and others. It will be discussing with its institutions the best way to restrict their application to commercially sensitive information. It has already acted to require the disclosure of severance payments in institutions' annual accounts, and to monitor and encourage compliance with the Committee of University Chairmen's guidance on governors.

The HEFC has acted with commendable swiftness to get the original severance package for the vice-chancellor of Huddersfield university set aside, and has also instigated an investigation of the departure of the vice-chancellor of Portsmouth university. I hope that that shows that robust action has followed. It deals with one point made by the Opposition about the PAC, which was described as a toothless watchdog. The fact that robust action is being taken as a result of the PAC's reports is a clear indication of the importance attributed to them.

[Mr. Michael Jack]

One issue that emerged from the reports was the question of the National Audit Office's access to areas to which it currently has no access. While I acknowledge the concern expressed by the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, it should be pointed out that the Comptroller and Auditor General already carries out certification on audits of more than 550 accounts, covering total income and expenditure of £500 billion per annum. While it does not necessarily have direct access to certain bodies, it does have a right of inspection. The activities of the Comptroller and Auditor General, therefore, are perhaps wider than some are led to believe. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, however, that sector is the subject of further consideration by Government and more will be said in due course.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned the Sana'a embassy saga, as did a number of other right hon. and hon. Members. They pointed out that disciplinary action had been taken against those who were directly involved in that matter. I wish to reflect on some of the wider issues that came out of that sorry saga.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has acted. It has created a financial compliance unit, a rapid reaction team, able to deploy quickly to investigate reports of financial weaknesses and to get to the root of any problems that may ensue. It has instituted an early warning system to highlight posts at risk through internal management problems or local conditions. The permanent under-secretary wrote personally to all heads of post reminding them of their duties and responsibilities as sub-accounting officers. Finally, the FCO has published a booklet with advice on how to prevent and detect fraud.

It is right that people should be critical and point fingers, but it is equally right that we should learn lessons from that. Just as the hon. Member for Bristol, South pointed and prodded her finger in my direction, one could equally say that perhaps there are local authorities run by members of her party in which some of the lessons learnt from all these exercises may be properly applicable.

The final matter that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned, and which my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Sir M. Shersby) also touched on, involved the whole question of green forms. There is no doubt that there is a serious problem there, which is why something that has been in operation in its current form for some 50 years is the subject of investigation by the Lord Chancellor. The right hon. Gentleman will know that steps have been taken through the franchising operation to try to control much more carefully the operation of the solicitors' end of the green form activity, but the whole subject is to be considered by my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor, who has announced a fundamental review of the whole basis of the matter. I shall take pleasure in drawing his attention to the many sage comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge.

My hon. Friend went on to talk on the subject of Hillingdon. One could sense from the passion with which he dealt with that subject that he was talking very much in his capacity as Hillingdon's excellent Member of Parliament. To that extent, I hope that he will not mind if I draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, which were relevant and should be attended to in some detail.

On the other comments, I should like briefly to deal with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall). He, too, mentioned the Sana'a embassy and I have given our response on that. He touched on the subject of grant-maintained schools. The Funding Agency for Schools shares his concerns and, as part of the review and updating of guidance on financial management to such schools, the agency will place a mandatory requirement on them to maintain a register of pecuniary interests of governors and of staff with significant financial responsibilities. The hon. Gentleman will find that that matter has been taken seriously, as have some of his comments on events on Merseyside.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) touched in their own ways on matters connected with the Welsh Development Agency. That matter has been thoroughly commented on in public. They picked out their own particular matters of concern. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West touched on matters connected with a land deal at Gadlys road. The Government agree that aspects of the agency's handling of the case were unacceptable and, as he knows, appropriate action has been taken. The Welsh Office has issued new guidelines to the agency which have revised its procedures, and a code of practice has been issued to all staff. Lessons have been learnt not only from that but, as I have said, from all the reports by the Public Accounts Committee. Those matters have been taken extremely seriously and I am sure that further note will be taken of what hon. Members have mentioned.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy touched on the Grant Thornton report. The agency has commissioned that report at the instigation of the Secretary of State for Wales. The report examined all the issues relevant to the development at Aberdare, including the Tirfounder fields, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The agency has accepted all the recommendations of the report. Both those examples show the way in which the role and work of the Public Accounts Committee lead to robust action to deal with particular matters.

The final speech was made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) and included points on housing. The Government maintain that the objectives of the sale were met, particularly in terms of tenants' interests. I understand that the tenants had already shown a preference for the Waverley housing association that he mentioned. I have noted his particular comments.

As we come to the conclusion of a wide-ranging debate which has touched on value for money, fraud, matters of control and complex projects, it is right to put on record the fact that Conservative Members have sought to improve the efficiency of Government by effectively removing Government from many areas where we should not be operating. The result of that has been a dramatic improvement in efficiency, a reduction in the number of civil servants, a substantial reduction in levels of public expenditure, and due note being paid to the question of value for money, which brings us full circle to where the debate started and to where the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne drew the House's attention to the continuing importance of the PAC's work in the vital matter of value for money. I thank him for the way in which he introduced the debate and all those who have

spoken in it. Without doubt, it shows that the PAC is as robust as ever in probing properly the inner workings of Government and the positive way in which the Government have responded by taking action in so many of the ways that the reports have recommended.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 40th and 42nd to 51st Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1993-94, of the 1st to 40th Reports of Session 1994-95, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm 2732, 2739, 2754, 2757, 2786, 2825, 2832, 2906, 2921, 2988, 2990, 3013), with particular reference to the following Reports of Session 1994-95:

First, Ministry of Defence: The Major Projects Report (1993);

Second, The Sports Council: Initiatives to Improve Financial Management and Control and Value for Money;

Fifth, Council Tax Valuations in England and Wales;

Twenty-eighth, Severance Payments to Senior Staff in the Publicly Funded Education Sector;

Thirty-third, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Overseas Representation: Irregularities at the Sana'a Embassy;

Thirty-fourth, Lord Chancellor's Department: Qualification of Audit Opinion and Alleged Frauds on the Green Form Scheme.

Fisheries

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 6588/95 relating to NAFO conservation and Greenland Halibut, 6191/95 and 7618/95 relating to European Union and Canadian fisheries and the NAFO Convention, 6192/95 relating to drift net fisheries and salmonids, 6196/95 relating to drift net fisheries and tuna and 7599/95 on NAFO fisheries, the Observer scheme for Community fishing vessels operating in the NAFO area, the scheme of joint international inspection adopted by NAFO and the provisions for the application of certain control measures adopted by NAFO.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): I must inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and that she has also placed a 10-minute limit on speeches by Back Benchers throughout the debate.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could not Madam Speaker have selected amendment (b) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) bearing it in mind that we are asked to make a decision on the basis of 120 pages of paper which I am sure some of us have not read—we received them only on Friday? As the decision will in any event be taken in Brussels on Thursday on a majority vote, would not it help the House more if we were to debate amendment (b) and have a proper debate—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already explained to the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

8.17 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Tony Baldry): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents No. 7596/95, on establishing a control system applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy, No. 7465/95, relating to Community financial contribution towards certain expenditure incurred by the Member States in implementing the monitoring and control system applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy, and No. 8817/95, concerning a proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the list of species to be recorded in the fisheries logbook and landing declarations; welcomes the agreement reached at the Fisheries Council on 15th June on fishing effort levels; and supports the Government's efforts to secure effective measures to monitor and enforce fishing activity in Western Waters, including the Irish Box, while not placing unnecessary burdens on the fishing industry.

I shall try not to take up too much of the House's time as this debate is short and I am sure that a number of hon. Members want to speak. To help, I have sought in advance of today's debate to keep informed those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have a particular interest in this subject, but it will be helpful briefly to put tonight's debate into context.

The United Kingdom joined the European Community on 1 January 1973, nearly a quarter of a century ago. It must have been abundantly clear at that time that, by joining the Common Market, Britain would be taking part in a European fisheries policy. Articles 38 to 46 of the EC treaty set out the provisions that deal with agriculture. Fishery products are specifically mentioned in article 38 and in annex 2 to the treaty. The common fisheries policy is very much part of the EC treaty.

To put the matter beyond all doubt, the treaty on European Union in 1993 amended the objectives of the Community in article 3 to refer specifically to

"A common policy in the sphere of agriculture and fisheries."

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

Nor was the UK's involvement in a European fisheries policy seen to warrant great concern in the years after we joined. When the Labour Government renegotiated the terms for Britain's entry into the Common Market prior to the referendum in 1975, there was no mention of fisheries policy; nor, once the European Commission's common fisheries policy was agreed in 1983 and the Community enlarged, was there much interest from the Opposition. Indeed, at the general election, the Labour party did not mention fisheries policy in its manifesto. It was a lengthy document, but there was no mention of fisheries policy.

I fully appreciate that the nationalist parties have their particular angle, consistent with their broad political philosophies, but other than that it would be extremely disingenuous of anyone to suggest that the solution to the challenges facing the United Kingdom fishing fleet is for Britain to seek unilaterally to leave the CFP.

The House should acknowledge that, when Spain joined the European Community some 10 years ago, its accession had been agreed with the existing member states, including the UK. I have re-read all the debates on Spain's accession, both in this House and in the other place. The Committee stage of the Bill was taken on the Floor of the House. There were reasonably lengthy debates, but in none of them, and in not one speech either here or in the other place, was any query raised about Spain's accession to the European Community and the possible effect of that on the CFP in general and the UK fishing industry in particular.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister makes a somewhat disingenuous point. The treaty of accession for Spain and Portugal did not envisage full Spanish and Portuguese access to Community waters until 2003. That is not on offer now. The House has never been told when and why it was agreed that access should take place from 1 January next year. What was the deal and why did the UK subscribe to it?

Mr. Baldry: It is not me who is being disingenuous. Throughout the debates to which I referred, it was clear that the treaty of accession contained very specific references to fishing, to Spain and to the fact that Spain would not have access to the North sea. The fact that no hon. Member raised the matter of Spanish accession and its impact on the CFP should be taken into account. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows the answer to his point about 2003—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman is genuinely seeking the truth, let me help him.

It was quite clear that when Norway and other applicant states sought to join the European Union, they negotiated on the basis that the CFP would apply to them once they had joined. Therefore, it was difficult for existing member states to insist that the transitional arrangements for Spain should continue for a long time after the new applicants had joined the EU. That is the perfectly straightforward reason why the date was changed.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Why was it difficult to resist countries that had freely signed the treaty of accession? Why did the Government agree to a six-year acceleration in the access arrangements? The Minister has given us rather more of an explanation than we have ever had previously, and I am grateful for that, but will he deny outright that the basis of the deal between Iberian countries and the British Government was Spanish support for Major on qualified majority voting and British support for the Spanish on accelerated access? Was that the deal?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman is indulging in an enormously complex conspiracy theory when in fact the matter is quite straightforward. As I have already explained to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), it was not unreasonable of the Spanish Government to say that, as other countries applying to join the EU were to be included in the CFP immediately, the transitional arrangements for Spain should be brought into line.

It should be clear that we are talking about an agreement that meant that the Spanish would have no access to the North sea, the Irish sea or the Bristol channel. They have access for up to 40 trawlers at any one time to the Irish box, the vast majority of which is within the territorial waters of the Republic of Ireland.

It must have been clear to everyone when Spain joined the European Community that, just as previously member states had had to adjust to take on board the entry of the UK, Denmark and Ireland in 1973, so we and the other members of the EU would have to integrate Spain and Portugal within the CFP. It is worth noting that not one Member of Parliament voted against Spain's accession to the European Community at any stage of the Bill's progress through Parliament.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend accept that if hon. Members on both sides of the House had known what the deal would be—if they had been fully informed at the time of Spain's accession—a large number of them would have protested? The Spanish have marauded their way through the south coast and decimated the British fleet. That is why hon. Members, even if they did not protest before, are entitled to protest now.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend reflects rather poorly on a number of right hon. and hon. Members who were in the House at the time in question, many of them on the Conservative Benches. They were well and fully informed of what was involved, but saw it as sensible and proportionate to Spain's accession to the European Community. It is rather disappointing that hon. Members should cast aspersions and suggest that we do not understand what we are doing. I am sure that every right hon. and hon. Member at the time fully understood what he was doing when the House agreed to the treaty and allowed Spain's accession to the European Community without one vote against.

My hon. Friend referred to the Spanish marauding through our waters. I appreciate the concerns of the UK fishing industry, but I think that it fully recognises that the deal that we have agreed means that the Spanish fleet will have no access to the Irish sea, the North sea or the Bristol channel. There will be a limit of 40 Spanish trawlers at any one time in the Irish box, the vast majority of which involves waters within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland, not the UK.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall give way in a moment, but I want to make some progress.

What we are dealing with this evening follows on logically from a number of decisions taken by the House and by the country as a whole in the 1975 referendum, which led to the UK's and, eventually, Spain's accession to the European Community and the involvement of all member states in a common fisheries policy.

I want briefly to outline some of the history of the transitional arrangements for Spain in relation to the CFP. Under the Spanish accession treaty, the number of Spanish vessels that could fish in western waters north of 48 deg north was limited to 300, of which only 150 could fish at any one time. Those vessels were excluded from the Irish box and the North sea and were required to submit detailed information on their fishing activities.

The exclusion from the Irish box was due to cease at the end of this year and failure to agree new provisions would have resulted in unrestricted access. That was not acceptable to the Government or to the UK fishing industry. A new agreement that safeguarded UK fishing interests was essential and we achieved that last December after tough and difficult negotiations. As a result, there will be no overall increase in fishing effort in western waters. Effort ceilings are to be established for each member state permitted to fish in the waters and, most important, Spanish access to the Irish box will be limited to a maximum of 40 vessels at any one time.

I emphasise the fact that the Spanish will not be allowed to fish within the North sea, the Irish sea or the Bristol channel. They will be allowed to fish only in the areas of the Irish box beyond the 12-mile limit. The Irish box covers a sea area of nearly 250,000 sq km of which around 73,000 sq km, or 33 per cent., falls within British fishery limits, so the vast majority of the Irish box is within the territorial waters of the Republic of Ireland.

In my travels around the coast, talking to members of the fishing industry, it became clear that there is a general recognition that the vast majority of Spanish fishing activity in the Irish box will take place in the waters of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): My hon. Friend mentioned the North sea. He will appreciate that many hon. Members who represent constituencies on my side of the coast are extremely worried. Does he envisage a time when the Spanish may be allowed to fish in the North sea?

Mr. Baldry: Not while I am the Minister responsible for fisheries policy. I have only one brief as the United Kingdom Minister responsible for fisheries policy and that is to represent the best interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry. It is perfectly straightforward.

Everyone, not least ourselves and the Republic of Ireland, wants to be confident of having a system that will enable there to be effective control so that there are no more than 40 Spanish trawlers in the Irish box at any one time. There is also a broad recognition—and agreement among all those involved in the fishing industry—that we have to have effective conservation policies to protect tomorrow's catch and ensure that we have a sustainable industry that can go with some confidence into the next century. That means responsibly controlling effort for today to ensure adequate catches tomorrow. Part of the western waters agreement is that there should be measures to monitor and control fishing effort.

As the House knows, the Commission was sent away to come up with proposals to achieve those objectives. The proposals that it came up with were overly bureaucratic and would have been unnecessarily burdensome and costly for our fishing industry. They were simply unacceptable to us and to our fishing industry. They would have required the masters of vessels of more than 18 m in overall length or 15 m between the perpendiculars to have notified flag and coastal states, by radio or telex, of each movement into or from a fishing area or port within western waters, including the Irish box. That would have meant that a major part of the United Kingdom fishing fleet would have spent much of its time hailing in and hailing out.

I estimate that, under the Commission's proposals, our vessels would have had to make some 170,000 calls to the United Kingdom authorities and perhaps a further 50,000 to other member states. The costs of communication alone would have been more than £1.2 million, averaging £1,400 for the 900 or so vessels affected. That is clearly daft, unacceptable and unnecessary.

I see from reports in some national newspapers that there has been some briefing from Brussels which is a mixture of scaremongering and speculation. The compromise proposals which the presidency will be putting forward to the Fisheries Council on Thursday have wide support among Ministers, as I shall make clear.

As I have already made clear to the fishing industry in this country, I have only one brief, which is to promote the best interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry. I have no brief for the European Commission, and I have no brief in particular for the European Union. I do, however, have a brief for the United Kingdom fishing industry and a clear responsibility to try to ensure that it has to deal with the minimum level of regulation necessary.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Does my hon. Friend agree that, if he is to stick to that brief, to put the interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry first and to ensure that it genuinely has a future, the best course is undoubtedly for the United Kingdom to withdraw from the common fisheries policy, which has been ecologically and economically disastrous for our traditional fishing communities?

Mr. Baldry: I believe that my job, which is to be the best possible advocate for the fishing industry, entails listening carefully to what the industry says and then, like any good advocate, explaining honestly and straightforwardly what I believe to be within the politics of the possible.

I do not believe that it will ever be within the politics of the possible—nor should it be—for the Government unilaterally to seek to leave the common fisheries policy. It is not possible legally or pragmatically. It would jeopardise something like £500 million worth of United Kingdom fish sales each year and, furthermore, what would it achieve? I or my successor would, I suspect, have to spend something like the equivalent of a Parliament negotiating bilateral arrangements with each and every European Union member state.

Hon. Members who suggest that the solution to the challenges facing the United Kingdom fishing industry is simply for us unilaterally to try to leave the European fisheries policy are misleading the industry and being disingenuous.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall give way, but I must make some progress.

Mr. Budgen: Why?

Mr. Baldry: Because this is a short debate and because a large number of right hon. and hon. Members would like to take part in it.

Since taking on this job in July, I have spent a considerable amount of time in discussion with the presidency of the European Union and ministerial colleagues in other member states to try to ensure that we come forward with sensible proposals that enable us to control and monitor Spanish activity in the Irish box and to record effort generally in the western waters without imposing further costs or burdens on the United Kingdom fishing fleet. The proposals on which I have been working and which the presidency will be putting to the Fisheries Council on Thursday—where, I am glad to say, I shall have the support of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland—are sensible and proportionate to what needs to be achieved.

First, individual member states will be able to determine the arrangements for monitoring the movement of their own vessels operating within waters of their jurisdiction. Secondly, vessels at sea for fewer than 72 hours but operating in waters of other member states will be able to submit a single report to the flag state and relevant coastal state, advising their fishing intentions prior to departure from port. Thirdly, vessels at sea for more than 72 hours and fishing in the waters of other member states—for example, Spanish trawlers in the Irish box—will have to provide real-time information about their movements, although there will be greater flexibility as to how this information might be communicated.

Those proposals will enable us and the Irish Government to monitor Spanish trawlers entering and leaving the Irish box, but involve vessels in the United Kingdom fleet calling in only if they are entering other nations' fishing waters and are at sea for more than 72 hours. That should significantly reduce the number of calls and the cost to our fishing industry. Vessels engaged in pelagic fishing will be wholly exempt. For United Kingdom vessels operating within our fishing limits, we envisage making full use of the present logbook system to record and report on fishing effort, supplemented by our extensive surveillance activity at sea, in the air and on land.

I appreciate that the Northern Ireland fleet has particular concerns about how the proposed regime will impact on its traditional Irish sea fishery, which involves frequent passage between our waters and those of the Republic of Ireland. At present, there is a long-standing agreement that vessels from the Northern Ireland fleet and vessels from the Republic of Ireland go freely in and out of each other's waters.

Northern Ireland fishermen will be especially interested in how the new control arrangements will apply when they are fishing in the Republic of Ireland's jurisdiction. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) and the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) who, with Dick James of the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation, met me last week to set out their concerns constructively and in detail. I hope that they and other right hon. and hon. Members will take some reassurance from the fact that extensive discussions have been and are taking place between the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland and the Department of the Marine in the Republic of Ireland. I am confident that sensible and pragmatic reporting arrangements, with which I hope the Northern Ireland fleet will be happy, can be made.

The proposals that I have just set out, and which I believe to be reasonable and proportionate, now have the support of Fisheries Ministers throughout the European Union. I hope that they will thus be endorsed by the Council of Ministers on Thursday so that everyone will know where they stand as of 1 January next year.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the Minister reject entirely the advice that some of us received from Brussels to the effect that, if the arrangement that he has made is accepted, individual Spanish fishermen could take action to overturn it on the basis of unfair discrimination because Spanish vessels were not being treated in the same way as those from the United Kingdom? Does he agree that he was incorrect to say that there were no votes on Spanish accession? A reading of the proceedings of 10 December 1985 reveals that there were.

Mr. Baldry: I am not entirely clear about the last point that my hon. Friend is trying to make. Perhaps we could clarify it. I am sorry that he has to pray in aid—an unusual experience for him I am sure—press articles which have as their basis briefings from officials in Brussels concerned at the progress that democratically elected Ministers have made in bringing forward sensible proposals.

The measures are not discriminatory. They are the same for all member states and they reflect reality. All vessels that fish in the waters of other member states will have to notify their fishing intention prior to departure, and if they are at sea for more than 72 hours they will need to report each entry and exit immediately prior to making that entry or exit.

I am confident that the arrangements that I and other Fisheries Ministers have made throughout the European Union are perfectly capable of withstanding any legal challenge. It is also absolute rubbish for anyone to suggest that foreign vessels fishing in British waters will be given a blank cheque. I do not think that anyone who is involved with Spanish vessels in this country doubts the rigidity of our enforcement arrangements.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I need to make some progress. It is only fair to others.

I fully appreciate that, earlier in the year, our fishing industry was quite rightly totally opposed to the Commission's proposals, which the industry saw as being bureaucratic, burdensome and costly. I am sure that the industry now recognises—I hope that the House will also recognise it, irrespective of the various views that might exist on the European Union—that I and other Fisheries Ministers throughout Europe have been able to move matters a considerable distance during the summer.

Given the policy objectives that we have to meet, I believe that the proposals place the minimum of extra regulation on the UK fishing industry, consistent with the

need, which I am sure is recognised by hon. Members of all parties, to ensure that Spain's involvement in the Irish box is properly monitored and supervised. I would certainly welcome the House's support for the proposals tonight. That would send a strong signal to everyone else in the European Union that, on these matters, we stand together, and that we stand together in support of the UK fishing industry.

I shall deal briefly with Community funding for enforcement. It is a relatively straightforward proposal. It continues the provision of Community financial assistance to member states for fisheries enforcement for a further five years when the existing arrangements finish at the end of this year. It also incorporates special assistance for Ireland, agreed at December's Fisheries Council, which recognises the exceptional demands and costs involved in undertaking enforcement in the waters of the Republic of Ireland, which include the majority of the Irish box.

Those measures are justified because member states are required to monitor and enforce the Community rules relating to a common resource. It is also an important factor in achieving effective fisheries controls throughout the Community.

I shall mention the proposal to extend the number of species to be recorded in logbooks and to develop regional arrangements through the Commission's management committee procedures simply so that it will not become a distraction this evening. The proposal will not be considered at Thursday's Fisheries Council. Just as I have been determined that we should not have costly and bureaucratic controls for western waters, I hope that the House and the industry will be confident that I am equally determined to ensure that we keep logbooks as straightforward and as simple as possible.

The Commission's proposals on logbooks start off as being over-burdensome. How can it expect fishermen to record so many species—even if they were capable of identifying each and every one and of carrying a logbook large enough to record them all? I have made my position perfectly clear to Brussels. I am not prepared to consider any extension of the present number of species unless I receive a clear justification for the addition of each and every species and I have a clear view of the species to appear in regional lists.

I also wish to see a continuing derogation from the need to complete logbooks for vessels at sea for fewer than 12 hours and less than 17 m in length. I intend to resist further burdens being placed on what is already a very heavily regulated industry. Our energies should be directed to lessening the regulatory burden on our fishermen, not increasing it. Of course I fully support any sensible proposals to reform the common fisheries policy to that end.

A number of other documents have been tagged to this debate. They are mainly concerned with the arrangements for waters regulated under the auspices of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation and with the future arrangements for the regulation of drift nets. The use of such nets in the tuna fishery has been an issue of some controversy over the past two years. On 29 September, I announced that this year's tuna fishery had finished. I am very pleased to report that the arrangements that we have put in place, combined with the co-operation of our industry and efforts of the Royal Navy and the sea fisheries inspectorate, have ensured that the fishery was peaceful and free from serious incidents such as occurred last year.

Since the three-year decommissioning programme was announced in 1992, we have spent £16.6 million on two schemes—one in 1993 and a second in 1994. The schemes, using a tendering arrangement to give us the best possible value for money, enabled us to reduce the fleet by just over 10,000 tonnes, or some 4.6 per cent. of fleet capacity.

In January last year, the then Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), announced that a further £25 million would be made available for decommissioning, taking the total over five years to £53 million. That shows the Government's commitment to securing the future of the fishing industry.

In July, I launched the third round of decommissioning—£12 million was made available. I am pleased tonight be able to announce that 164 vessels have been successful in the scheme. They represent 5,326 gross registered tonnes; equivalent to some 2.5 per cent. of the fleet's capacity. Together those excellent schemes will have removed more than 7 per cent. of fleet capacity. In the light of that, I shall analyse the detailed results of the schemes and consult the industry to see whether we need to adjust the rules for the 1996 scheme to continue to target spending where it is most needed.

I hope that I have demonstrated that the Government are determined to put forward the best interests of the UK fishing industry. We have listened very carefully to what the industry has had to say. I believe that the proposals on which I and other Ministers have been working hard during the summer will enable us to meet our policy objectives of monitoring effort in western waters and controlling foreign vessels in western waters without placing undue burdens or costs on our industry. I hope, therefore, that the House will give the proposals its full support this evening.

8.46 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I beg to move, to leave out from 'declarations' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the widespread concern about the increased pressure on fish stocks in Western Waters including the Irish Box resulting from the failure of the Government to secure a satisfactory agreement on the future access of Spanish and Portuguese vessels; and calls upon the Government to secure arrangements which match fishing effort to available fish stocks and include a system of control and effective enforcement that reflects the operational needs of the United Kingdom fishing industry and the need to protect the interests of local fishing communities.'

As always, Opposition Members welcome an opportunity to discuss fishing issues, but I must start by saying that it is a disappointment that the debate has been cut to one and a half hours. Previous debates have been three hours. This debate is all the more important—I take the point made by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—because it also refers to a whole series of documents relating to the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation, tuna fishing and drift net fishing in the north Atlantic; all of which are important regional interests which we should have had more time to discuss. Yet there is not going to be any opportunity for such discussion in tonight's debate.

To put the record straight, the Minister's comments from his brief about Labour's manifesto promises or mention of fishing are an old chestnut. In 1992, the Labour party launched a document as part of the election

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

campaign in a dedicated policy launch in Tyneside on the fishing industry marine harvest. The Conservative party did no such thing. Although the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), complained about the quality of that document, it must be said that in 1992 we did not have the resources of the Conservative party or, should I say, given its bank account, the overdraft of the Conservative party. That document is very well known to the fishing industry and was warmly welcomed by it, even if it is not known to the Minister.

Although the Government are known for their cheek, they have the brass neck to try to suggest that Opposition Members are responsible in some way for bringing forward the accession of the Iberian fleets by six years. That subject was never on the agenda when we were discussing matters. So it was somewhat of a surprise that the accession suddenly came forward in the negotiations. Indeed, our amendment points out that it was a failure of the Government in those negotiations to concede to the Spanish and Portuguese in such a way. We believe that such things as the principle of relative stability could have been used far more effectively than they were in those negotiations. I do not doubt that there was a deal in terms of conceding to the Iberian request and I do not doubt that sooner or later, the details of that deal will come out, probably when we are in government.

We are discussing these documents tonight because promises were given that the Spanish accession would not lead to greater effort; the controls that we are talking about are part of that discussion. Although there is a sensible case for effort control—no one would disagree with that—any scheme should be workable and should not put an undue burden on our fishing fleet. As the scheme stands in its draft form—I accept that the Minister has recognised this—it is totally unacceptable in terms of the burden that it would place on the UK fishing fleet.

We also expect the Minister fully to comply with the assurances that were given by his predecessor, the hon. Member for Fylde, in a letter to every fisherman in the country, stating that any such effort control would not add further burdens for the fishing fleet. I am a bit concerned that Fisheries Ministers seem to come and go. I very much hope that the assurances given by one Minister are not suddenly ignored by the next Minister. I refer to the Minister's own welcome assurance of protection.

I also note that although the Government have said that they welcome the presidency compromise, which goes a long way towards improving the draft proposals, even that compromise puts a heavy burden on parts of our fishing fleet, especially south-western vessels which frequently fish in French waters, and our Northern Ireland fleet which frequently fishes in Irish waters. We very much want their needs to be recognised in any deal because even the compromise does not go far enough. I very much hope that the Minister will give some thought to the desirability of reciprocal agreements with the countries I have mentioned if the presidency compromise forms the basis of a future settlement.

I shall now expand on what we envisage in our amendment when we talk about "control and effective enforcement". The Minister will be aware of the crisis of confidence felt by UK fishermen about the operation of the current common fisheries policy. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations stated in a brief that it circulated to hon. Members that it believed that there was no future for the fishing industry within the present structure and that it must be abandoned. Certainly, there must be radical change and the forthcoming Council meeting is an opportunity for the Minister to begin that change.

In essence, we believe that the member states should have far more control of enforcement and conservation management within their own waters. We would like to expand that into wider areas of fisheries management and control, but for the purpose of this debate, we want to concentrate on control and enforcement. We accept that the intention is to enforce effort and it is also recognised that the Minister has stated that in the UK, that will be done through logbook entries; we accept that that is a reasonable approach in terms of our own fleet.

However, we also share the concern of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation about what will happen in terms of the enforcement of Spanish vessels in UK waters, especially from 1 January. Will the Minister confirm that current reporting-in regulations for Spanish ships will be relaxed as they are absorbed into part of whatever scheme comes out of the Council of Ministers? Will he also confirm that the current restriction that limits Spanish ships in western waters to 150 will be relaxed from 1 January as the new measures come in and the restriction on numbers is replaced by kilowatt days?

Will the Minister also confirm that enforcement will be by the flag state? We believe that when there is fishing in UK waters within the CFP and within the principle of the CFP, the enforcement should be by the member states. Yet under the proposals, it seems that in terms of enforcing kilowatt days and enforcing regulations generally, the enforcement authority will be the Spanish authorities. With the best will in the world, the record of the Spanish authorities in terms of enforcement has not been good—I put that somewhat mildly.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has asked a number of rhetorical questions which will take me a little time to answer. Actually, he is confused on a number of issues. I am sorry that if he had so many questions to which he genuinely wanted an answer, he did not seek to see me beforehand because I could have put him right on some things.

I hope that we shall not waste time in fisheries debates arguing about matters that are not correct. Of course the Spanish will have responsibility for ensuring that there are no more than 40 Spanish vessels within the Irish box at any one time. It is, however, of course a matter for us to supervise Spanish vessels generally in our waters. Last year, we inspected more than 5,000 vessels at sea; almost half were foreign. We made more than 45,000 sightings. The hon. Gentleman and the House can rest assured that we shall continue to monitor and supervise all vessels within UK waters. There is no question of our abandoning our responsibility for that. If the hon. Gentleman has any concerns about that, I shall be happy to put him straight.

Mr. Morley: If the Minister wishes to put me straight, will he tell us whether the management and enforcement of the kilowatt-day regime will be carried out by the flag state or by the member state in which the vessels are fishing? Am I misinformed on that issue?

Mr. Baldry: We shall monitor effort in our waters through the logbook system. We shall, of course, as the

flag state, continue to supervise Spanish vessels fishing in our waters, just as we do at present. Of course within the Irish box, the Spanish will have the responsibility of seeing that no more than 40 vessels are within the box at any one time. The Republic of Ireland will also have responsibility. The recognition of the extensive waters within the Irish box is the reason why we in the European Union have agreed to give the Republic of Ireland extra funds for enforcement purposes. The Irish will be able to ensure that the Spanish are complying fully with the arrangement to which we have come. There is no mystery about that. If the hon. Gentleman has any concerns—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene and I fully appreciate that the Minister is trying to be helpful. However, these are long interventions. We have only 50 minutes now for this debate and many hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Morley: I understand that the Minister's colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), will reply to the debate and I am sure that he will have an opportunity to deal with some of these points. The Minister has, however, confirmed what I have said. Enforcement of the kilowatt days for Spanish vessels fishing in western waters will be the responsibility of Spain. I am talking not just about the Irish box, but about western waters, as a result of the accession agreement. The Minister is misleading the House if he is suggesting that the United Kingdom will have absolute control over Spanish vessels in UK waters. My information is that it will not.

Of course, we have powers to board and to check the logbooks and reporting of Spanish vessels, but those powers do not go as far as they do over UK vessels fishing in UK waters. I believe that within the principle of the CFP, we should have the powers to ensure the absolute enforcement of kilowatt days and that regime. I suspect very much that if we do not, Spanish vessels will not work to the same strict enforcement regime as our own vessels will. Time will tell.

Rightly or wrongly, our fishermen feel that the rules are often applied more rigidly in our country than they are in others. When the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland answers, can he tell us whether he has seen lists of vessels yet? Are the lists of vessels that will be fishing ready and what are the details?

Does the Minister believe that other member states will be ready to implement proposals of this kind on 1 January? It will be totally unacceptable if we implement the proposals fully while other member states do so in a somewhat relaxed way, which—rightly or wrongly—is a perception within the UK fishing fleet.

I do not wish to take any more time, as I know that more hon. Members want to speak in the debate, and I hope that the Minister will bear in mind my comments about the time to be allocated for these debates in the future. But I ask the Minister to bear it in mind when he goes to the Council of Ministers that the credibility of the CFP rests on a management scheme that is credible, effective and simple. He must also bear it in mind that it is not incompatible with the principle of the CFP for there to be more UK control over UK waters. I hope that the Minister will argue strongly for more autonomy over the management of our waters.

8.59 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I hope that the House will appreciate that we are making ourselves look rather ridiculous for a democracy—whether we are fishermen or not. Our constituents should realise that we had the opportunity to grab the bundle of papers that we are now discussing in the Vote Office on Friday. Those who were here on Friday will appreciate that hardly any hon. Members were in the House at that time, and Members instead received the papers this morning. As Members have lots to do—I am sure that the Members here now are very busy indeed—how on earth could they read all of the documentation?

Our constituents should also know that even if some hon. Members had managed to read all of the papers—I know that our friends in the Scottish National party work day and night—it would have been irrelevant because, at the end of the day, what is to happen will be decided by majority vote at Thursday's Council of Ministers meeting.

Hon. Members should appreciate that there is nothing more pathetic than Opposition parties—I am sure sincerely—putting questions to Ministers on issues over which the Government have no power. We must bear it in mind that whatever the Government do can be overturned by the European Court, and by majority vote thereafter.

The Minister objects to my intervening in the debate to remind him of tiny matters which are not terribly relevant, such as the vote on 10 December when a former Minister acted as one of the Tellers, and I accept that he is working very hard indeed. The Minister is faced with a nightmare, as the British fishing industry is faced with a situation in which the average boat must spend up to £5,000 on the most ridiculous bureaucracy. The boats must send in messages non-stop, and they could end up sending hundreds of thousands of messages because of the new arrangement.

We all appreciate that the only way in which we can properly police Spanish vessels coming into the Irish box is to have a Euro-policeman on every boat, or perhaps three Euro-policemen and a computer. That is why the Commission put forward its proposals. The British industry, of course, objected to the proposals because of the cost of the bureaucracy. Therefore, as the Minister kindly wrote to some of us, an arrangement has been made whereby that bureaucracy will be reduced, and it is thought that the arrangement will go through on Thursday. My point is that if the bureaucracy is reduced, the policing of the system will become less effective.

In addition, if the Government bring forward proposals—as they intend to—which basically discriminate against Spanish vessels by having separate rules for those who work 72 hours or more a week and for those who work fewer than 72 hours a week, they could find that the proposals will be overturned by the European Court.

I feel guilty taking up time in this debate, although we all know that—as is the case so often in debates on European measures—we are wasting our time. We do not have the power to do anything in this matter, and hon. Members' votes to note or not to note the proposals will not have the slightest effect on what happens. Even if the Council of Ministers agrees on the great new arrangement—I can appreciate that it has been forced on the Minister following the objections by our fishermen—it can be overturned by a European Court decision.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

During the past 30 years, I have become a thorough Euro-bore. Ministers obviously regard me as such, but I ask them to realise what is happening to democracy. I shall mention only one other case. I had the pleasure of attending a political party conference in a place called Blackpool, where I heard someone say that we will fight on the issue of border controls and that we will surrender not an inch. A terribly important Minister—a Minister who is more important than any other—said that the issue was not negotiable. Yet we all know than an action has been started in the European Court on the matter. I have received advice from learned, clever and highly paid people—who must be intelligent—that this country does not have a hope in the matter because the declaration on which we are basing our defence does not hold any water.

On fishing, as with everything else, we should appreciate that democracy is dying. All of the assurances that the Minister gives with great sincerity to fishermen and all of the hard work that I know he does is basically one great joke. That is why I and some colleagues tabled an amendment—to make people think. There is no solution to the problems of British fishing within the present situation in the EU. In the same way, and despite all of the silly comments we have heard from successive Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, we should appreciate that there is no way at all in which the common agriculture policy can ever be reformed within the present structure. We simply have to wake up to the fact that on this mountain of papers we are basically wasting our time, misleading our constituents and misleading the fishermen of Britain, who are probably among the most respectable, hard-working and decent groups in our community.

I look forward to the time when—if, by any chance, the Labour party is elected to power—we will see exactly the opposite happening. If only the parties would come together, accept things as they are and accept that if we are to save British fishing and avoid the crazy expenditure of vast sums on bureaucracy, we should consult others about the possibility of extracting the British fishing industry from the common fisheries policy. There is no other solution.

It is sad for our industry that so many people in this House of Commons—good, hard-working people—are not prepared simply to tell people things as they are. If we did that, irrespective of opinion polls, we would all have a great deal more respect. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that, no matter what is agreed on Thursday, it can be overturned. I also hope that he will accept that, irrespective of what the House says, the Council on Thursday can overturn what we think. I hope that he will also conclude that the views of the fishermen of Britain seem to be virtually of no consequence.

9.5 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): It is worth saying at the outset some words about the background against which the debate takes place. The level of discontent and sheer anger among the fishing communities is well known by all hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies. It has never been higher. One sign of that is the growth in support for the aims of the Save British Fish campaign, which seeks to persuade the Government to withdraw from the common fisheries policy. It is fair to say that many of the people who subscribe to that campaign appreciate that its aim is probably not a realistic legal objective, but they are so fed up and angry about the way in which the policy has impacted on them and their communities that they feel driven to that extreme solution.

Over the years, fishermen have had to put up with conflicting advice from scientists about how much of various stocks is left in the seas. That advice leads them from one year to the next to change their fishing expectations and patterns. They are trapped in ever-increasing regulations and restrictions. They fear that the enforcement procedures that we are discussing tonight would represent a major step forward in those regulations and restrictions.

Fishermen have had to put up with the loss of the financial support that the industry has been able to rely on in the past for renewing and improving boats. They face ever-increasing incursion from foreign boats into waters that they regard as traditionally theirs. As a result of all those factors, fishermen are at the end of their tether. In considering and discussing the regulations before us tonight, and in thinking ahead towards the meeting with his fellow Ministers, it is important that the Minister appreciates the level of anger in fishing communities.

Fishermen are especially angry in my constituency of the Western Isles. The fishing industry there is a major aspect of the islands' economy. It is a major foundation for maintaining otherwise fragile rural communities. There is a special twist in the Western Isles in that more than 90 per cent. of the catch is shellfish. So the fleet in the Western Isles makes no real contribution to the problem of overcapacity that has afflicted the British fleet in recent years and led to many of the regulations and restrictions that we have had to put up with.

The Minister mentioned decommissioning. He may not realise that none of the Western Isles boats is eligible for decommissioning because the vast majority of them fish for shellfish—primarily for prawns. The Government have concluded, logically, that because the prawn sector is recognised not to be contributing to overcapacity, it should not be eligible for decommissioning.

However, if it is true that the prawn sector does not contribute to overcapacity, logically also it should be eligible for a resumption of financial support to help it renew and rebuild the fleet. Not only in the Western Isles but throughout the west coast of Scotland, the boats that are used for fishing are elderly boats that should have been renewed or replaced a long time ago. As a result of the freeze on financial assistance to be spent on fishing boats, that has not been happening. I ask the Minister, as he looks ahead into the next year—I specifically ask the Scottish Office Minister—to consider the possibility of again opening up those sources of financial assistance to help those boats.

Enforcement, which is the primary subject of the debate, continues to be murky and unclear. Fishermen remain confused as to the way in which Spanish access will work out from 1 January 1996. The Government continually repeat that there will be no increase in overall effort and insist that relative stability will be maintained. If those two things are true, it appears to follow—to Labour Members, at least—that that means that there will be no significant increase in Spanish effort.

Given the track record of Spanish boats, we find that hard to believe. Given the ability of Spanish boats to evade those rules and regulations that are laid down already, fishermen looking ahead to 1 January 1996 are fearful of what the impact of Spanish access will be. Therefore, in spite of the Minister's attempts, no one will believe his reassurances until the reality of the position unfolds in the new year.

It is now widely realised that we must think urgently about radical reform of the common fisheries policy. One of the elements of that reform will be an attempt to move to a system of regulation that pays greater heed to regional differences within countries. There are huge differences between the types of fleet, the fish and the problems in different parts of the United Kingdom, even in different parts of Scotland. A policy that pays greater heed to those differences and allows regions greater freedom to set guidelines or to regulate will be one of the elements of a reformed common fisheries policy.

We heard earlier about the problems caused by a state-based system of regulation. The Minister referred to the briefings that are apparently being given by Commission officials, complaining that what the Minister is trying to do will undermine the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination between states. As long as we think only in terms of state regulation and state criteria, we shall run into those problems constantly. We need to aim much more for a regionally based system of regulation.

9.14 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I want to raise matters relevant to Northern Ireland. The Minister tonight rightly utterly rejected the first proposals that were put and pointed out how ludicrous they were and how expensive and discriminatory they would have been. It must be emphasised that the fishermen who would have been discriminated against more than any others by the original proposals were the fishermen of Northern Ireland.

For example, under the first proposals, vessels out of Kilkeel fishing in the waters of the Irish Republic would be required to report on leaving Kilkeel, upon entering the territorial waters of the Irish Republic, upon exiting those waters and again upon returning to Kilkeel. In some instances, reports would have had to be made to the authorities in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. That burden could not have been borne by the fishing industry in Northern Ireland.

The Minister tells us that on Thursday, Spain, which holds the EU presidency, will put forward a compromise proposal. That is a step in the right direction, but it will still have a negative impact upon all Northern Ireland vessels. The essence of the compromise is that it would remove some of the clearly excessive parts of the Commission's proposals, such as reporting of catches by radio, and would allow certain exemptions from the reporting requirements. Vessels fishing in their own member state waters would be exempt from the Commissions's reporting rules and vessels operating within another member state's waters for fewer than 72 hours would have to make only one report on leaving port. However, Northern Ireland vessels working in the south-west which have to pass through Irish waters to fish in French and Irish waters will still be hit with the full force of all the Commission's reporting requirements. Each call will cost at least £5.

The Minister responsible for fisheries in Northern Ireland wrote to every individual vessel owner in Northern Ireland at the beginning of this year. He assured them:

"no new measures to control effort will need to be imposed in the United Kingdom industry".

The fishermen of Northern Ireland would contend that the requirement to report in and out is a new measure and that the Ministers's undertaking has not been kept.

The Commission's proposals for Northern Ireland fishermen—even the compromise proposals—are expensive, complicated, excessive and unworkable. The compromise put forward by the Spanish Government as president of the EU may be a move in the right direction but, if adopted, it will leave Northern Irish and south-western fleets exposed to the full rigour of the Commission's excessive reporting requirements. The fishing industry cannot bear that burden.

The United Kingdom and Europe already have in place numerous measures regarding the minimum size of fish and net mesh sizes. The existing rules should be enforced; by doing so, many problems could be solved. Northern Ireland fishermen who, because of their position with regard to the Irish Republic are the most affected by the proposals, must not be given an extra burden when their living conditions and the making of enough money for them to keep ticking over are already so difficult.

I appreciate that the Minister says that he is going to fight for the industry, but his fighting capacity in the matter is limited. It is all very well for him to denounce people who did not see into the future but when the accession of Spain was proposed, we were told that it would not happen until into the next millennium. Although Spain's accession has now been brought forward, we have not been given the real reason for that.

The Minister may fight as hard as he can, but ultimately the interests in Europe that have the power can vote down any suggestion that he makes. I wish him well and hope that he will remember the plight of Northern Ireland fishermen, who will still be discriminated against if the second proposal goes through.

9.19 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I shall try to keep my remarks brief because many of the salient points in this debate have already been aired, not least by the hon. Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

I thank the Minister for giving us an insight into the reasons why the full Spanish access to our waters has been advanced. Arrangements for the Irish box were due for renegotiation. However, the Minister has not answered the more fundamental question of why, given that Spain had voluntarily entered into a treaty agreement, it was necessary to make that concession to it. One might have thought that there was some kind of quid pro quo, but there is no evidence that Britain has achieved anything from a change in the arrangements. The change went ahead notwithstanding the warnings that the Government received from the fishing industry, which underlines what can happen when important decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers behind closed doors and when legislation is effectively made in secret. It certainly calls for greater openness in the Council of Ministers' deliberation.

[Mr. James Wallace]

The hon. Member for Antrim, North quoted a letter sent by the Northern Ireland Fisheries Minister to fishing vessel owners at the turn of the year. The same words were used in letters sent by the former Minister of State, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), to fishermen in England and possibly even in Scotland. The fishing industry sought comfort from the fact that, if effort did not increase, new measures to control effort would not need to be imposed on the UK industry.

On 25 August this year, both the chairman of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and the president of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation wrote to the Minister to ask him to confirm that that was still the Government's policy and to give the same assurances as his predecessor had given last December. As of this morning, no reply had been received, so it would be useful if the Minister would say whether that is still the Government's policy. It would certainly not have been consistent with acceptance of the Commission's original proposals. It is to the Minister's credit that he has no doubt resisted those proposals and sought coalitions with our Community partners in an effort to have them taken off the table. He stated clearly what the proposals would mean in terms of increased bureaucracy—up to 170,000 reports to our authorities and 50,000 reports to member states' authorities. He has our support in resisting those.

As the hon. Member for Antrim, North said, even the presidency compromise would lead to an increase in bureaucracy for Northern Ireland boats and boats from south-west England, many of which would be in either Irish or French waters. I understood the Minister to say in his opening remarks that he is trying to negotiate with the Irish Government for some "voisinage" agreements—that is the swank name for neighbourhood agreements—to allow for further derogations to reduce the need to report in. Are similar efforts being made with the French authorities in respect of vessels, particularly from south-west England, which, even on journeys of fewer than 72 hours, would find themselves in French waters? What happens if, having set out on a journey that is intended to be fewer than 72 hours, there is a change of mind midway? Is it necessary at that point to report in again?

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe raised the important question of who will prosecute in those matters. It is not a matter to be discussed before the debate but a matter on which the House should legitimately hear an answer. For example, if a 41st vessel appears in the Irish box when only 40 Spanish vessels are allowed, what is the legal position? Who will take action? Will it be the Spanish authorities, the United Kingdom authorities, or indeed the Irish authorities? Would anyone be prosecuted or would a diplomatic note of protest be sent to the Spanish embassy? We would like to know about such details.

It is also relevant to point out that the present arrangements on the accession of Spain and Portugal come into effect on 1 January. We would welcome information from the Minister about what will happen then and about whether every country will be in a position to implement and enforce the new arrangements. My understanding is that part of the arrangement means that each country must register with the Commission, which, in due course, will publish the arrangements that it is making to monitor the take-up and use of kilowatt days. Can the Minister tell me how many countries have so far registered how they intend to monitor that take-up? Will he assure the House that all will have done so by 1 January? Failing that, what precisely will happen?

An important point relates to catch reporting. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland recently sent a helpful letter to hon. Members representing Scotland in which he said that the catch reporting proposals had been deferred and would not have to brought before the Council until the end of 1996.

According to the original regulations relating to Spanish access to our waters, it was a requirement on Spanish vessels to communicate on entry into and departure from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea zone in which they were authorised to fish. They were required to communicate weekly, beginning on the date of the commencement of fishery operations, a series of facts, including the quantity of each species of fish in the holds and the quantity in kilograms of each species caught since the previous transmission.

I know that a report of the Commission in 1991 suggested that those arrangements were not working effectively, but at least they were something. Do those arrangements fall on 1 January 1996? Can the Minister clarify whether that means that between 1996 and the coming into operation of the new catch reporting regime, whenever that will be, there will be no requirement on Spanish vessels to report their catch?

I welcome what the Minister said about the recording of the list of species in fisheries logbooks. Will he assure me that there will be full consultation with the industry before that arrangement is subject to further development? When will there be an announcement on the decommissioning awards for the current year?

We know that a review group is sitting at the moment. I agree with the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that that group should have a more regional dimension in terms of the representation of regional waters and nations. That is something worth pursuing. Until such time as that review group reports and the common fisheries policy is reformed, fishermen must continue to earn their living. That is why it is so important to get the proposals right. I assure the Minister that if he adheres to the undertakings made by the then Minister in December about the introduction of no new control measures, he will enjoy the support of the Liberal party.

9.27 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): It is part of the tradition of the House that individual Members speak up for threatened minorities—of which, of course, our fishing industry is one. That is why I wish to speak briefly in this debate. Although I do not represent a fishing community, it is important for the fishermen of Britain to know that there is widespread support in the Conservative ranks for their Save British Fish campaign.

Every time I hear a debate about the fishing industry I am struck by its Chamberlainesque tone. It is all about appeasement, peace in our time and a good negotiated settlement, but we know that that inevitably means that our fishermen will lose more of their traditional rights. It ill behoves the Opposition to express their hypocritical concern; they, too, are well aware that they have no will even to constrain the activities of the European Community, still less—

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: No, I must be brief.

It was depressing to hear from the Minister that more and more money is to be spent on the decommissioning of boats. In the past six months, when I was less than normally constrained by party controls, I had the privilege of visiting the fishing ports of Britain and talking to fishermen. The process of decommissioning begs the question: what are those men supposed to do once their boats have been destroyed? They have no other occupation, their communities are dependent on fishing and no one knows how their traditions and the livelihoods of their families will be maintained without the ability of fishermen to fish.

We are talking about British vessels having to report their whereabouts every five minutes when our fishing communities have fished for centuries without the need for such frequent reporting. It ill behoves us as a Government and a country to say that fishermen are to be paid as bureaucrats. They will be required to phone, to telex and generally to make known their whereabouts.

My hon. Friend the Minister poured scorn on the requirement that our fishermen now have to report 20 species within their catch. Under the new proposals, they will have to report on 200. My hon. Friend neglected to say that if the wrong species have been caught, notwithstanding that the fish are dead on the decks, our fishermen are obliged to throw them back into the sea. Parts of the sea are becoming polluted because of the mass of fish that our fishermen are dumping in obedience to such rules.

I do not wish unduly to detain the House because I am aware that others wish to speak, but I should like to prevail on my hon. Friend the Minister to accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has urged, to take the bull by the horns and to insist that our waters are regained for the use of our fishermen. I would welcome the support of other Members, especially those who represent fishing communities. It is possible to do anything if we have the will to do it. If we insist, we can ensure that our waters are policed and that marauding Spanish fleets are kept out. We are talking of fleets that are becoming constantly larger on the strength of EC subsidies while having no natural fishing waters to support the volume of their vessels and the amount of business that they require to sustain themselves.

9.31 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): It is a pleasure to be called to participate in the debate. I shall be brief because I know that many other Members wish to say a few words on behalf of their fishermen.

It is clear that the Government are worried about Spanish fishermen. The Irish are also concerned. I hope that on this occasion we shall find an ally in Dublin.

The Government appear to be handling different problems in various parts of the United Kingdom by lumping them all together. In that context, the remarks of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) were especially appropriate. Within the general problem we have several discrete problems which need to be handled and dealt with separately. The measures before us would not have come into operation had it not been for the necessity to control the operations of Spanish boats in the Irish box. That being so, we should have it in mind that Spanish boats should not be given any access to the Irish sea. Against that background, what is the necessity for all the controls being proposed?

The Minister is well aware of Northern Ireland concerns, which I hope that he has taken on board. I hope, too, that the efforts being made between Belfast and Dublin will bear fruit. I know that some progress has been made, but much more needs to be done. I suggest that the Minister should consider carefully the existing agreement between Northern Ireland and the Republic. That would be a starting point.

Some problems have been resolved, but we must go a great deal further. The Minister should not rest on his laurels. Instead, he should reach a sensible agreement and not be deterred by the opposition that will be mounted from other quarters.

9.33 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I shall be brief because I wish to allow the Minister some time to answer the substantial questions that have been raised. First, I ask a simple question: who is leading the United Kingdom delegation this Thursday?

Mr. Baldry: I am.

Mr. Salmond: I am satisfied with that answer. It was said in another place today that the Secretary of State for Scotland was to lead it. I thought that he would be the ranking Minister. It is of some interest to Scottish Members that the hon. Gentleman will be leading the delegation.

There is an old, very bad joke whereby someone asking for directions gets the answer, "If I were you, I wouldn't have started from here." Opposition Members are in precisely that position because I do not think that anyone, whatever the Minister says, will have acquiesced in the acceleration of Spanish accession by six years with no apparent valid reason being given for it whatever. The reason why Spain wins fisheries negotiations is very simple: for Spain, fishing is an absolute top priority. It has two major concerns in European Council meetings—the first is fishing and the second is European regional policy—and it has been willing to use any instrument, particularly those in terms of enlargement of the Community requiring unanimity, in order to extract concessions in those key areas. The lesson must surely be that if one makes fishing one's top priority, things are more likely to go one's way than if it is way down the scale of priorities, as it most certainly is for the British Government.

There are two specific questions that the junior Minister from Scotland should address when summing up the debate. First, as of 1 January next year, when these control regulations come into force, will Spanish boats in western waters be required to report the catch on board, as they are now? That is not clear from the documents that we have. It is a vital question, because merely hailing in and hailing out, reporting in and reporting out, is relatively meaningless if no account whatever is being taken of the fish being caught by Spanish vessels at that time. Secondly, what assurances do the Fisheries Ministers have from their counterparts elsewhere in Europe that as of

[Mr. Salmond]

1 January next year the resources will be in place to police what already seems to us a scheme that is full of loopholes and potential ambiguities?

My final point relates to what the Minister said in answer to a question from his own Back Benches. He said that so long as he was Fisheries Minister, the House could be reassured on these points. As previous Fisheries Ministers have been wandering in and out of the debate all evening, in all honesty that is not much of an assurance to give the House. Fisheries Ministers have very short tenures of office. What the fishermen of Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and everywhere else are looking for is an indication from the Government of some determination to make this great natural resource industry a top priority of policy, rather than something that can be bought and sold, a subsidiary element of negotiations in Europe.

9.37 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am probably the only Member of the House whose constituency has an international water border with another country. South Down has two thirds of the fishing industry of Northern Ireland and is adjacent to the Republic of Ireland. I emphasise the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). Is the Minister going to Brussels this week with a thought-out plan agreed with the Ministry of Fisheries in the Republic of Ireland?

The deputy leader of the Ulster Unionist party was in Dublin today with one of the Northern Ireland fishing organisations—that is very creditable in these political times—trying to get a compromise. We have precedents in dealing with the Irish Republic in terms of quota exchanges year by year. Can the Minister state categorically—or state at all—that he will be making a joint approach in Brussels on Thursday, or whenever it is, which will alleviate the great difficulties that the fishermen of Northern Ireland and of the Irish Republic will enter into if this compromise does not go through? Even if it does go through, there will be many difficulties still remaining and a lot of expense incurred. Will he ensure that some financial burden is taken off the Northern Ireland fishermen because of their position? I see that the Minister is edging off his seat. I should like him to reassure me that he and his Department will do everything on Thursday and afterwards to have this agreement on an all-Ireland basis because of the traditional, historical intermingling of the fishing in the Irish sea.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Raymond S. Robertson): I shall try to respond to as many points as possible. I am delighted that so many hon. Members with fishing interests—and a few with no such interests—have been able to contribute to the debate, but I must add that as a Scot I was very disappointed that no member of the shadow Scottish Office team spoke or, indeed, bothered to grace the debate with their presence. That is a worry, and I am sure that representatives of the Scottish fishing industry listening to our proceedings will have noted it.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I will reflect the contributions of all hon. Members in agreeing the negotiating line that the Government will adopt at the Fisheries Council in Luxembourg later this week.

The interest shown in the debate demonstrates the continued importance of our fishing industry. The Government recognise the valuable contribution that the industry makes to the economic well-being of the United Kingdom, and the vital employment opportunities that fishing provides for many remote and fragile coastal communities. Various hon. Members have brought that to my attention today and over the summer recess. I stress that the Government are committed to ensuring a sustainable and profitable future for the whole United Kingdom fishing industry—an industry with long and treasured traditions for an island state such as ours.

Various hon. Members have raised concerns about the future viability of the industry in the light of proposed Community measures to introduce effort control in western waters. Effort control is one of the key issues facing us all: the need to balance the fishing effort of the European fishing fleet with the fishing opportunities available to it is crucial to ensuring continued sustainable and profitable fishing activity for all.

The hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked about specific arrangements for Northern Ireland vessels. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said in his opening speech, we are conscious of the circumstances of the Northern Ireland fleet, notably when it is fishing traditional grounds in the Irish sea. The so-called "voisinage" agreement has operated successfully in the past and provides a good foundation for future arrangements. That is why we have opened up a dialogue with the Department of the Marine in Dublin as to how best we can deal with the matter within the framework of the control measures to apply to western waters.

I am confident that the use of the presidency compromise, as proposed, will cater for the vast bulk of trips by the vast majority of the Northern Ireland fleet, as fewer than 40 vessels go on trips lasting more than 72 hours.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked how the flag state monitored its fleet's effort. Of course the flag state has an important responsibility to monitor the activities of its own fleet. However, I fully recognise the fears of United Kingdom fishermen. We have therefore argued over the summer for a central role for the coastal state. Spanish vessels will have to hail in in real time when entering UK or Irish waters.

Many hon. Members touched on the subject of bureaucracy. The United Kingdom has been at the forefront of negotiations for a practical, sensible system to integrate the Spanish and Portuguese fleets into the common fisheries policy. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have been working hard behind the scenes throughout the summer in bilateral discussions with other member states to canvass support for some alternatives to the bureaucratic, impractical proposals first advanced by the Commission. I do not want to tempt providence, but I believe that we have gone a long way down the road towards agreeing the outline for an acceptable outcome at the Fisheries Council later this week.

Many hon. Members have rightly identified the many risks and costs attached to bureaucratic proposals for monitoring fishing effort on a real-time basis. The Government have led the way in pointing out how excessively complex such a scheme would be, and arguing against heavy-handed bureaucracy. From the outset, we identified our key negotiating objectives for an acceptable alternative, and we have throughout kept in close consultation with the British fishing industry. I am pleased that we have managed to maintain a close dialogue with the industry north and south of the border, and I commend all concerned for that.

We want practical measures to integrate the Spanish and Portuguese fleets into western waters. From the outset, we have sought to avoid the unnecessary imposition of any new regulatory burdens on the British fleet, although we recognise that the arrangements should not discriminate between European Union member states. On the one hand, we want to achieve satisfactory protection for fishing grounds of importance to the UK fleet, particularly the sensitive water around Ireland and the Irish box. On the other hand, in order to ensure adequate control of the fleets of other member states, we must accept some of the quota requirements for our own fleet when it is in foreign waters. That is why we have long argued that the coastal state should have a key role in managing waters under its jurisdiction.

The hon. Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked whether we were satisfied that other member states would be ready to start on 1 January next year. The answer is yes—we believe that all states will be ready on the same date.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland talked long about the letter of last year from my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) to fishermen. I have spent time reading and re-reading that letter, in which he stated:

"The UK will be able to monitor its own fishing effort and provided this does not increase, no new measures to control effort will need to be imposed in the UK industry."

Later he explained:

"Vessels going into or out of the area of the Irish Box and the other defined fishing areas in Western Waters will have to hail in and out to both coastal states and the flag state, which will enable us to keep track of Spanish fishing activity."

The position is therefore clear: there will be no need to place restrictions on the amount of time that vessels spend at sea so long as fishing effort does not increase.

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): On that point, my hon. Friend must recognise that, particularly in relation to his point about the Irish box, there is considerable concern among fleets in the south-west that the prosecuting authority is the flag state and that, with the best will in the world and not wishing to intrude into too sensitive waters, the Spanish record in prosecuting its own fleet is not good.

Mr. Robertson: I accept what my hon. Friend says and I assure him that that will be very much on the agenda of both my hon. Friend the Minister and myself.

I should like to say a quick word to my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who talked briefly about quitting the common fisheries policy. It is wrong to talk down the UK industry and to underestimate our ability to defend our fishermen in the European Union. We cannot do that by putting our heads in the sand and by wishing that the CFP did not exist. We must work within it to ensure that the regime operates as effectively as possible in the interests of our fishermen. Being at the heart is better than being out on a limb. Some form of common European fisheries policy is essential as fish do not respect international borders and their conservation cannot be achieved unilaterally or in isolation.

Do the hon. Members who question our involvement in the common fisheries policy really want to call into question the livelihood of our fishermen? If the answer is no, I must point out that if there is no market for their fish, the economic position of fishermen is gravely threatened.

We have had a good and far-ranging debate and I commend the motion to the House. I believe that the House and the fishing industry in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland can look forward with some confidence to the Fisheries Council on Thursday.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 150, Noes 236.

Division No. 220] **[9.47 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Boateng, Paul
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew

Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pearson, Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. George Mudie and
Mr. Robert Ainsworth.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Mr. Gary Streeter.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 233, Noes 152.

Division No. 221] **[10.01 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riffkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dr. Liam Fox and
Mr. Gary Streeter.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks Tony
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth Valley)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davis, Terry
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Galloway, George

Gerrard, Neil
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pearson, Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. George Mudie and
Mr. Robert Ainsworth.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents No. 7596/95, on establishing a control system applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy, No. 7465/95, relating to Community financial contribution towards certain expenditure incurred by the Member States in implementing the monitoring and control system applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy, and No. 8817/95, concerning a proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the list of species to be recorded in the fisheries logbook and landing declarations; welcomes the agreement reached at the Fisheries Council on 15th June on fishing effort levels; and supports the Government's efforts to secure effective measures to monitor and enforce fishing activity in Western Waters, including the Irish Box, while not placing unnecessary burdens on the fishing industry.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS

Ordered,

That Mr. Timothy Kirkhope be discharged from the Accommodation and Works Committee and Mr. Derek Conway be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Elfyn Llwyd be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee and Mr. Cynog Dafis be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery.]*

Kuwait

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I begin this debate by congratulating the Minister of State on his new appointment. I feel sure that the murder and mayhem of the middle east with which he will now have to grapple and the potentates and dictators with whom he will have to deal will prove to be a more tranquil billet than his previous position. I am sure that his famous good nature and good manners will prevail, and that he will do a good job for our country in that difficult and turbulent part of the world.

I want to raise the issue of our relations with Kuwait for a number of reasons. We have a long and close relationship with the Emirate of Kuwait, and in a sense we invented Kuwait. The father of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was in the tent when the famous line in the sand was drawn, and one part of the sand was designated to be Kuwait and another part of the sand was designated to be Iraq. That line has caused many problems ever since, but that is a subject for another debate.

Not only did we invent Kuwait: to a real extent the ruling family of Kuwait was returned to its throne and its all but absolute power at the point of British and American bayonets. That gives us a clear focus of concern about some of the many problems that afflict that benighted country.

When I describe the ruling family as such, I really mean it. I remarked a little while ago in the House that 11 of the top 12 Ministers in the Government of Kuwait, and four out of the five provincial Governors, share the same surname and are members of the same family. The Amir is Jaber As-Sabah. The Crown Prince and Prime Minister is Saad As-Sabah. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is Sabah As-Sabah. The Minister of Amiri Affairs is Khalid As-Sabah. The Minister of Information is Jaber As-Sabah. The Minister of the Interior is Salim As-Sabah. The Minister of Defence is Nawaf As-Sabah. The Minister of Oil is Ali As-Sabah. The Governor of Ahmadi is Ali Sabah As-Sabah. The Governor of Jahra province is Ali Abdullah As-Sabah. The Governor of Kuwait province is Jaber As-Sabah. The Governor of Faranawiya province is Ahmad As-Sabah. I could go on, but I see that the Minister would prefer it if I drew my own line in the sand at that.

Kuwait is not so much a one-party state as a family business, and one that owes more to the Corleones than to the Sainsburys. It is my contention in this debate that the As-Sabah family and business are a disreputable lot indeed. The internal repression in Kuwait and the lack of basic human rights and democracy is legendary. It was bad before the Iraqi dictatorship's invasion and it is worse now, despite all the promises that were made to western public opinion, to justify the armed intervention. Some $690 billion was expended in returning the family to its thrones. Many lives were lost—many western lives, many British lives, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of other lives that were lost.

No doubt the Minister will tell me about what is laughingly described as a parliament in Kuwait. It is a parliament with no woman member, and for the members of which no woman can vote. Only male full citizens over 30 educated to university standard may vote. Fewer than one in 10 Kuwaitis have the right to vote. Some democracy; some parliament.

The Minister may mention, as has been done before, the press and the media in Kuwait, which are more free than in some of the other dictatorships round about, but it is far from a free press, with censorship and self-censorship everywhere. One newspaper was recently closed down for criticising the royal family.

Of all the human rights atrocities committed by the ruling family in Kuwait, the worst and the greatest is that against the people known as the Bedoons. There are more than 300,000 Bedoons—one third of Kuwait's native population. Half of them—150,000—have been driven into refugee camps in the desert across the Iraqi border by the regime and left there to bake and to rot. The other 150,000 are treated not as second-class or even fifth-class citizens but not as any sort of citizen. They are bereft of all rights.

The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch/Middle East has said:

"The totality of the treatment of the Bedoons amounts to a policy of denationalization of native residents, relegating them to an apartheid-like existence in their own country. The Kuwaiti government policy of harassment and intimidation of the Bedoons and of denying them the right to lawful residence, employment, travel and movement, contravene basic principles of human rights . . . Denial of citizenship to the Bedoons clearly violates international law . . . Denial of citizenship and lawful residence to Bedoon husbands and children of women who are Kuwaiti citizens violates rules against gender-based discrimination."

That violates the United Nations conventions to which Kuwait is a signatory.

The report continues:

"Denying Bedoons the right to petition the courts to challenge governmental decisions regarding their claims to citizenship and lawful residence in the country violates the universal right to due process of law and equality before the law.

By retroactively implementing restrictive citizenship and residency laws, Kuwaiti authorities deprive Bedoons of their vested rights to state citizenhip and residence."

I could go on.

It is a scandal that almost no one in the world cares a thing about the plight of 300,000 people, 150,000 of them cast out of the land in which they have lived. Many were born to Kuwaiti mothers, and many of those families have lived in the Kuwaiti area for many centuries. Indeed, given the ruling family's penchant for spending time on the Riviera or in the west end of London, many of them have spent a great deal more time in Kuwait than many of the members of the ruling family.

Literally hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, Sudanese and Yemenis were also sacked from their jobs, evicted from their houses and deported from the country, including constituents of mine who were born in Kuwait, who had never been in any other country but Kuwait and who had loyally served Kuwait, but who, because they were Palestinians, were kicked into the Yemen or into Iraq, where many of their families continue to live in appalling conditions. They are the very people whose labour, skill and dedication built much of the wealth of Kuwait.

Many times in the past five years, I have detained the House by speaking about individual atrocities against human rights. I have told the House about the British citizen Sulaiman Al-Adsani, who was tortured by a

[Mr. George Galloway]

member of the Kuwaiti royal family, Sheikh Jabar Al-Sabah, who was put in a swimming pool which was afloat with six dead bodies, who was repeatedly held under the water in that swimming pool, and who was then burnt, suffering 25 per cent. burns all over his body, such that one year later he continued to wear protective clothing.

I have told the House about Naim Farhat, whose father and younger brother were shot dead protecting her honour, and who was herself raped and shot in the head, such that she is paralysed and permanently disabled, by a policeman in the Kuwaiti state employ, and for whom absolutely no compensation has ever been paid. The criminal, the murderer, the rapist, was sentenced to the grand total of five years in prison.

I could go on and on about the problems that have afflicted so many citizens in that country, but I intend to speak not only about the behaviour of the ruling family in their own country, but about their behaviour in our country, which gives so many people in their district so much shame and embarrassment. I could detain the House with legendary tales from the casinos and bordellos of London about members of that rapacious family, with more money than sense and fewer morals than the pound notes in their pockets.

However, I want to confine myself to the case of the London business man, Mr. Salus, which is described in early-day motion 748, supported by no fewer than 66 Members of the House from every party in the House, and by several peers of the realm, senior Conservatives, senior Liberal Democrats and senior members of the Labour party. I table plenty of motions in the House. Few reach 66 signatures, fewer have any Conservative names on them, and fewer still have the support that that motion has.

The Minister knows the case well. It is that of a London business man, a married man with a young family, ruined by the decision by two princesses of the Kuwaiti royal house, Princesses Nadia and Fatemah Al-Sabah, who commissioned him and other British contractors to renovate flats in Kensington in London and who, midway through the contract, without warning, liquidated their limited liability company and walked away from their liabilities to those British contractors, ruining all of them. Some of them died; the marriages of others broke up; all of them suffered terrible hardship as a result of that dreadful decision.

When Mr. Salus began to be concerned that his bills were not being paid, the princesses' fellow director pulled out a copy—I have it with me—of a *Hello*-style photo session in *Harpers and Queen*, in which the beneficence and massive wealth of the princesses was profiled. The Minister will say that it is a commercial matter, that it is a limited liability company, and that, under the law, it can be liquidated, but as a Minister of the Crown he must know that it cannot be morally acceptable for multi-millionairesses who are members of the Kuwaiti royal family to walk away from their debts and obligations in that way. He and the British Government have an obligation to have a word in the ear of the Kuwaiti Government and royal family to ask them to pay their debts to a man who has been ruined and bankrupted by this decision.

Members of the Kuwaiti royal family can put £75,400 on a turn of the roulette wheel in London casinos, but they will not pay up to people who did work in good faith, trusting the honesty—the bona fides—of members of the royal family of a friendly country, which was returned to power by the sweat and blood of British and other allied forces' arms.

The question is a moral, not a legal or commercial, one. Imagine if members of the British royal family decided not to pay their debts in a foreign country and made a company bankrupt. I do not believe that it could ever happen, but if it did, it would be a source of shame to the British people, and the British Government would have something to say about it.

Our relations with Kuwait are close and of long standing. We have influence there; its investments in Britain are legion, and our economic interests there are legion. I am asking not for a breach in relations with the Kuwaiti Government, but simply, quietly if need be, for the Minister to have a word in their ear about the Salus case and about other instances of behaviour unbecoming to a country that is so indebted to the British state.

10.27 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) has given us an opportunity to debate our relations with Kuwait. This has been a significant year for UK-Kuwait relationships, and has been marked by the highly successful state visit of His Highness the Amir in May, following the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister's visit in February. We also look forward to the Princess Royal's visit to Kuwait in November.

Last year, visitors to Kuwait included my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friends the Defence Secretary and the President of the Board of Trade. Those visits are symbolic of the closeness of our relationship, which is based on a friendship dating back over 200 years.

Our friendship is founded on close co-operation in many fields, particularly in defence. For many years, long before the discovery of oil, Kuwait's status as a British protectorate helped to ensure its independence and territorial integrity. That formal relationship ended in 1961, but Britain has continued to work closely with one of its oldest friends in the region. That was apparent immediately after Kuwait became a state in her own right, when we deployed troops in response to a military build-up and threatening moves by Iraq. More recently, Britain played a key role during the Gulf war, and was the first to respond last October when Iraq again threatened Kuwait.

Defence is only one, albeit important, aspect of the relationship. I am pleased that our trade with Kuwait is growing. The presence tonight of my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is proof positive of that excellent relationship. Our exporters have played a leading role in the post-Gulf war reconstruction of Kuwait and in helping Kuwait to re-equip its armed forces.

British exports in 1994 were worth £312 million, and our performance is strong in many sectors—not least, of course, oil, where companies such as British Petroleum have a long and successful record of involvement. We expect that that involvement will create further

opportunities, if and when Kuwait decides to allow foreign investment in the upstream sector of its oil industry. As usual, the Government will do all they can to help and support British companies that seek to do business in Kuwait.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a commercial dispute. We are aware of the dispute involving Mr. Salus and two members of the Kuwaiti ruling family, which is several thousand strong. We hope that lawyers acting for both sides in the dispute will meet soon, and that the dispute can be resolved as quickly as possible, but we cannot intervene in a commercial dispute of this nature, which, if necessary, should be pursued through the courts.

Mr. Galloway: What would the Minister say if I told him that, just prior to the Amir's visit, the Kuwaiti embassy told me that members of the embassy would meet soon and resolve the matter? I was told that, if I would only stay my hand and desist from causing any difficulties during the Amir's visit, the matter would be resolved. I did so, and raised no protest of any kind during the Amir's visit. I behaved impeccably, but the embassy welshed on that promise. So I suspect that whatever the Minister has been told about a meeting that might take place soon is the same kind of falsehood that was conveyed to me.

Mr. Hanley: I would say that we have mentioned the case to the Kuwaiti embassy, which I believe also has no standing in this dispute. It has been trying to arrange a meeting between lawyers acting for both sides in the dispute, and I hope that that will occur as soon as possible. More than that we cannot do, but I am sure that this debate will come to the attention of those to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, who may realise the urgency of the matter.

I also welcome the fact that parliamentary links are well established and flourishing. Madam Speaker was able to welcome her Kuwaiti colleagues here last year, and several hon. Members have visited Kuwait since then. Hon. Members may be aware that, last year, the Kuwaiti National Assembly organised and hosted the first inter-Gulf parliamentary conference.

Every country has the right to develop its political structure in accordance with its culture, heritage and traditions. The ruling family, Government and people of Kuwait have an impressive record. We are encouraged by the contribution made by the democratically elected National Assembly in Kuwait since the election in 1992. We also support recent decisions to extend the franchise to some naturalised Kuwaiti citizens and their male offspring, and we hope to see further extensions in the future. The hon. Gentleman referred to that, too.

Our links and co-operation with Kuwait are flourishing in other areas too, including medical training and research, education and culture. Each year, an ever-increasing number of Kuwaitis visit this country as holidaymakers, students and longer-term residents. They are most welcome, and I hope that their presence will help to promote a better understanding of Islam and the west, and of our respective cultures.

Some of our Kuwaiti visitors may be wondering what effect the European Union's common visa list will have on their visits once it is introduced. It was not in our power to block the common visa list, which could have been adopted by a qualified majority after the end of this year. We could not persuade our European Union partners that four Gulf states—Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates—should be excluded.

We expect the majority of Gulf state travellers to be eligible for multiple-entry visas, and we aim to make the issue of visas as simple and straightforward as possible. Unlike most of our partners, we do not operate a system of post-entry checks. We hope that our many Kuwaiti visitors will not be inconvenienced as a result of the common visa list.

I shall now deal with the threat that continues to hang over Kuwait and Britain's interests there. I refer, of course, to Iraq. Our aim is to ensure that Kuwait never again suffers at the hands of Saddam Hussein. To this end, we co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 949, which makes it clear that any substantial Iraqi military build-up and deployment towards the Kuwaiti border will be met with a robust response.

Saddam has often demonstrated that he cannot be trusted, and it is essential that we maintain the pressure on him. This House will know that we remain resolute in our view that Iraq must comply with all relevant United Nations obligations before sanctions can be relaxed. The United Nations special commission's recent revelations about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme demonstrate how important it is to remain firm. Some have suggested that the time has come to relax sanctions for one reason or another, but there is no reason to believe that Saddam is repentant. To relax the sanctions regime now would risk allowing Saddam to threaten the region again.

The reason most often advanced for a relaxation of sanctions is the plight of the long-suffering Iraqi people. We share that concern. We took a leading role in the adoption of Security Council resolution 986, which allows Iraq to sell oil to purchase humanitarian supplies. Sadly, Saddam rejected that offer. We urge him to reconsider, and to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. He is to blame.

Resolution 986 was welcomed by Kuwait and other countries in the region that share our concern. Kuwait itself has donated humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of Iraqi refugees in Iran. As my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) will be aware, the Amir gave a very generous donation to this cause during his state visit.

One area of Iraqi non-compliance which causes us great concern is the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and detainees, including other third-country nationals still missing in Iraq. The physical scars of the Iraqi occupation have been removed by Kuwait's impressive reconstruction programme. That unresolved issue, however, prevents the deeper psychological scars from healing and continues to cause much anguish and anxiety for the relatives and families of those missing in Iraq.

I know that several Members of this House take a close interest, and have visited Kuwait recently to discuss that and other subjects. They and others may welcome an account of what we are doing to press Iraq to provide substantive information on the missing persons.

Under the terms of UN resolution 687, Iraq has a clear obligation to co-operate with the International Committee of the Red Cross in its efforts to obtain information on prisoners of war and missing persons. Britain is a member of the tripartite commission, which was set up to monitor

[Mr. Hanley]

progress. We are very disappointed that progress has been so slow. Iraq has had the Red Cross case files on missing individuals for nearly three years, and has so far failed to provide substantive information on all but a few of them.

We have made it clear that we expect Iraq to provide some answers at the next meeting of the tripartite commission in November. We will continue to raise this issue in the Security Council at each review of sanctions against Iraq, and will take every opportunity to press Iraq to comply with its UN obligations in that and every other respect.

We are aware of the concern expressed about a number of human rights issues in Kuwait. We welcome the fact that the Kuwaiti Government permit international human rights organisations to visit Kuwait and conduct fieldwork there. The Kuwaiti National Assembly has established an effective human rights committee, and there is a local chapter of Amnesty International now established in Kuwait. Kuwait's democratic system allows for a thorough debate of local issues, which are fully reported in the media. We have made known our concern on specific issues, and will continue to monitor the situation.

A particular problem exists—the hon. Member made passionate reference to it—with a group of people known as the Bedoon Jinsiya, who are those without nationality. They are stateless persons, primarily of Iraqi or Iranian descent. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights estimates that there are 130,000 Bedoon remaining in Kuwait. The hon. Member mentioned those who are outside it. The Kuwaiti Government regard many of them as illegal immigrants, who have chosen to conceal their true nationality. However, some have strong residence ties. Her Majesty's Government welcome the fact that the Kuwaiti Government have set up a committee to examine the Bedoon problem and recommend possible solutions.

Mr. Galloway: I appreciate the Minister giving way again. I must tell him that those who briefed him have misled him, inadvertently no doubt, on the origin of the Bedoon, whom he describes casually as of Iraqi or Iranian descent. I am sorry if that allegation disturbs the Minister, but they are of Iraqi or Iranian descent only in the sense that perhaps many in the House are of French descent. William the Conqueror came here many centuries ago, and no doubt some here are the progeny of those invaders.

These Bedoon have been in Kuwait for many centuries. If they are of Iraqi or Iranian origin, it is from a time when neither Iraq nor Iran existed. It is facile to describe them thus. Every human rights organisation accepts that these are people with an overwhelming claim to Kuwaiti citizenship.

Mr. Hanley: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about some of the Bedoon, who have lived in Kuwait for several decades and are the spouses or children of Kuwaiti fathers. That group has a good claim to Kuwaiti citizenship. Many of the Bedoon, however—it is likely to be about 80 per cent. of the estimated 130,000 who remain in Kuwait—are citizens of other Gulf countries, and predominately Iraq. They came to Kuwait to benefit from its generous social services, free health care, free education and low-cost housing. They chose to conceal their true identity. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can deny that that case exists. A committee has been set up by the Kuwaiti Government to examine the Bedoon problem and to recommend possible solutions.

The trials of alleged collaborators by the martial law court, and more recently the state security court, have also caused international concern. We and our EU partners have told the Kuwaiti Government that international legal and human rights standards should be respected. We welcome the fact that the state security court has been abolished. We understand that the court of cassation has been active in reviewing state security court cases and has altered sentences, including the commutation of the death penalty, in a number of cases.

Similarly, we welcome the fact that the Kuwaiti Government have set up an office to look into complaints of abuse against domestic workers, primarily from south-east Asia. We hope that the provisions of Kuwaiti labour law can be extended to protect the rights of these workers.

I hope that hon. Members will agree that Kuwaitis are good friends, with whom we have much in common. We share a strong trading and maritime tradition, and we have both faced unwarranted aggression. Hon. Members familiar with Kuwait may be aware of the diwaniya system, which allows Kuwaiti families and friends the opportunity for full and frank discussion of every conceivable subject under the sun. Our relationship with Kuwait is conducted in similar fashion, and the fact that it is so close today is a tribute to good open communication based on shared interests.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 24 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

STANDING ORDERS (PRIVATE BUSINESS)

Ordered,

That the following Amendments to Standing Orders relating to Private Business be made:

STANDING ORDER 39

Line 4, leave out 'the Department of Health and Social Security and'.

Line 9, after first 'of' insert 'Education and'.

Line 9, after 'Employment' insert 'the Department of Health'.

Line 10, after 'Heritage' insert 'the Department of Social Security'.

Line 21, leave out 'Science' and insert 'Employment'.

Line 24, leave out 'Science' and insert 'Employment'.

TABLE OF FEES

Line 2, leave out '£2,500' and insert '£3,500'.

Line 3, leave out '£2,500' and insert '£3,500'.

Line 23, leave out '£2,500' and insert '£3,500'.

Line 29, leave out '£1,250' and insert '£1,750'.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCHYARD BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Saint Paul's Churchyard Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Defence Establishment

1. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of the defence establishment; and what was the equivalent figure immediately before the end of the cold war. [36559]

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): As at 1 September this year, the strength of our regular armed forces was just under 228,400 and our civilian staff strength was about 130,000. On 1 April 1990, the figures were 305,711 regular service personnel and 172,273 civilian staff.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister recognise that there is now an estimated shortfall of about 10,000 personnel in Her Majesty's forces? Will not that present problems to Britain when meeting its national and international obligations in future? Will he recognise, too, that—by contrast—the British economy is suffering from severe unemployment? Does it not take a Government of some ineptitude to bring about such a contradiction?

Mr. Soames: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman has not quite got the right end of the stick. It is true that there are manning shortfalls, principally in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Artillery and the infantry, because of poor recruiting and the inadequate retention of young soldiers. These shortfalls occur from time to time but are being dealt with by a vigorous recruitment campaign; and a special bounty has been introduced to improve retention in some areas.

The hon. Gentleman should realise that 32 per cent. of the land Army is engaged in commitments and operations—it is still an extremely exciting and thrilling career, one that is well worth people's joining. We must do more to ensure that people continue to be recruited to the service.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend use this opportunity to congratulate all involved in the defence costs study, which will save about £720 million on next year's defence budget? Will he also confirm that those savings will not be plundered by the Treasury but will be ploughed back into defence expenditure? Would he like to earmark some of it to improve on the establishment of our manpower, which is suffering from overstretch?

Mr. Soames: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for what he says about the defence costs study. As he rightly says, the results are extremely impressive: not just because the front line has been preserved but because substantial savings have been made.

I am also able to announce this afternoon that, in order to alleviate undermanning in the Army, we intend to retain for three years, from 1997, some 400 Gurkhas who would otherwise have been made redundant next year. They will form up to three infantry companies to substitute for British soldiers in infantry battalions, and a small number will also fill unmanned posts in units of the Royal Signals.

I believe that this imaginative scheme to use available military manpower in this way will be warmly welcomed by the Gurkhas, by the British Army, and above all by the British public, who rightly have huge regard and great affection for the Gurkhas.

Dr. Reid: I can assure the Minister that, despite the misleading headline in one newspaper this morning, as regards the defence establishment the Labour party has no intention of abolishing the courts martial system. As far as the figures are concerned, does he not have some explaining to do? The Ministry of Defence and the armed forces Minister have spent £500 million on redundancy payments, made 40,000-plus soldiers redundant, and now tell us that because we are short of soldiers we have to spend £100 million on recruiting them. Is that not an indication of mismanagement on the part of the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Soames: No, Madam, it is not. We are grateful for the clarification on the courts martial system. I am disappointed to see that the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), its genesis, has been removed to the Whips Office. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well—he is merely mischief making—that restructuring could not be achieved by natural wastage alone. A phased redundancy programme had to be used by each of the services. Obviously some recruitment continues during a redundancy programme, to ensure that there is a properly balanced age and rank structure to meet all the skill shortages in certain areas. The hon. Gentleman is making mischief in the way in which he phrased the question. There is a problem on recruiting. He knows that, as do we. We see it coming and are taking the most radical and sensible steps to ensure that we deal with it.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend reflected on the fact that, at the height of the cold war, under the previous Labour Government, members of our armed forces faced decline in their conditions of service, whereas today they have realistic conditions of service that reflect the dangerous and challenging nature of their job. Does not that show that, on many other issues, one cannot trust Labour with defence?

Mr. Soames: The whole nation knows that one cannot possibly trust the Labour party on defence. My hon. Friend is quite right. Indeed, the services have never been better equipped or motivated than they are today. They are indeed at a lower level than they were, and quite rightly and inevitably so. They continue to be the most formidable armed forces of any nation in the world.

Financial Waste

2. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he maintains a central record of financial waste in his Department. [36560]

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. James Arbuthnot): My Department has identified significant improvements in the way in which we carry out our tasks, leading to large efficiency savings. We are determined to bear down on waste wherever it occurs.

Mr. Cummings: Given the Secretary of State's tough reputation for controlling public expenditure, can he explain why his Department appears unable to control cost overruns at a time when more and more disclosures of incompetence and mismanagement are emerging virtually every week?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am tempted to ask: where's the beef? The hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) was one of those who signed the Labour amendment last week calling for huge cuts in defence spending and the scrapping of Trident. He is living proof of the adage that was just stated by my hon. Friend the Minister: one cannot trust Labour on defence. My Department has been at the forefront in cutting out waste. The defence costs study, to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred, rightly called "Front Line First", will yield savings rising to £1,000 million over the next seven years, and that is over and above the efficiency savings that my Department has gone in for.

Mr. Atkins: Is my hon. Friend aware of the financial waste that would accrue both to his Department and to the British aerospace industry if the Department were to purchase F16s rather than have the mid-life update of Tornados? Is he further aware that such a decision, if it were taken, would be seen as a major blow to British industry and to many of the constituents of his hon. Friends, and as such would be wholly unacceptable?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I congratulate my hon. Friend on managing to get into his question an important point on behalf of his constituents. It is true that we have to consider all options in considering the mid-life update of our Tornados. One of those options is the possible leasing of F16s from the Americans. That is an option that we are obliged to consider, and we would be properly criticised—possibly by my hon. Friend, but certainly by Opposition Members—if we did not consider all the options in deciding on the mid-life update of our Tornados.

Dr. David Clark: On the subject of waste, will the Minister confirm that the Department spent £24 million on buying 846 Reynolds Boughton light vehicles in preference to Land Rovers; that all those 846 vehicles have been found to be defective and unroadworthy and are in store in Army depots since they are unusable? How does he justify that as a sensible spending of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have already said that, if I or any of my fellow Ministers find waste in our Department, we are determined to come down on it like a ton of bricks. That remains the case. The hon. Gentleman is, as always, picking around tiny little things. He is determined to undermine as much as possible the savings that we are introducing. The efficiency scheme that we have introduced in the Ministry of Defence has over-achieved its target ever since 1988. It has produced savings of around £2.5 billion; that is a dramatic achievement of which we are proud.

Sir Peter Hordern: When my hon. Friend pursues his study in bearing down on costs, will he tell the House what is happening about the disposal of surplus MOD properties, which has been a subject of complaint for many years now by the Public Accounts Committee? Some progress has been made, but will my hon. Friend tell the House?

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend is right that some progress has been made, but it is not yet sufficient and

that is why we are conducting a study to improve it and will be able dramatically to improve those sales of land during the next few years.

Bosnia

3. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest military situation in Bosnia. [36561]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Portillo): The situation is generally much quieter following the ceasefire which came into effect on 12 October. [HON. MEMBERS: "Thanks to the Americans."] Sarajevo, for example, is a changed city with trams running, convoys arriving unhindered and prices falling.

Mr. Hain: In the new military situation, what guarantees can the Secretary of State give that British troops will still be available for protection and escort duties for British humanitarian and aid missions?

Mr. Portillo: For as long as the United Nations mission continues, British troops will continue to play their part. I should say that I am aware of a situation which has arisen in central Bosnia where mujaheddin appear to be operating with some sort of vendetta against British troops and, for the time being, the United Nations has withdrawn British troops from certain convoy escort duties in central Bosnia. That is on the recommendation of the United Nations for their own protection. But the general position remains that British troops will play their full part in United Nations operations.

Sir Patrick Cormack: Did not the firm, decisive and well co-ordinated action that took place during the recess, in which British troops played a conspicuous and distinguished part, prove that decisive action does in fact pay?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I was bemused a moment ago to hear Opposition Members calling out that the improvement over the summer had been due to American troop operations, as though British troops had played no part. It is typical of the anti-patriotic ranting that we get from some Opposition Members.

The fact of the matter is that, as the House knows, British forces firing their artillery on Mount Igman played an extremely distinguished part, as did pilots from the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, who committed themselves to missions with absolute courage and commendable success. Opposition Members would do well to recognise that.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Secretary of State accept that, if NATO was to be unable to put the full force into the field to support the fragile peace, it would be damaging for the prospects for peace, and also to the credibility of NATO? Is the right hon. Gentleman apprehensive about the extent to which the United States is willing to put troops into a NATO force in order to assist the peace process in the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Portillo: No, I am not apprehensive about that. I agree with what the hon. and learned Gentleman says about the importance of NATO deploying a full and effective force, but I am confident that the United States will wish to play its part in that. I can also assure the House that the United Kingdom will wish to play its full part as well.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the current situation in Bosnia was brought about largely because we deployed the right equipment and the right people at the right time? In particular, the top-cover flying of the Royal Air Force with the Tornado F3—especially at night—could not have been done by other aircraft crews available from NATO. The same applies to the important job of delivering the necessary laser bombs, performed by Harriers and Jaguars, and the enormous task undertaken by transport and other aircraft, including helicopters. All that meant that we were doing the right thing at the right time.

Mr. Portillo: This has been an enormously distinguished period in the history of all three services; but the history of distinguished service in Bosnia goes back further than just the past few weeks. What we have done, patiently, in feeding the hungry and saving human lives has been commendable, but when our forces were called on to adopt a more robust posture, they did not fail.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Secretary of State yet in a position to advise the House on the command structure for the 50,000 to 60,000 troops that, according to NATO, will need to be deployed in Bosnia following a truce and peace accord? Will British troops serve under the United Nations or NATO, and is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that the agreement outlined yesterday in Washington will safeguard those troops?

Mr. Portillo: I believe that the operation must be undertaken by NATO, operating within the bounds of a United Nations Security Council resolution. I believe that NATO is the appropriate body. As has been proved recently, it is able to operate effectively in military terms. I also agree with the American position, which is that the command and control arrangements for NATO need to be absolutely straightforward and unambiguous.

That having been said, however, I should like nations outside NATO to participate. I am thinking of Russia, and of Muslim countries. I hope that we can find a way of including those countries in the operation without in any way confusing the command and control aspect.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that recent events in Bosnia show how successful air power can be if it is properly deployed? Will he contrast NATO's effectiveness in the past few months with the dithering of the UN over the past two years? Will he ensure that, in future, British interests in Europe are pursued through NATO rather than the United Nations?

Mr. Portillo: I certainly agree that NATO has been very effective, but I do not join my hon. Friend in his attack on the UN. I think that the UN found itself in a difficult position. Many of the problems that it faced were not its fault, but were caused by the inadequate support and resources voted to it by member states. I do, however, join my hon. Friend in again paying tribute to the way in which our troops have performed in the NATO operation.

National Parks

4. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new proposals he has concerning the extent of military activity in national parks. [36562]

Mr. Soames: My Department has no new proposals that will alter the current extent of military activity in national parks, which continue to provide essential facilities for our armed forces.

Ms Quin: Will the Minister support a full public inquiry in relation to the proposed Ministry of Defence development in Northumberland national park—an area that is already being subjected to intensive military activity? Does he realise that, as well as the environmental concerns expressed by the Ramblers Association and others, concern is felt in the urban area of Tyneside about the number of military convoys and the inadequacy of roads to accommodate them?

Mr. Soames: I do not think that the hon. Lady speaks for many people in that part of the world. There is massive support for the developments at Otterburn among all local people; the Army continues to be an important part of their lives. We hope very much that a sensible decision will be made early in 1996, and I hope that a planning inquiry will not be necessary.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the defence land agents and land command at Wilton on the sensitive way in which they have improved the management of the defence estate, and the use of the national parks and other countryside sites? Does he agree that the strange coalition who oppose the Army's sensible and sensitive development of the Otterburn ranges are anti-Army, anti-local people, anti-jobs and anti-countryside?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is right. That coalition is also anti-defence and I am extremely grateful to him for his tremendous support for the services in his part of the world. The Ministry of Defence gives the highest possible priority to conservation and maintains close liaison with national parks officials at both national and local level. The MOD has an unparalleled and unrivalled reputation for its conservation programme and it does not need lessons from anyone in that regard. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

European Security

5. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to have discussions with his colleagues on the Council of Ministers of the Western European Union about the future of European security. [36563]

Mr. Portillo: The members of the Ministerial Council of the Western European Union will meet in Madrid on 13 and 14 November.

Mr. Thompson: When he meets his colleagues on the Council of Ministers, will the Secretary of State take the opportunity to seek the support particularly of those in the associate partners organisations, to persuade our French colleague on the council to abandon all nuclear testing in the Pacific?

Mr. Portillo: No, I will not do that. It is extremely important that the House should understand that, if a nuclear deterrent is to be credible, people must know that it works: the country that owns the deterrent needs to know that and others need to know it too. In the United Kingdom, we are able to have that confidence about our weapon system without undertaking tests, but it is not for us to lecture the French on whether they can have that confidence without testing.

I remind Opposition Members—I remind those many unilateralists among the Opposition—that we have secured a long period of peace thanks to the operation of the nuclear deterrent, which has been paid for by the taxpayers of the United States, of France and of the United Kingdom, and that those countries have borne responsibilities on behalf of the rest of the world.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the European Union's ambition to absorb the Western European Union defence organisation is deeply resented by those connected with the WEU and by many people outside, particularly in view of next year's intergovernmental conference? Is he also aware that the efforts made by his diplomats and officials in that sphere to achieve a sensible, middle-of-the-road approach are much to be welcomed and are much supported by many people connected with WEU? In those circumstances, will he give every encouragement that he can achieve a worthwhile bridge between WEU and the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend puts it extremely well. I understand why there should be resentment among members of WEU at the idea that it would be absorbed into the European Union. The two are not susceptible to being merged. After all, the European Union includes a number of countries that are neutrals and it would be absurd to erect a new barrier to entrance to the European Union—a defence qualification that those countries would have to cross. My hon. Friend is right to say, therefore, that we want to build a bridge between the European Union and the WEU and to ensure that, as European nations take on more responsibilities for their defence, the arrangements they make are compatible with NATO and not in competition with it.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State accept that Labour Members disagree both with the concept of the single European army and with majority voting by the Council of Ministers on defence policy? Will he therefore assure the House that his discussions with his European counterparts are both sensible and constructive and are not coloured by an obvious and damaging anti-European bias? Talking about trust, how on earth can we trust a party and a Secretary of State for Defence who, over the past two weeks, have played party politics of a most blatant sort with our nation's defences?

Mr. Portillo: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new position; after hearing his question, that welcome is really heartfelt and sincere.

The hon. Gentleman rises to denounce his own party, because Pauline Green, leader of the socialists in Europe and a Labour Member of the European Parliament, tabled a motion calling for the abolition of the veto in the European Union virtually everywhere, including the application of qualified majority voting to foreign and security policy, to frontiers and to tax harmonisation. If I might be entirely fair, I should also mention that the European People's party decided that qualified majority voting and participation and monitoring by the European Parliament must be worked out and that intergovernmental co-operation in foreign and security policy must be replaced by qualified majority voting.

It is perfectly clear that there is a battle to be fought to make sure that the national veto is maintained. There is nothing anti-European in what I say; it is merely anti-federalist. That is because the Conservative party will defend the United Kingdom's vital interests in the European Union.

Airmobile Brigade

6. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the role and activities of 24 Airmobile Brigade in the former Yugoslavia. [36565]

Mr. Portillo: Following the taking of British hostages at the end of May, 24 Airmobile Brigade was deployed to the former Yugoslavia to make clear our determination to enhance the effectiveness of UNPROFOR and provide additional protection to British troops. As part of the changes in UN force deployments requested by the UN Secretary-General, most of the troops are relocating to England and will remain on short notice to return to theatre if required.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for that response. As well as paying tribute to the Highland Gunners who took part in action outside Sarajevo this summer, will he also pay tribute to the other elements of 24 Airmobile who were stationed rather unhappily in Ploce on the Adriatic coast? They were in great discomfort, but nevertheless provided an important deterrent role.

Mr. Portillo: Yes, I am extremely pleased to do that. While for the majority of 24 Airmobile their mission in Bosnia turned out to be somewhat unglamorous, that does not mean that their role was unimportant. They played an important role in deterring and they lived under difficult conditions with very good cheer and I congratulate them on that.

Mr. Gapes: When discussing former Yugoslavia and the remaining British forces there, will the Minister make it clear to the United States that we do not intend our forces to take one side in the conflict and that when the implementation of the peace plans begins, firm and, if necessary, tough military action should be take against Croatia if it continues to violate human rights and the rights of civilians throughout the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Portillo: It is extremely important that the forces in Yugoslavia—including the implementation forces—should be even-handed. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about human rights violations. We wish to have further details about what has been happening in Krajina following the Croatian advances.

Sir James Spicer: My right hon. Friend rightly paid tribute to 24 Airmobile Brigade and to all our troops engaged in Yugoslavia. Can he give any indication of the total cost to the British taxpayer of our operations there over the past three or four years? To what extent have they been underwritten by the United Nations, and how much is currently outstanding?

Mr. Portillo: I speak from memory, but I think that the cost has been £224 million so far. We have recovered about £70 million, but in principle most of that sum is refundable by the United Nations.

Anti-personnel Land Mines

7. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he is having with other countries' Defence Ministers to reduce the number of anti-personnel land mines currently deployed. [36566]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government are at the forefront of international efforts to restrict the export and use of anti-personnel mines. We are disappointed that the recent conference which was called to tighten such restrictions was unable to reach agreement, but we will continue our efforts.

Mr. Alton: While I share the Minister's disappointment about the breakdown of the talks in Vienna recently when the United Nations held a conference on inhuman weapons, who does he think was to blame for the breakdown of those talks? Will he clarify the Government's position on self-destruct weapons and whether that played any part in the breakdown of the talks? Does he agree that with more than one million fatalities so far from anti-personnel mines and inhuman weapons and with many countries littered with hundreds of thousands of such devices, it is a major humanitarian and development issue, and that, when the conference meets again in January, our Government should give a moral lead in ensuring that the world is rid of anti-personnel mines?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have some sympathy with the way in which the hon. Gentleman has put his question. I do not think that it would be appropriate or constructive for me to attempt to point the finger at any particular country, because we want to achieve a successful result when the conference resumes, in December we hope. We and our allies believe that a bad agreement would have been worse than no agreement at all. In order to press for a better outcome, we strove for the resumption rather than the total abandonment of the conference.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of any agreement covering self-destruct and detectable anti-personnel mines, because those mines cause severe damage to civilians throughout the world. We want to restrict their use and their export.

Mr. Bellingham: What is being done about de-mining measures in countries such as Afghanistan, Laos, Cambodia and Rwanda? Can my hon. Friend confirm that, with expenditure totalling nearly £20 million, Britain is in the lead in spending money on such projects? Would he agree that that pragmatic policy, combined with his policy to impose a moratorium on the export of land mines, is the right one rather than the rubbish spoken by many Opposition Members?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I can confirm that we have committed nearly £17 million to mine clearance projects around the world. We have funded projects in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, northern Iraq, Laos, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and the Yemen. We are one of the world's leading contributors to mine clearance programmes. We have also been working with the United States and others on proposals for a land mine control programme, which would regulate the production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

We believe that the conference result demonstrated that a total ban on anti-personnel mines—called for from a number of quarters—is not possible at this stage because

there is simply not enough international support for it. We will work, however, for a successful outcome at the future conference, which we hope will take place in December.

Local Authority Discussions

8. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with local authorities in the last year to discuss changes to the size of the defence industry. [36575]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We try to involve local authorities by giving them early warning of changes to defence requirements for land and buildings, and we seek their help in finding alternative uses when those lands and buildings are no longer required.

Mr. Clarke: I thank the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that, since 1979, more than 345,000 highly skilled people have been paid off from the defence industry? Is it not about time that the Government formed a diversification agency to employ those people? The worry in the communities where those redundancies have occurred is that, without some action, those skills will be lost to their future generations.

Mr. Arbuthnot: We consider that decisions on how to adapt to changes in market circumstances and what products to make are for the commercial judgment of companies. I must say that, if ever there were a Labour Government again, no company would be likely to ask for the advice of Labour Ministers on how to run industry, because they have never run a whelk stall.

Mr. Wilkinson: In his discussions with local authorities and defence industry leaders, can my hon. Friend reassure them that Her Majesty's Government are using their best efforts to ensure an equitable work share on important collaborative programmes, such as the Eurofighter 2000? That programme has been seriously delayed because the Germans are insisting on a bigger work share than that to which they are entitled according to their production requirements.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I can indeed confirm that the Eurofighter 2000 programme is intended to form the cornerstone of our air defence in the next century. If the cuts in defence spending proposed by many Opposition Members ever came into effect, we would have to have far more discussions with local authorities than we do now; then perhaps even Labour councils might begin to recognise that one cannot trust Labour on defence.

Mr. Spellar: Why will the Minister not accept that the real problems facing many areas are as a result of the downsizing of the defence industry? Instead of using the cheap political rhetoric that we have just heard, why will he not accept the responsibility of Government to set up a defence diversification agency to work with industry and local authorities to deal with the problem?

Dr. Reid: At least my hon. Friend served in the cadets.

Mr. Arbuthnot: So did I. It is not cheap political rhetoric; it is in fact the truth. None the less, I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities. I feel sure that he will carry them out very effectively. I am pleased to be able to say that our recent decision, for example, on the Rosyth naval base, which I announced last Tuesday, had the full support and involvement of Fife regional council. That decision has been widely welcomed. We are grateful for the input of local authorities. We do not believe that a defence diversification agency would add anything to the conversations which we have already had.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend accept that, were the policies of the Opposition to come into force, there would not simply be diversification of our defence industries but destruction of them? Not only can we not trust the Labour party on defence but the Labour party itself does not trust Labour on defence, judging from the policies that it advocates and the votes that were not taken at the Labour party conference.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I could not have put it better myself. In fact, I did put it like that myself.

Greenham Common

10. **Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to transfer Greenham Common air base to Newbury district council. [36568]

Mr. Soames: Newbury district council, as one of the former owners, will have the opportunity to acquire part of the open area at Greenham Common under the Crichel Down rules. The area which has been developed is not covered by these rules and is expected to be sold on the open market.

Mr. Rendel: Does the Minister accept that one of the main causes of delay is the fact that the developed part around the main gate is still common land? Would not a faster way of going forward be to exchange land between the developed land around the main gate and other land adjacent to but not part of the common, so as to avoid the whole issue of deregistering the common?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is right; it is a fiendishly complicated matter, made the more so because of the element of common land, which, as he knows, has been the subject of a court case which recently found in favour of the Ministry of Defence. He will understand that it is our intention to ensure that the best possible use is made of the whole site and that it benefits the community and taxpayers. I can assure him that we are taking a great deal of trouble in processing it all, and I would be happy to discuss it further with the hon. Gentleman if he wished to do so.

Mr. Hendry: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best possible use of the land would be to make Greenham Common available to the Millennium Commission so that it may be used as a theme park for the great failures of socialism? There could be monuments to unilateral disarmament and global socialism, and it would serve as an everlasting reminder of the fact that we cannot trust Labour on defence.

Mr. Soames: That is a fantastically tempting proposition, which I have no doubt my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would find very interesting to push forward. I shall ensure that is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Married Quarters

11. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress made in dealing with surplus married quarters. [36569]

Mr. Soames: We are making good progress in dealing with surplus married quarters and aim to dispose of 4,000 quarters by the summer of 1996.

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree—I suspect that he does—that it has been a scandal that so many houses were empty—*[Interruption.]* Does he not agree that it has been a scandal that so many houses were left empty in the village of—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Gentleman still agree that it was a scandal that so many houses were left empty in the village of Longhoughton for so long when they could have been taken over by the district council or by a housing association? It is not only a scandal at a time of housing shortages but an embarrassment to the Royal Air Force locally, because it has no control over the situation at all.

Mr. Soames: The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that it has taken much longer than we would have wished to resolve the matter. I know that he has been following it keenly and pushing it along. Our aim is always to dispose of surplus property at the earliest opportunity so that it can be brought back into use as soon as possible. The sale of 20 houses to a housing association will be completed in December. I know that this will be welcome news to local people in housing need.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend and congratulate the Government on their excellent progress in disposing of surplus properties in Portland and around Bovington. May I, however, add to the pleas I have made in the past as a result of talking to local authorities and housing associations? Many people would also like quite a large number of these properties to be sold to private people because we do not want to have a block of just council properties again; private owners tend to bring up the whole quality of an estate for the people living in it.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's point; what he says is self-evidently true. Whenever possible, quarters that are temporarily surplus are leased to local authorities and housing associations. We are currently looking to identify more properties that can be leased in the short term which would well fulfil some of my hon. Friend's ambitions.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36589]

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the commemorations for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in New York.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming yet another fall in the unemployment figures, which are now below even those of Germany for the first time in recent years? Is this not a resounding vindication of the Government's policies and is it not about time that the Labour party explained how a minimum wage would help young people to get jobs?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The latest unemployment figures are quite excellent. He raises an important point in directing the House towards the minimum wage. I noticed that the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the deputy Leader of the Opposition, said:

> "Some Party Colleagues have advocated such a wage without having the courage of their convictions to state an amount that would make the commitment meaningful."

Will the deputy leader of the Labour party now break the habit of his party and answer the question? What is the figure that would give meaning to the policy?

Mr. Prescott: This is an historic moment. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his first Prime Minister's questions. It has been a long time, but he has finally made it.

Given the Prime Minister's belated but welcome concern with waste and mismanagement abroad, can we now expect him to show the same concern for waste and mismanagement at home? Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us how much money was wasted on the poll tax? How much money was wasted on the new bureaucracy in the health service? While he is at it, can he tell us how much it cost to set up and run his own new empire?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for welcoming me to the Dispatch Box today in this position. Of course, I reciprocate in welcoming him to the position he holds. But I cannot help but notice that, while my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has trusted me to come alone, the right hon. Gentleman has had a minder appointed to look after him. The curious point about the minder is that he has not even had the courage to turn up to help with the minding process. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well—*[Interruption.]* Do I gather that the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) has crossed the Floor and is now sitting on this side of the House, or is he scouring away in the basement somewhere relaying what is going on in the House to the leader of the Labour party, who, of course, will never be able to get a first-hand account from the deputy leader because they do not talk? It really is ridiculous—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is very time-consuming. I want brief questions and brief answers now.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I think that we shall get a brief answer, Madam Speaker, because the hon. Member for Hartlepool has now turned up.

Mr. Prescott: As the right hon. Gentleman cannot give us a proper answer, may I help him? According to the Government's own figures, £14 billion was wasted on the poll tax and £1 billion on the new bureaucracy in the health service. Is not the real truth that the Government's press and publicity machine costs the taxpayer £1 million every working day? Is that not the real cost to the country of the right hon. Gentleman's new title? Is it not clear that something so expensive to sell must be a pretty shabby product?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will know that, when a Government have as

many good policies as we have, it is our duty to draw them to the attention of the people who will benefit from them. Our first obligation is to point out that, for every £1 spent on the health service in 1978-79, we spent £5 last year.

Q2. **Sir Michael Shersby:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36590]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister—

Mr. Skinner *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will resume his seat.

Sir Michael Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the BBC and Channel 4 on transmitting live the whole of last week's debate on the Prison Service? Does he agree that that provided viewers with the opportunity to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary demolish the Opposition's unworthy and unsuccessful attempt to smear his reputation?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. It was excellent that the House and a wider public had the chance to see the vacuum that lies behind Labour's allegations. They also had the chance to hear the excellent speech by my right hon. and learned Friend. If the BBC continues to show the Opposition in that light, it will not be Alastair Campbell who rings up to complain but the League Against Cruel Sports.

Q3. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36591]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Ms Lynne: Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware that, because of financial constraints, Rochdale health authority proposes that elderly, critically ill patients should not be allowed into nursing homes funded by the national health service unless they will die within four weeks? Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that that is ultimately the responsibility of the Government?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is the ultimate responsibility of the Government to provide the excellent health service that we do. I would not be prepared to discuss at the Dispatch Box the sort of case that the hon. Lady put to me without a chance to examine it in more detail. However, the health service is attracting increasing funds and the results are increasingly attractive to the public. Public assessment of the quality of the health service is rising consistently.

Mr. Brooke: After the warm-up bout last week, will my right hon. Friend arrange, after the manner of the Ryder and Walker cups, a series of singles matches between members of the Cabinet and their opposite numbers, not least so that we can see whether the captain of the other side, in a manner unusual in international golf, continues to intervene to help his hon. Friends out of bunkers?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is a pastmaster at coming to the heart of a matter. I suspect that the Leader of the Opposition will not want to reveal his shadow Cabinet too conspicuously because it is self-evident that the parliamentary Labour party has elected a shadow Cabinet diametrically opposite to the direction in which the Leader of the Opposition wants to go.

Q4. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36592]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Purchase: Does the Deputy Prime Minister recognise that investment in manufacturing is lower than it was six years ago, despite a recent and welcome improvement? Does he accept that the lack of investment—widely acknowledged as a British problem—is directly responsible for the loss of 520 jobs in my constituency at the British Steel plant which is the only supplier of specialist seamless tubes in the United Kingdom? Will he undertake to intervene—preferably before breakfast—and ask for a rethink on the closure? Does he recognise that, if the plant closes, we shall have an even bigger balance of trade problem than we have at present?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would help his constituency if he got up earlier in the morning, as he would discover that unemployment in his constituency has fallen by 30 per cent. in the past two and a half years.

Sir Michael Marshall: On United Nations day, will my right hon. Friend reflect that the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference at the General Assembly in New York a month ago agreed unanimously that the problems of the UN are our problems and that, if we did not have the organisation, we would have to invent it?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made a valuable contribution to the subject, and particularly to the work of the IPU, and the House is indebted to him for that. Our support of the UN is second to none, but that is no justification for the organisation wasting money and not collecting its proper dues.

Q5. **Ms Hodge:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36593]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Hodge: We seem to have some difficulty in eliciting direct answers from the Deputy Prime Minister. Following what my right hon. Friend the deputy Leader of the Opposition said, an article in *The Independent* yesterday asserted that the Deputy Prime Minister had

spent £80,000 of public money on a desk diary. Did the Deputy Prime Minister receive permission from the Prime Minister to spend that money in such an extravagant manner?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will find that, if she relies on the national press for the basis of her research, she will be consistently wrong-footed. I spent no money on a desk. The hon. Lady would be better employed praising the Government, who have presided over a 22 per cent. reduction in unemployment in her constituency.

Q6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36594]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. I want to hear the answers to the questions, whether the House does or not. *[Interruption.]* Order. Do be quiet.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that no less a luminary than the director of the Fabian Society has come out in support of grant-maintained schools, much to the relief of the Leader of the Opposition, whose party is opposing him on the matter? With almost cross-party support for the measure, can we count on the Government to proceed with all speed to make all our schools grant maintained, thus bringing a choice of school to every parent?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw the attention of the House to this critical matter. The fact is that, in putting forward the proposal, the Fabian Society is once again looking to the Conservatives for the ideas which are taking us forward into the next century. For all the rhetoric of the left, what the Opposition are about is abolishing grant-maintained schools, abolishing grammar schools, abolishing city technology colleges and abolishing simple performance tables and simple tests—everything is for dogma and rhetoric, and nothing is for quality in education.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Deputy Prime Minister not realise that all this knockabout opposite will be taken very badly by starving millions in the third world who are already fearful of the proposed cuts—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are laughing, as usual. Now we have the Prime Minister at the United Nations talking about abolishing UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Labour Organisation. That will go down extremely badly because everyone knows that, like the cuts in overseas aid, the proposals are to fund the pre-election tax cut bribes of the Tory Government.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Did I hear the hon. Gentleman refer to knockabout Opposition when he first intervened? It cannot be explained in any other language. This country has the fifth largest aid programme in the world. How can the Labour party decry that? When one adds to that our inward investment in other people's countries and the remarkable contribution that we make to peacekeeping, one has just one further example of the way in which, whatever this country does, the Labour party seeks to decry and destroy it.

Q7. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36595]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: Did my right hon. Friend welcome the protestations that we have heard, particularly from the Opposition parties, that all of us in the House are in favour of increasing investment in our railways? Does he believe that those protestations are consistent with, first, the suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition that the railways will be renationalised and, secondly, the statement by the new shadow spokesman on transport that she would not pay for it?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The whole House is interested in what my hon. Friend has to say, but it is also interested in what the deputy leader of the Labour party has to say to the union that sponsors him. Is he in favour of it taking strike action and imposing hardship on very large numbers of Londoners trying to get to work, or is he not in support of that?

Constituency Surgeries

3.32 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for another Member of this House to advertise surgeries in my constituency and seek contact with my constituents? In seeking your advice, I should add that my constituents will be excluded from my constituency following boundary changes at the next general election. However, it is my belief that it is my duty to represent my constituents until that time, and that no other Member should intervene.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. Until the next general election, the hon. Gentleman represents his constituents, even if he has boundary changes. I, too, have boundary changes, but I still represent the people who put me here from West Bromwich, West. If the hon. Gentleman would like to let me see the advertisement, I shall be glad to deal with it.

Registration of Fostering Agencies

3.33 pm

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable voluntary and independent fostering agencies to approve foster carers subject to registration and inspection of the agencies.

I am grateful that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) is present to listen to my introduction of the Bill. The Department of Health's latest figures show that 60 per cent. of children looked after by local authorities are placed with foster families. That proportion has increased since 1989. Foster care is the community's response to the needs of parents and children in difficulties.

The children who are accommodated in foster care are not blue-eyed angels. They have many needs and problems, which can be displayed in very difficult behaviour. They often come at short notice from traumatic family situations which often take time to resolve, either through rehabilitation of the child at home or through alternative long-term foster or adoptive placement.

Foster parents face increasingly complex tasks—for example, contributing to assessments, dealing with parental visits and giving evidence in court, in addition to nurturing hurt and sometimes aggressive children. The majority of foster carers are volunteers; they are not paid. They volunteer for altruistic motives. It is their way of contributing to the community. It is their choice and their decision.

Without their volunteering, the child care system would collapse. It is remarkable, therefore, that, under the present regulations, foster carers are effectively denied the opportunity to choose for whom they foster.

Voluntary organisations have a long tradition of providing services for children—Barnardo's, Catholic Rescue, The Children's Society, and the National Children's Home, to name but a few. Those organisations have contributed to innovative services and provided diversity and choice in the placement of children as a complement to local authority provision. Many of the organisations are already adoption agencies, and they run registered children's homes.

Under present regulations, however, they cannot approve their own foster carers. They can approve parents for life, but not parents for one night. The Foster Placement Regulations 1991, which are clarified by circular number LAC(94)20, state that voluntary organisations can approve foster carers only when delegated to do so by a local authority in relation to a particular child, that those foster carers are deemed to be on the list of the local authority and that any subsequent placements have to be agreed by the local authority. So voluntary agencies can recruit, train and assess, but those foster carers end up on the list of the local authority that has placed the first child. They are owned by the local authority.

As people may have been attracted to an organisation because of their religious beliefs, it is clearly unacceptable that they find themselves as local authority foster parents. If that is what they had wanted to be, they would have applied to the local authority in the first place. A letter sent to me by Norwood Child Care states:

"Foster parents come to our agency because it is Jewish and because it is small. They do not want to belong to the council because of a legal requirement."

The regulations raise other technical issues, which I do not have the time to discuss. The circular also states that, in delegating duties,

"the local authority will need to satisfy itself about the capacity of the organisation to discharge duties on its behalf."

That may not be difficult with adoption agencies, but a number of smaller organisations are coming into the field. One matter of concern is that the study by the social services inspectorate into small, unregisterable children's homes, which was published in August, identified some private organisations running small, unregisterable children's homes in the profit-making sector and parallel voluntary fostering sector.

There is no central point where concerns about agencies can be collated. Termination of approval of foster parents does not constitute termination of approval for an organisation, where problems may have been in the support offered in the placement or in the management of the organisation.

Indeed, the inspectorate's report identified proprietors of children's homes who had had previous convictions for fraud and for sexual and physical abuse. It is worrying that those same proprietors might be running voluntary fostering agencies.

Only registration and inspection similar to that for adoption agencies can ensure that organisations maintain proper standards. That step has the widespread approval of reputable organisations in the voluntary and independent sector, as well as the Association of Directors of Social Services, British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering and the National Foster Care Association.

Clarity of responsibility is one of the prevailing issues in child protection. That clarity of responsibility in foster placements will be met by registration and inspection. I am conscious that the Department of Health consultative document, "Moving Forward" asked the question, "Should voluntary and private sector agencies be subject to statutory regulation?" Before one asks that, one should deal with the question whether voluntary agencies can approve their own foster carers.

Earlier this year, the Minister proposed to extend the fostering regulations to include private agencies, to encourage diversity and choice. I find it surprising that he was unaware that the existing regulations were denying voluntary organisations the opportunity to provide that choice and diversity, and denying foster parents the opportunity to make their voluntary contribution to the agency of their choice.

The Government have not provided an opportunity for a debate on the Floor of the House on fostering. Indeed, the statement by the Minister on the result of his initial consultation was issued during the recess, as was the report on small unregisterable children's homes. The House can draw its own conclusions about that timing.

I am aware that this Bill will not make any parliamentary progress, but I am bringing it before the House because the issues it raises are important enough to be a matter of public record. I urge the House to support the Bill, as a clear message to the Minister that we want voluntary agencies to be able to approve their own foster carers, subject to registration and inspection. In doing so, we would recognise the contribution that the voluntary sector makes to children's services, as well as the contribution of the thousands of volunteers who, as foster carers, are the unseen and often undervalued carers of society's most difficult and disturbed children.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms Ann Coffey, Mr. Alun Michael, Mr. Keith Hill, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. George Howarth, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Mr. Kevin Hughes, Mr. Dennis Turner, Mrs. Bridget Prentice and Ms Janet Anderson.

Registration of Fostering Agencies

Ms Ann Coffey accordingly presented a Bill to enable voluntary and independent fostering agencies to approve foster carers subject to registration and inspection of the agencies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 October, and to be printed. [Bill 178.]

Questions (Transfer)

3.41 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I refer you to some correspondence that causes me great concern. I tabled an oral question the other day to the Deputy Prime Minister—and if I recall correctly, there was a point of order on this matter only two or three days ago—asking

"What plans he has to meet representatives of Campbell's Soups to discuss competition in the production of soups."

To me, that is an important question, because Campbell's Soups, an American company, last August purchased Home Pride in my constituency, and last week announced that 120 jobs are going to be lost in Maryport.

I tabled the question after taking advice from the Clerks in the Table Office, and now, because of some civil servant's view that that question is not relevant to the Deputy Prime Minister, it has been transferred. I object very strongly, because I made a point of ensuring that it was in order so that, in two weeks' time, I could ask the Deputy Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box—it came up as No. 4 on the ballot—a question on this issue of great importance in my constituency.

I wonder whether you would ask the Parliamentary Clerk in the Cabinet Office to withdraw the letter that I have received, and to advise me that I can table this question. I do not do this only on my own behalf; other hon. Members are being affected by such decisions. We believe that we are being most unreasonably treated. It is very damaging to me in my constituency.

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration. I have heard similar complaints from other hon. Members. As the House knows, I have no influence on or responsibility for the transfer of questions. It is not the Parliamentary Clerks who make transfers, but Ministers themselves who are finally responsible for transferring questions to other Departments.

May I ask the hon. Gentleman to raise the matter with the Deputy Prime Minister? I would encourage him to do so, because the matter can be dealt with if the hon. Gentleman would write to the Deputy Prime Minister raising the matter and asking him why the question has been transferred.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that you would wish us to proceed in that way, Madam Speaker, but the reality is that the Deputy Prime Minister will say that he does not believe that it is his departmental responsibility, but a matter for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food But the issues that I am driving at are competitiveness and competition, which fall directly within the right hon. Gentleman's brief—it was on that basis that the Table Office accepted the question.

I believe that we have now got to the position where the Speaker of the House of Commons should intervene, with a view to protecting the rights of Back Benchers.

Madam Speaker: This is not a matter for the Speaker of the House of Commons; it is a question for the Minister concerned. It is the responsibility of Ministers to transfer questions. This is not the first time that it has occurred, and I take it seriously. I shall see what I can do, but I have no powers in these matters.

I do understand the frustrations felt by Back Benchers, who seek out the Minister who they feel is responsible for a particular matter, only to find that it is sent elsewhere. I have every sympathy; I understand the frustrations; I would ask the hon. Gentleman to write and ask for an explanation, and I shall do what I can.

Opposition Day

[19TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Environment (Scotland)

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.45 pm

Ms Roseanna Cunningham (Perth and Kinross): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the depth of public concern in Scotland and beyond at HM Government's failure to provide proper stewardship of Scotland's environment; notes the triple threat posed by plans to increase the number of reprocessing contracts at Dounreay, the disclosure of the munitions dump at Beaufort Dyke and continuing uncertainty over Shell's plans to decommission the Brent Spar; views with alarm reports that between five and fifteen thousand fuel rods of US origin may be destined for Dounreay, pending the decision by the USA Department of Energy; further notes that over a thousand phosphorus devices have been found along the shores of south west Scotland; is dismayed that crucial decisions affecting the Scottish people are taken without any semblance of public consultation; calls on Her Majesty's Pollution Inspectorate to refuse to grant any further applications for discharge authorisations at Dounreay; demands an urgent investigation into the munitions dump at Beaufort Dyke so that the dangers posed to the public and the marine environment can be properly assessed; urges the Government to refuse any application for a licence for the offshore disposal of the Brent Spar or any other North Sea installation until such disposal can be assessed by an independent authority; and rejects the contemptuous treatment which fleeces Scotland of its natural resources while imposing unacceptable environmental dangers upon the Scottish population, threatening industries such as fishing, farming, food processing, whisky and tourism which depend crucially on Scotland's perception as a country with a clean environment.

In choosing this topic for today's debate, my colleagues and I in the Scottish National party seek to highlight what we consider to be the real concerns that are uppermost in the minds of Scottish people. We have chosen to focus on three specific issues.

First, I refer to the disclosure by the Ministry of Defence in June of this year that more than 1 million tonnes of conventional munitions had been dumped at Beaufort dyke off the south-west coast of Scotland over 50 years, between the 1920s and the 1970s. Secondly, there is the prospect of up to 15,000 spent nuclear fuel rods of United States origin making their way to Dounreay for reprocessing, with all the risks that that will inevitably entail, both at Dounreay and in the course of transportation. Thirdly, I want to mention the continuing uncertainty over the disposal of Brent Spar, with the Government refusing to rule out the idea that it could yet be dumped at sea.

Each of these issues is of vital importance to every man, woman and child in Scotland, because of their impact on the perception of Scotland as a clean country on which so many of our vital industries depend—farming, fishing, food processing, whisky and tourism. Each issue is different, but they all have one thing in common: they raise questions about the safety of people's lives, the security of their jobs and the sustainability of their communities.

They also have something else in common—an apparent view of Scotland as some kind of convenient waste disposal unit. That certainly makes a change from the Thatcher years, when Scotland appeared to be regarded as a testing ground, but I do not think that the people of Scotland will regard it as a change for the better.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): How many Scots have lost their lives as a result of the transport of nuclear equipment of any kind through Scotland?

Ms Cunningham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not the point. We are discussing an enormous increase in the likelihood of risk. We are talking about risk in this debate. I shall return to that issue, but I want first to deal with Beaufort dyke, an issue of current concern up and down the west coast of Scotland.

If this debate had been held two years ago and an Opposition Member had stood up and said that more than 1 million tonnes of bombs, incendiary devices and other high explosives had been dumped in Scotland as a deliberate act of Government policy, he or she would no doubt have been accused of scaremongering and irresponsibility. Yet, on 29 June this year, that is exactly what the Ministry of Defence admitted, in a letter to the Irish Sea Forum:

"In total, we estimate that the Ministry of Defence may have disposed of over 1 million tons of conventional munitions within Beauforts Dyke . . . between the end of the war and December 1948 some 135,000 tons of conventional munitions were disposed of at this location. Subsequently other dumpings took place during the 1950s, particularly of aircraft bombs and disposals continued at a rate of about 20,000 tons per annum into the late 1950s".

The letter goes on to state that, by the early 1970s, the annual tonnage had reduced to about 3,000 tonnes, and that Beaufort dyke was last used by the Ministry of Defence for general munitions dumping in 1973—although I understand that there was a further emergency dump in 1976. We are also told that, between July and October 1945, some 14,000 tonnes of 8-in artillery rockets filled with phosgene were similarly disposed of.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but is she aware that, in the period 1945 to 1955, many thousands of chemical warfare bombs were transported from Wales for dumping off the Scottish coast at Beaufort dyke, and that the safety of those bombs has been a matter of considerable concern?

Ms Cunningham: I was not aware of that, and I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because it shows the extent of what has been going on in Beaufort dyke. Off the west coast of Scotland, we have the largest single underwater munitions weapons repository in western Europe. The Government have admitted that there was a 50-year programme of dumping between one of the UK's busiest shipping lanes, only six miles from the Scottish coast.

Neither Parliament nor the Scottish people have ever been told what was going on, let alone consulted. The Scottish people, their elected representatives and their environment have been treated with utter contempt by successive UK Goverments, as though they were physically and politically expendable.

I should point out that Stena Sealink carried 1.3 million passengers between Stranraer and Larne in the past year. Those waters are also home to deep-water trawlers and Royal Navy submarines. It is a busy channel. An undersea gas pipeline is being planned across the channel, with construction later this year. The company involved, Premier Transco, has already announced that it has

[Ms Cunningham]

changed the planned route to take account of Beaufort dyke. When the Ministry of Defence concedes, however, that it does not have complete records, the situation is clearly fraught with difficulty.

The concern of the local population was summed up very well by the chief executive of Wigtownshire district council, Mr. Alastair Geddes, when he said:

"Nothing is more damaging than uncertainty. An inquiry should look at where the dumping took place, what was dumped and whether or not it remains in a stable condition and also if there is to be any danger in the future."

There is understandable local concern about the impact that that uncertainty will have on the economy of the area. Wigtown had the lowest rate of economic growth in Scotland this year, and Upper Nithsdale had the highest level of unemployment in Scotland. Already, two shore front developers in Stranraer have threatened to withdraw their development plans, and uncertainty can only harm the economic prospects of those who have invested heavily in the area.

I now turn to the nature of the materials dumped in Beaufort dyke. Responding in 1985 to a question from the late right hon. Donald Stewart MP, the then Scottish Secretary, Mr. George Younger, said:

"Because of the non-toxic nature of the materials that have been dumped at Beaufort dyke it has not been considered necessary to check for leakage or environmental pollution."—[*Official Report*, 1985; Vol. 71, c. *518*.]

Yet that statement is in direct contradiction of the letter of 29 June from the Ministry of Defence, which refers to the toxic potential of munitions materials. It is worth recalling the Department of the Environment's definition of toxic material, in May 1995:

"a substance which inhaled or ingested or penetrates the skin may involve serious, acute, or chronic health risks or even death."

Yet, by their own admission, that is what has been dumped off the coast of Scotland.

Will the Minister confirm that, although the toxic potential of munitions material may be reduced by the combined effects of dilution, dispersion, hydrolysis and low temperatures, it is not eliminated? If, as the Government admitted in 1985, it was not their practice to check for leakage or environment pollution, on what scientific evidence do they base their assertion that the toxic potential of the munitions material has been reduced? Further inconsistencies demand clarification.

There is the whole question of the failure to mention any dumping of chemical weapons in the previous claim by the then Under-Secretary of State for Defence, Viscount Cranbourne, in a letter dated 13 October 1992 to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), that small quantities of chemical weapons were dumped at Beaufort dyke. The letter stated:

"small quantities of chemical weapons were sea dumped in 1945 in Beaufort's dyke a deep water . . . trench in the Irish Sea."

Dr. Paul Johnston, a munitions expert at Exeter university, has said:

"The conventional weapons are still active and potentially explosive. The chemical drums are corroding and some may have been punctured."

He has warned of what he says is

"a mind-blowing potential for an environmental disaster."

The Ministry of Defence says that it is prepared to carry out a detailed survey of the dyke, but that, as long as the material remains undisturbed 263 fathoms below the waves, there is no cause for concern. The Government must be made to realise that only a full and urgent investigation will suffice.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am most grateful to the hon. Lady for raising this matter on the Floor of the House of Commons. Incidentally, I hope that she will bring the Scottish National party councillor for Newton Stewart on side with what she says and what I have been saying as well.

Does she agree that, although what is dumped in Beaufort dyke is bad, even worse is what has been dumped outside the permitted area of Beaufort dyke? Does she further agree that it is outrageous that, when we met the Secretary of State for Defence last week, he did not admit that the laying of the gas pipeline had been stopped for six days because of the dangers to which those laying it had been subjected?

Does she also agree that it is imperative that the Secretary of State for Scotland considers that when he is considering the report of the reporter into the proposed electricity interconnector with Northern Ireland, because that could also cause great disturbance of the munitions and chemicals that have been dumped outside Beaufort dyke? That is an extra reason why the proposal should be rejected.

Ms Cunningham: Some of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman will be brought out in the course of the debate. The matter is of great concern, because, while what has been dumped in Beaufort dyke is a matter of some uncertainty, what has been dumped in the surrounding area is a matter of even greater uncertainty. We shall be talking about that in a little more detail, because it highlights people's concern. If the Government themselves do not take any notice of what is going on, how can we possibly have any control over our environment?

I recognise that the Government have travelled some distance since expressing the view in 1985 that it was not necessary to check for leakage or environmental pollution, but they will have to go much further if they are to allay public anxieties.

Why, having written to the Secretary of State for Scotland more than a month ago calling for a public inquiry, has Wigtown district council still to receive a reply? Will the Minister confirm that the gathering of water samples at the north channel dump site by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were concluded in August? If that is the case, will details be published? The Ministry of Defence letter of 29 June said that results would be released on completion of the tests. If those tests were completed in August, we would all be interested to know what immediate publication meant.

Finally, it is a matter currently causing great concern that more than 1,000 phosphorus devices have been scattered along the shore of south-west Scotland. Can the Government give us any information about that? On Saturday, we learned from the national press that a four-year-old boy had come across a phosphorus flare and been burned. In March 1994, the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, now the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), said that

investigations had been unable to identify the origins or purpose of those objects, except that records showed that no phosphorus objects were ever stored at Beaufort dyke.

I dare say that people on the west coast of Scotland would be obliged if the Government could do something fairly soon about finding out, if they do not already know, precisely what these things are and from where they come. It seems quite extraordinary that they are washing up in such vast numbers, yet the Government appear thus far not to wish to take any view on them. That cannot be enough when it is clear that the devices have been washed ashore from somewhere, and continue to be.

I am sorry to say that the overwhelming impression currently being given is of near indifference to the public's real and understandable concern. In the face of that, it is little wonder that public confidence has been so undermined. We are suffering now for decisions made decades ago. We must have action now, so that we do not suffer in future decades for the current lack of decisions.

Environmental decisions cannot be made on an ad hoc basis, having regard only to the short term. All the matters raised today have serious long-term implications, and none more so than another matter raised in the motion—the possibility that the United States Government will decide to send between 5,000 and 15,000 US-origin spent fuel rods to Dounreay for reprocessing.

The volume of such a transportation affects most of Scotland—and, indeed, may well affect large parts of England as well. The port of entry may be Scrabster, Aberdeen or Leith; the route will go right through the centre of Scotland, up through its most populated areas. Indeed, if the items are brought ashore at English ports, they will go right through the most heavily populated parts of England as well. Once the fuel rods have arrived at Dounreay and been reprocessed, waste is likely to be retained for up to 25 years.

The irony of all this is that the United States Government have been carrying out an on-going consultation exercise among the US population, and we are told that a decision is imminent. The United States Government appear to have regarded the issue as serious enough for detailed consideration; whatever we may think of the range of possible options, the contrast with what is happening in Scotland could not be more acute. The United States Government have engaged in no consultation there—unless my questionnaire has been lost in the post. Their openness does not appear to extend to us who are likely to be most affected. Nor have our own Government engaged in any consultation.

The whole issue of Dounreay is very controversial. In view of that, should there not be consultation before we proceed? There has been an appalling loss of confidence in Dounreay over the years. I shall refer to only a few of the more recent developments that have led to that loss of confidence, but I could mention many others.

A report published in May this year by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, does nothing to allway public concern about Dounreay. The then chair of the advisory committee said:

"The contamination on the beach and within the site has proved to be higher than I had previously been told. I received the highest radiation dose I have ever recorded during my time with the RWMAC while standing at the top of the waste disposal shaft. To say they"—

he was referring to the Dounreay management—

"were lying is not an unreasonable conclusion to reach."

That sentiment is echoed by the chair of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment. A further eight hot spots have been found since the sweep began in July; moreover, particles found on the foreshore are apparently likely to cause death if ingested. For that, we can thank Dr. Wheldon of the committee.

Those are only the most recent examples in a catalogue of contamination reaching many years back. The lack of public confidence in Dounreay is well founded; yet we may face a considerable increase in activity if the United States opts for sending some or all those elements to Dounreay.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): If, following widespread public consultation in the United States, it is concluded that it would be a good idea to send all this material for reprocessing in Scotland, is it not reasonable to suppose that the outcome of widespread public consultation in Scotland might be the conclusion that it would not be a good idea? No country wants to be the world's nuclear laundry.

Ms Cunningham: Many people would agree with my hon. Friend—

Mr. Salmond: Including my hon. Friend.

Ms Cunningham: Indeed, although I was not planning to use the words "nuclear laundry" in the context of my speech—"nuclear dustbin" is used more often than "laundry", but if that United States decision is taken, it will lead to a massive increase in activity at Dounreay.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I am listening carefully to the hon. Lady's speech, and I share many of her concerns about the transport and reprocessing of nuclear materials, but I notice that there is no mention of Sellafield in her motion. Is that because it is not in Scotland? Is she happy that the reprocessing should be done in Sellafield because it is not in Scotland? If so, is she aware that my constituents live nearer to Sellafield than to Dounreay?

Ms Cunningham: No. The decision was to highlight current environmental concerns in Scotland. We are, of course, concerned with environmental questions throughout the rest of the United Kingdom, and, indeed, in the rest of the world. When I come to the question of transportation, I will be talking about transport through England as well as across international waters, so it is not right for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we are not interested in what is happening outside Scotland.

It is a question not just of on-site dangers, but of transportation dangers. The routes may be many and various, as I have already said. The road route passes through many of Scotland's most densely populated regions. As I said earlier, the spent fuel rods are brought ashore at ports in Aberdeen and Leith. All the regions on the east coast would be included, as well as the places that the A9 goes through. If the things are brought ashore in England, they will be transported through the heart of England. It may have been more interesting to hear some of the speeches of English Members who might be concerned if their constituencies were on those routes. Many people will have those concerns.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I speak as an English Member of Parliament very near to a nuclear

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

power station, and I welcome its contribution to a clean electricity supply. Will the hon. Lady make it clear that her party is still opposed to the principle of nuclear power, and explain how Scotland would possibly survive economically without 50 per cent. of its existing power generation?

Ms Cunningham: In Scotland, we currently export more power than we use. We are an energy-rich country, and there is no difficulty with making a conversion from nuclear energy to alternative sources of energy. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to have more details on that, he may see me later. I was discussing the dangers—

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Cunningham: No. I have given way frequently in the past 15 minutes. If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I will continue, and make the point about the safety of transportation on land.

Undoubtedly, test accident standards are set down for specially designed flasks that carry this waste, but those standards cannot begin to accord with the standards necessary for what is likely to happen in a real accident.

For example, the test standards for transportation in the marine environment work on the basis of testing flasks for 30 minutes in fires of 800 deg C. I understand, however—we have the International Maritime Organisation to thank for these figures—that the average length of a shipboard fire at sea is 23 hours, and that the fire is likely to reach 1,100 deg C, so the test standards that are being applied are not the standards that are required if flasks are to cope with any such accident at sea.

If hon. Members doubt that, I refer them to a specific incident in 1991, when a ferry and a petroleum tanker collided off Livorno on the coast of Italy. The fire on the ferry burned for 45 hours and reached more than 1,000 deg C. That would suggest that test standards of anything less than those temperatures and those times are wholly unsatisfactory. Any such accident has serious—if not catastrophic—implications for the Scottish economy and its environment.

I understand that marine insurers refuse cover for radioactive contamination because of the scale of the likely effects of such an accident. The position on land is little better. Local authority emergency planning units get no warning whatsoever. The Highland and Islands fire brigade has no resources to deal with such an accident and has therefore called to an end to reprocessing at Dounreay.

Furthermore, Dounreay is touting for contracts in the United States, although Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate has not yet approved discharge reauthorisations, which have already been delayed for two years. When do the Government intend to publish the review currently being carried out? Will the Minister confirm that no contracts can be signed until those reauthorisations are approved? Ultimately, the decisions currently being taken will affect Scotland for the next 35 years, yet they are being taken by a management distrusted by the public and, in effect, by a foreign Government. That highlights the ultimate powerlessness of Scotland under the present regime.

The final part of our motion deals with Brent Spar, but expresses the same concerns that we raised about Beaufort dyke and reprocessing at Dounreay, and highlights our powerlessness under the present regime.

On 19 June, in his statement to the House after the G7 summit in Halifax, the Prime Minister told the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the proposition that Brent Spar

"could have been taken inshore to be disposed of is incredible."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1995; Vol. 262, c. 28.]

However, since 1987, 914 platforms have been removed from the Gulf of Mexico and 13 from the North sea—including nine in the same depth range as the Brent Spar—to the shoreline. The same group of companies involved in the Gulf of Mexico removal own 140 of the 205 platforms in the North sea.

The industry has a wide range of experience in removal techniques and could help to revitalise the United Kingdom construction industry by utilising available skills and plant for the deconstruction of decommissioned platforms. At the heart of the Brent Spar controversy, I received phone calls from businesses in my constituency advising that they would be only too keen to be involved in such decommissioning.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the hon. Lady aware that one of the companies that she has just mentioned is currently seeking to persuade the Government of the sensibility of toppling the North-West Hutton platform on its side, in order to create a reef which will become rich with fish? Does she agree that that is a rationalisation and that toppling a structure is cheaper than bringing it ashore for dismantling?

Ms Cunningham: I was not aware of the specific instance to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I was aware that reef forming with such structures has been carried out in other parts of the globe and is one of the many things that can be done with such installations.

My party endorses the ministerial declaration of the fourth international conference on the protection of the North sea which states:

"Even if the offshore installations are emptied of noxious and hazardous materials, they might still be, if dumped or left at sea, pose a threat to the marine environment. Disposal of such installations on land by recycling recyclable materials and by ensuring safe and controlled disposal of unavoidable residues would be in accordance with generally agreed principles of waste management policy.".

In contrast to the sensible approach outlined in that document, which the United Kingdom refused to sign, the Minister for Industry and Energy, the right hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) refused to rule out the disposal of the Brent Spar on 12 July, when he stated:

"I would not rule out the option of deep sea dumping for the Brent Spar in future."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1995; Vol. 263, c. 935.]

That has created a great deal of uncertainty, and the Government's position should be clarified.

It would be far better if the Government did as suggested in today's edition of the *Financial Times* and adopted a co-ordinated international approach to the removal of North sea installations rather than simply adopting a case-by-case one. According to the *Financial Times*, such a proposal would mean that £630 million could be saved by the Government and the oil industry.

It is that case-by-case, ad hoc, short-term approach which causes the greatest concern about all environmental issues. As a result, the SNP is demanding three courses of action in the motion before the House. First, we demand an urgent investigation into Beaufort dyke and the surrounding sea area, so that the dangers posed to the public and the marine environment can be properly assessed.

Secondly, we call on Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate to refuse to grant any further applications for discharge authorisations at the Dounreay plant. Thirdly, we urge the Government

"to refuse any application for a licence for the offshore disposal of the Brent Spar or any other North Sea installation until such disposal can be assessed by an independent decommissioning authority".

Westminster has turned Scotland into the largest single underwater munitions dump in western Europe, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has said, Dounreay into the world's nuclear laundry. They would quite happily see 150 Brent Spar installations dumped in the North sea. The Scottish National party is today signalling that the days when Scotland gets every dangerous substance dumped on its doorstep while it is fleeced of its natural resources are coming to an end.

4.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Raymond S. Robertson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on their environmental achievements in Scotland and applauds their continued commitment to the further protection and enhancement of the environment, notably through the creation of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; supports the Government's view that United Kingdom's Atomic Energy Authority should be allowed to continue to undertake reprocessing of spent fuel, subject to the appropriate regulatory requirements being met, and that sound science and careful cost benefit analysis should continue to guide the Government in their consideration of issues affecting the marine environment, the matters of safety always to the fore."

I congratulate the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) on her lively and vigorous speech. It is only a pity that it bears little resemblance to reality. Her description of Scotland's environment is a travesty of the reality, and she should not let her enthusiasm for debate triumph over her respect for the truth.

It is pleasure to see that some members of the shadow Scottish affairs Front-Bench team are present, considering that none of them bothered to turn up last night for a debate of vital importance to Scotland's fishing industry. Their absence has been noted by the fishing communities and fishermen's organisations.

A visitor to north-west Europe would soon see Scotland as something of an environmental beacon.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As someone who was here last night, I can say that the Minister's comment about that debate has the modest disadvantage of being completely untrue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is not a matter for me, but no doubt the Minister has taken note of it.

Mr. Robertson: I did not realise that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is a member of the shadow Scottish Front-Bench team.

Mr. Wilson: I am not.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is it not true that the Labour party's embarrassment is further deepened by the fact that, although it wants a Parliament in Edinburgh, its own Front Bench is comprised mostly of Scottish-based Scots, including its Chief Whip?

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend has made a valuable point. I said that no member of the shadow Scottish Front-Bench team was present last night. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North has admitted that he is not a member of it, so I hope that he will withdraw his remark at some appropriate moment.

Mr. Wilson: It is a simple matter. The Minister should learn that it is a waste of a speech to make such stupid, false points. It is a matter of fact that the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. We should get on with the debate.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope it is not the same point of order.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister gave way to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologise. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was making a point of order; I did not realise that the Minister had given way.

Mr. Wilson: There is no need to apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to take up time in the debate, but I do not want a straightforward, factual inaccuracy to remain on the record. For part of the time when I was present for the fisheries debate, the shadow Secretary of State was also present. The Minister made the same cheap point last night. It was not true then, it is not true now, and he should withdraw it.

Mr. Robertson: I will not withdraw my remark, and let us continue with the debate.

Scotland has an international reputation as an environmental beacon. I fear that the only problem is that the perennial parochialism of the SNP and its desire for cheap, quick soundbites create an extreme distortion of the current healthy situation.

I shall begin to respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross by trying to put matters into context. There is no denying that the era of heavy industry, which was the foundation of Scotland's wealth for more than 100 years, has left a legacy of environmental problems. But the new, high-tech industries, which are fuelling Scotland's economic resurgence, are not major polluters.

Regulatory standards are tighter as a result of European Union and United Kingdom controls. Industry itself increasingly acknowledges the force of the green imperative and is now moving quite independently to give a higher priority to environmental management.

Dr. Godman: What stage have the negotiations with Ameco reached concerning the disposal of the Northwest Hutton platform? Is Ameco to be allowed to dump it at sea to form a reef as it claims, which is absolute nonsense, or will the Government, in accordance with part I of the

[Dr. Godman]

Petroleum Act 1987, insist that that installation be brought ashore or at least into sheltered waters where it can be dismantled?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman raises matters of commercial sensitivity between the company and the Department of Trade and Industry, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is made aware of them. The hon. Gentleman's points are primarily a matter for the DTI.

Industry increasingly acknowledges the force of the green imperative and is now moving quite independently to give a higher priority to environmental management. While we must still tackle problems from the past, we can at least look forward with real satisfaction to a much less polluted future.

The hon. Member for Perth and Kinross made great play of the prospect that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority may be in a position to secure further contracts to reprocess spent nuclear fuel. It is unfortunate, if not surprising, that she did not praise the highly skilled staff of the facility, without whom such contracts would not be possible. She chooses instead to scaremonger; putting local employment at risk. Is she unaware that there are after all about 1,200 staff directly employed at the Dounreay site, plus 400 or so contractors? A further 250 jobs in the local economy can also be attributed to the plant.

The UKAEA has carried out reprocessing work for decades, and so long as it makes commercial sense for it to continue to do so, and the appropriate regulatory and safety requirements are being met, I see no reason why the Caithness area should be deprived of the benefit that such contracts would bring simply to satisfy the dogma and the narrow-mindedness of the SNP.

Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate will scrutinise fully and in great deal the application for authorisation made by the authority in respect of discharges of radioactive material from Dounreay. That scrutiny includes taking account of comments received from public bodies and local authorities consulted by HMIPI. A considerable amount of environmental monitoring has been and continues to be carried out around Dounreay, and that shows clearly that levels of radioactivity in the environment are well within internationally accepted limits for the public.

I am confident that the new Dounreay site management is dealing with that latter aspect with vigour and determination under the guidance of regulatory bodies. Indeed, the determination of the present management to ensure that all such localised contamination is fully identified and dealt with openly has brought about a great deal of the recent criticism made of operations on the nuclear site.

Similarly, we should not forget that the recent comments about Dounreay's operations made by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment are made by Committees set up by the Government to provide such independent advice and criticism, precisely in order that the operation of the nuclear industry in this country may be to the very highest of standards and so that the public may be reassured of that.

As for the transport of spent materials testing reactor fuel to Dounreay, were the United States contracts to come about, there is a history of safe operation and transportation to build on. I am amazed by the short memories of Opposition Members. Dounreay has been receiving such spent fuel elements for more than 35 years since the reprocessing plant opened in the 1950s. Why can the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross not come to this debate and congratulate the work force on their skills, expertise and safety record over decades, rather than seeking to destroy their livelihoods in search of a quick headline in tomorrow's paper?

I am deeply conscious of the concern about the phosphorous containers washed ashore in south-west Scotland and about the safety aspects to which the incident gives rise. The injury that at least one child sustained is most regrettable, and I convey my sympathies to him.

Unfortunate as the incident is, I record my high regard for the way in which the emergency services have handled the incident. Efforts are continuing to try to find the origin of the containers and where in the sea bed they came from. The video of the trench-laying operation will be studied carefully to establish whether it reveals any connection with munitions, if that is what the phosphorous objects turn out to be. Through the Scottish Office's initiative, all the appropriate Government Departments are working together, not only to try to get to the bottom of the incident, but to establish as much as possible about what munitions were dumped.

Mr. Foulkes: I endorse what the Minister has said about the emergency services; they worked extremely well. I cannot, however, say the same about Government Departments because over the past two weeks, there seems to have been a concerted attempt to cover up exactly what is going on. We were not told by the Secretary of State for Defence that there was a prohibition order, and British Gas did not tell us. The Ministry is still not answering questions about why the order was imposed and why it was lifted.

On behalf of my hon. Friends and myself, I have written seeking an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, because all fingers point in his direction. The Health and Safety Executive is clearly responsible and is under his control. I hope that the Minister will use his good offices and that the Secretary of State for Scotland will use his good offices to get us an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to try to solve the mystery of what exactly is going on in and around Beaufort dyke.

Mr. Robertson: I know of no cover-up. What I do know is that the hon. Gentleman had what he called a constructive meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Following from that meeting, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is seeking to move matters forward. As I said, through the Scottish Office's own initiative, all the appropriate Government Departments are working together to try to get to the bottom of the incident. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is made aware of the hon. Gentleman's request for a further meeting with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friends and myself said that we had a successful meeting because we thought that we were

being told the truth. It emerged afterwards that it was being withheld from us that the Secretary of State for Defence knew that there was a prohibition order and that there was trouble at Beaufort dyke. He did not tell us about that and neither did Cedric Brown.

That was an appalling cover-up of what was going on; that is why a lot of us are now suspicious that a cover-up is still going on and that there are dangers at Beaufort dyke to which the Government are not prepared to admit. That is why we need a meeting urgently.

Mr. Robertson: I hear what the hon. Gentleman has said. He is, by his own intervention, admitting that this is a matter that crosses many Government Departments. I have said that, following the hon. Gentleman's meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is seeking to move things forward. I will ensure that he sees this exchange of views.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Many of us were present at the meetings and we were an all-party delegation. I confirm everything that has been said by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). Why is it only now, some several weeks on from the first indication, that the Scottish Office is talking about co-ordination? Can the Minister tell us who will be working on the group, exactly what its role will be, to whom it will report, how we shall find out the information, how we shall report back to our constituents and what the time scale is?

Mr. Robertson: As I have said to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), the local Member of Parliament, this is a matter that crosses Government Departments. Following the meetings that he and others, including the hon. Lady, have had, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is seeking to take matters forward. When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland winds up, he will address the hon. Lady's question in greater detail. I now want to make some progress.

I now turn to the Government's achievements, as spelled out in our amendment, and our ambitions for Scotland's special and unique environment. So far, the 1990s have been an outstanding decade for our leading-edge policies to protect and to enhance the environment. The decade began with the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which, by any standards, represents a post-war landmark in pollution control legislation.

The Act's centrepiece has been the introduction of integrated pollution control—IPC—for the most potentially polluting industrial processes. This has undoubtedly set a benchmark for the rest of Europe. As a pollution control concept it was world class and the regime that we established in Britain had the immediate effect of persuading the European Commission that it should follow suit. Accordingly, an integrated prevention and pollution control directive—the IPPC—was agreed by the Council of Ministers earlier this year, and will follow very much the same trail as that blazed by the 1990 Act.

IPC finally brought to an end the separate regimes of pollution control that had applied to each of the environmental media—land, air and water. It has therefore heralded an era of greater coherence and more thoughtful analysis of the possible harmful discharges from industrial processes, compared with what was previously a rather fragmented area of operations.

Nor was IPC the only feather in the cap of the 1990 Act. For the first time, air emissions from less polluting industrial processes were brought within a tight regime of codified guidance notes in place of the ad hoc controls that had previously applied.

Waste management controls have also been greatly strengthened. Indeed, because of the extent of the reforms embodied, implementation has been phased over two or more years, and the final tranche of the new waste licensing controls did not come into force until May last year. The 1990 Act also strengthened litter laws, with clear output targets for local authorities.

The emphasis in that legislation was on the substance of pollution control, but the focus has shifted in subsequent years to the organisational aspects of securing on the ground the objectives set out in the Act.

The first fruit of that determination was the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991, which brought together the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland in the shape of a new and powerful body—Scottish Natural Heritage. That body has now settled down to the twin task of reconciling conservation with recreation, and is proving its worth across the entire spectrum of countryside policies. In particular, it has been able to secure a shift in the general climate of opinion towards achieving a much more constructive dialogue between landowners and conservation interests, putting aside the divisive debates of earlier years.

The current Session of Parliament has seen the passage of another major Act with far-reaching provisions. I have no doubt that the effect of the Environment Act 1995 will be felt well into the next century, and I understand that its 394 pages make it the longest piece of legislation passed by Parliament this decade.

The most striking impact for Scotland will probably arise from the creation of a Scottish Environment Protection Agency—SEPA. It is fitting that we should discuss the environment today, because 24 October is the day on which the board of the new agency meets formally for the first time.

The effective protection of the environment requires an integrated, holistic approach. The introduction of IPC—and IPPC in Europe—is an acknowledgement of that fact. SEPA will take that integration a stage further. The agency will concentrate on the key forms of industrial pollution of air, water and land where the benefits of a one-door approach to the prevention and control of pollution will deliver more effective environmental protection.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene; my question will allow him to catch his breath, because he is speaking at such a speed. Following the correspondence that I have had with the Scottish Office, does what the Minister now says mean that the operation to deal with the mercury from the former Nobel works in Redding, Falkirk, which is washing into the Forth and Clyde canal, where people still fish, will be funded by the agency? Or will the people of my constituency still have to pay through their taxes to the local council for cleaning up Government pollution?

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. Gentleman had waited a little more patiently, I would have reached the funding of the body.

[Mr. Robertson]

From 1 April next year, SEPA will bring together the work of Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate, the various river purification authorities and the district and islands councils in respect of waste regulation and some air pollution control. It will be a formidable organisation with about 600 staff and an annual budget of more than £22 million. Its functions will encompass the control of radioactive substances, discharges to controlled waters, air pollution, flood warnings and waste management, to mention but a few.

The Environment Act also tackles one of the legacies of Scotland's industrial past that I mentioned earlier. It provides a new framework for the remediation of contaminated land sites based on the "suitable for use" approach. That resists the temptation to throw money at every conceivable area of contamination regardless of the benefit that it would bring. Instead, it proposes a selective approach concentrating on remediation programmes on sites posing the greatest environmental risks or the greatest potential for reuse.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister has described the environmental agency as being under Scottish Office control. However, does he have any real power in connection with the concerns raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)? The munitions dump off the south-west of Scotland was put there by the Ministry of Defence. Nuclear waste transportation is under the control of the Department of Transport. Dounreay and its regulatory bodies are under the control of the Department of Trade and Industry, as is the disposal of offshore platforms. The simple question is: does the Scottish Office really have effective power to deal with the concerns that my hon. Friend raised, even if the Minister wanted to tackle them?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman well knows that the Scottish Office has a powerful voice on every issue that he has just mentioned as an integral part of the Government of the United Kingdom. He should know better.

The Environment Act also has important enabling powers to combat air pollution. Even though we have made great strides in the decades since the Clean Air Acts of the 1950s and 1960s, first to reduce air pollution from domestic fires and then from industry, we now find that a third threat to our air quality has emerged in the form of exhaust fumes from road transport.

The Act addresses this development by enabling air quality management areas to be set up in localities where air quality is particularly poor. As a backcloth to such local initiatives, the Government will publish an air quality strategy to outline the national policies which apply in this important area. The Government will also be discussing with local authorities the range of measures which they might apply to make the AQMAs really effective in improving air quality. We will give them new powers where they are shown to be necessary.

There is not enough time to go through the other provisions of the 1995 Act, but I believe that the Government have demonstrated their commitment to environmental improvement and have proved their ability to come up with appropriate policies to meet the changing challenges of our time.

I should like to turn to the wider environmental debate in the country. I detect behind the hon Lady's remarks a kind of moral absolutism, which I believe we must resist if the cause of environmental improvement is not to lose credibility in the minds of the community at large. The clamour from the green corner is all too often for the environment to be returned to its natural condition of pristine purity, regardless of the actual benefits of doing so and regardless of the costs involved.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Robertson: I have already given way to the hon. Lady. I sometimes feel that these calls are part of a flight from reality to a never-never land of simple truths and instant values, and we must all resist that pressure. The first fallacy is that nature is always a benign and beneficial force. As any scientist knows, harmful chemicals abound in the natural environment and naturally occurring radiation almost certainly poses a greater threat to health than radioactivity from nuclear operations.

Undoubtedly we must be careful and considerate in our treatment of the environment, but we must also be alive to the law of diminishing returns. The expenditure to clean up that last trace of pollution in the remaining residue of waste material is likely to be much better spent for the benefit of humanity in many other ways. Yet one hesitates to say anything that obvious in polite society, lest it offends the gospel according to the greens which we are all increasingly expected to acknowledge.

That inevitably brings me to the saga of Brent Spar. Shell undertook a very full assessment of the disposal options, and deep-sea abandonment was the conclusive outcome. The Government's licence to dispose of Brent Spar in this way was granted only after the most careful scientific evaluation by Scotland's foremost marine laboratory in Aberdeen.

The wisdom of those decisions has, of course, been totally vindicated now with the publication of the Det Norske Veritas study. The study demonstrates that Shell had been right all along and that Greenpeace's discreditable manoeuvring has served both to mislead the general public and to leave Brent Spar as a potential threat to the marine environment until it is finally disposed of. It is as regrettable as it is pathetic that the hon. Lady and her party fell in with the Greenpeace line in such an unquestioning and uncritical fashion. I had hoped that she would come to the debate today with her lesson learned—unfortunately, that has not proved to be the case.

That brings me to a matter which I ought perhaps to have mentioned earlier and which certainly looms alongside domestic reforms to improve environmental protection, and indeed overshadows and dwarfs them in many respects—the concept of sustainable development. This was endorsed at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. To my mind, the concept adds the vital ballast of economic realism to counter what can be the sentimentality of those who constantly see the world through green-tinted spectacles. The importance of development in the concept is crucial because as a society and as a planet we need to grow and innovate if we are to progress. Over-caution will lead to stagnation, and that can cast a blight over millions where growth and innovation can give them hope.

The Rio document which set out the many aspirations for sustainable development is called Agenda 21, and it carries the salutary lesson for us all that top-down

solutions—so beloved of Opposition parties—are not the answer. The seedcorn of change lies in our local communities, in our schools and at the workplace. Exhortation from on high, whether from Governments or the moral crusaders in the green movement, cannot actually achieve the shifts in life style and patterns of behaviour which sustainable development asks of us. Agenda 21 recognises this by calling for the full participation of all segments of society. This will not be an easy process, nor a swift one.

However, the Government are determined to play their part. The Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 was the first piece of UK legislation to make specific reference to the concept of sustainability. The Environment Act provides for the Secretary of State to provide guidance on sustainable development to SEPA so that the general aims of Agenda 21 can be reflected in the day-to-day work of that agency. In reality, of course, the very practice of pollution control is at the heart of sustainable development.

We have established a separate Scottish advisory group on sustainable development which has already issued a thoughtful report on transport and the environment. We have commissioned a survey of Scottish attitudes to sustainable development, which was published last year. We have supported the Association of Scottish Community Councils to give local Agenda 21 a higher profile. On the environment, as on so much more, the Government are leading the way. Our record is second to none. I invite the House to reject the scaremongering and political posturing of the SNP. I commend the amendment to the House.

4.40 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I do not know about green-tinted spectacles, but no Opposition Member will be green with envy of the quality of the speech that we have just heard from the Minister.

I rise in my place as a Scottish-born and Scottish-based member of the Scottish Labour party to speak from the Scottish Labour party's Front Bench. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) seemed to believe that those qualities were something of a disadvantage, but I am proud of them. I am also proud of the role that my party is playing in securing a Scottish parliament, which will be created after Labour's victory at the next general election. We shall make debates such as this in this House unnecessary. In future, such matters will be debated in Scotland, where they should be debated, by elected Members of a Scottish parliament.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) on introducing this important debate. Labour Members agree that there is genuine concern across Scotland about what the motion describes as the

"Government's failure to provide proper stewardship of Scotland's environment."

We disagree with the SNP that concern about the Government's poor record on environmental issues is a matter simply for the Scottish electorate. That concern is shared by the vast majority of people who inhabit this small offshore island.

Indeed, the concern is shared beyond the shores of this island in the wider world. The Government's repeated refusal to condemn the French nuclear tests in the south Pacific have made them moral outcasts among civilised opinion in the world—and deservedly so.

Today's debate is about Scotland and what the motion describes as the triple threat posed by reprocessing at Dounreay, leaking munitions from Beaufort dyke dump and decommissioning of oil rigs in the North sea. I shall deal with each issue in turn and in the order in which the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross did so.

The motion refers to 1,000 phosphorous devices that have been washed up on the south-west coast of Scotland. They are sometimes referred to as flares, but experts now believe them to be incendiary bombs. The Royal Navy's description of the devices is chilling. Any hon. Member who has not read it would be well advised to do so. It refers to the devices exuding a distinctive pungent smell, their being seen smoking on the shores of Scotland and their ability spontaneously to combust when they are dry. The Clyde coastguard has gone further and said that the devices have the potential to kill. So all hon. Members should be worried about the extent of the munitions being washed up on our beaches.

Youngsters are already picking up the devices—one did so and his clothes started to smoke. He sustained injuries to his arms and legs that required him to be taken to hospital. The devices are very dangerous indeed. The Government's slow reaction to the danger presented to the Scottish people by such devices is amazing.

If the Government do not care about today's children—they cannot vote in the coming general election and save the Government's necks—or about tomorrow's environment, perhaps they should at least be worried about the threat that the devices pose to Scotland's economy. A threat arises from the impact of publicity about the devices on the tourist trade in Scotland.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I go along with all that the hon. Gentleman has said about the hazards associated with the phosphorous sticks, but what evidence does he have to substantiate his comment that the Government have not taken a keen interest ever since the first sticks were washed ashore? I have evidence that the Scottish Minister with responsibility for the environment was aware and involved right from that time.

Mr. McAllion: If the hon. Gentleman waits, he will hear what evidence I have to substantiate my claim. For the moment, I am talking about the impact that the bad publicity is having on potential tourism to our coasts, which are famous for their marine environment and which attract visitors.

I am grateful for a briefing that was provided to Scottish Members by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It revealed that millions of pounds were pumped into coastal local economies by visitors. A Countryside Commission for Scotland survey of users of the south-west coast path revealed that in the past year almost £16 million was spent in the local economy by people attracted to the area by the environmental qualities of the south-west of Scotland.

Whether one looks at the problem on safety, environmental or economic grounds, one thing is clear: the Government should make it a priority to preserve the quality of our coastal and marine environment. Yet what did we find when the story first broke and the issue became a crisis in Scotland? One of the headlines in the Scottish press at the time simply read:

"Offices pass buck as munitions wash up on Scottish coastline."

[Mr. McAllion]

The Ministry of Defence said that the matter was not its responsibility but that of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. MAFF said that the matter was not its responsibility but that of the Ministry of Defence and the Scottish Office. No less than a spokesperson for the dynamic new Secretary of State for Scotland was quoted as saying that the Secretary of State did not feel it appropriate to comment on the devices. They all washed their hands of any responsibility for what was happening on the south-west coast of Scotland. They were all utterly clueless about what they could do about it.

We hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) that the Department of Trade and Industry hid from its responsibility in the matter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Kynoch): Would the hon. Gentleman have my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland comment on something before he was fully aware of exactly what he was talking about? This is a complex issue. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that and that significant effort has been made by many people to determine where the items have come from and to ascertain how to stop them.

Mr. McAllion: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for trying to come to the assistance of the Minister who is leading for the Government in the debate. The spokesperson for the Secretary of State for Scotland said that it was not appropriate for him to comment, not that he did not want to comment because he had not checked out the matter. The spokesperson said that it was nothing to do with the Secretary of State for Scotland. That is why the Secretary of State will rightly be condemned by people.

Were it not for the successful campaigning by my hon. Friends the Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who demanded Government action, an immediate investigation into the source of the munitions and the extent and nature of the munitions held at the Beaufort dyke dump and a halt to all undersea operations in the area, I suspect that Ministers would still be dithering and doing nothing. Only after my hon. Friends' intervention did the Ministry of Defence agree at last to meet them, and only then did the Secretary of State for Scotland decide to intervene in the affair and try to rescue something from it.

It was not just here in Westminster that the Labour party forced the Government into action. A Labour Member of the European Parliament, Alex Smith, took emergency action in the European Parliament and succeeded in persuading the European Commission to investigate the munitions dump at Beaufort dyke and the claims that radioactive waste was dumped secretly in the area.

That is the story of what happened at Beaufort dyke—Labour action to protect the public and the environment, but Government inaction and failure to defend the public interest until they were forced into action by Opposition spokesmen.

Mr. Bill Walker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, because everyone who has taken an interest in the matter is concerned. He must acknowledge, however, that Beaufort dyke has been used extensively for the dumping of wartime munitions under Governments of different colours. Accountability, therefore, lies with the people who decided to dump.

Mr. McAllion: Accountability for action today lies with this Government and the Minister sitting on the Treasury Bench. Clearly, they have failed to take action, for which they will be condemned not merely by the Opposition but by people who are interested in the subject throughout Scotland.

The second part of the motion refers to Scotland's nuclear industry. I must begin with a confession. I am not in the habit of reading Scottish National party election manifestos—a failure that I think I share with the vast majority of the Scottish people. Indeed, if we are honest, it is probably a failure that I share with the majority of members of the SNP, as you would realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you had ever taken part in a debate with them.

In preparation for this debate, however, I took the trouble to look up the SNP manifesto for the last election to find out what it said about the Scottish nuclear industry. Page 10 makes it very clear that the SNP would pledge itself to creating

"A Scotland without the nuclear menace."

That phrase is obviously similar to one used last weekend by Mr. Kenny McAskill, a senior member of the SNP, who said that only the SNP could deliver a nuclear-free Scotland.

A nuclear-free Scotland and a Scotland without nuclear menace are good slogans, with a certain ring to them. They may even be attractive to certain people, but they are entirely bogus, as I hope to show. They provide the background, however, against which the references to Dounreay in the motion should be judged. It is important for the House to understand that the references stem from the wider SNP attitude to the nuclear industry and nuclear power in Scotland.

The facts about Scotland's nuclear industry must be revealed before we can judge the references to Dounreay. For example, Scottish Nuclear has signed contracts with British Nuclear Fuels this year for the handling of Scotland's nuclear waste, which will cover the period between now and 2068 and are worth about £4,000 million in total. Of course, we do not have the details of the contracts because BNFL and Scottish Nuclear keep them well hidden, but we can be fairly certain that severe penalty clauses will be included if anyone should decide to tear up the contracts and break the agreements entered into by the two parties.

Under the contracts, Scotland's nuclear waste is to be transported not to Dounreay but to Sellafield in England, where some of it will be reprocessed, but most will be stored, either in wet storage or long-term surface storage. The SNP objects to the possibility of Dounreay being used as a dumping site for nuclear waste from other countries.

We heard from the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Perth and Kinross that they are equally concerned about England's nuclear future and would object to Sellafield being used as a nuclear dustbin for Scotland's waste. We must assume, therefore, that, if they were ever in a position to do anything about it, they would tear up the contracts and be obliged to compensate BNFL for its loss in full—an enormous cost to the Scottish taxpayer—and that they would agree to the repatriation of Scotland's nuclear waste to Scotland,

where it would be stored in sites throughout the country. A Scotland littered with nuclear sites of that type could hardly be described as nuclear-free, but no one has ever accused the SNP of being honest.

The SNP plan goes further, however, as it proposes to close down all Scotland's nuclear industry—not merely Hunterston A, which is being decommissioned by Scottish Nuclear, but Hunterston B, Torness, Chapelcross and Dounreay, which will all need to be decommissioned at huge cost to the Scottish taxpayer and will require huge amounts of radioactive material to be stored and disposed of.

Mr. Salmond: On the subject of honesty, will the hon. Gentleman give the House the precise date on which he came to believe that the Trident nuclear system should be supported?

Mr. McAllion: That shows the hon. Gentleman's desperation. Rather than answering questions on civil nuclear power, he mentions defence, which is not part of this debate. He will have to suffer in silence a wee while longer because I intend to continue exposing the bogus nature of the SNP's policy on the civil nuclear industry.

The hon. Member for Perth and Kinross said that there would be no difficulties in closing down Scotland's nuclear industry and switching to non-nuclear power systems. Perhaps I might refer her to the problems associated with Hunterston A and Chapelcross, which both have Magnox reactors. The hon. Lady quoted, with great approval, the words of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, but it pointed out that spent Magnox fuel is potentially unstable and, on safety grounds, should be reprocessed before being disposed of.

Yet the hon. Lady and the SNP are promising to ban reprocessing at Dounreay and have made it clear that they will not have anything to do with reprocessing at Sellafield, which will make it impossible to deal safely with the spent fuel rods from existing Magnox reactors in Scotland. It seems strange for a party that talks about creating a safe Scotland to take decisions that make it impossible for us to dispose safely of Magnox fuel rods from reactors in Scotland.

At its most recent conference in Perth, the SNP decided that Scotland's nuclear industry would be retained only until it could be decommissioned safely. I am not entirely certain what that means and at what point all the nuclear stations would be decommissioned. We know that Hunterston A is already well down the road. The reactors have been defuelled, the ancillary reactor plant has been dismantled, the fuel storage ponds have been cleaned up and all that remains is to remove the reactor core, once radiation levels decrease significantly and it is safe to do so. British Nuclear Fuels estimates that that might be in about 100 years' time, so the SNP has a wide time span in which to decide when it will decommission Scotland's nuclear plant. Perhaps it should invent a new slogan, "Scotland nuclear-free by 2093", but that suggestion might not appeal to some SNP members.

It is incumbent on SNP Members to let the House and the people of Scotland know exactly when they will decommission and write off Scotland's nuclear stations. We must recognise one thing, however: that it is simply no longer credible for us to deal with complex nuclear issues on the basis of simplistic sloganising. The 4,500 workers in the Scottish nuclear industry and the many thousands more in the spin-off industries deserve a little more respect and consideration from that party. Indeed, the SNP did not touch on the most immediate threat to the Scottish nuclear industry—privatisation, which will definitely threaten safety standards in the industry. It is not merely the official Opposition who are saying so. Even the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) is about to say so.

Mr. Gallie: Has the hon. Gentleman not read recent reports from Scottish Power, stating that its safety performance has increased beyond all recognition from the days when it was in the public sector? On that basis, will he take back his words about the privatisation of the nuclear industry?

Mr. McAllion: Has the hon. Gentleman not read the comments of Mr. Richard Killick, who is saying what I said? He may not know who he is. Mr. Killick admits that he is not a political animal because he admits to voting Tory more than anything else, but he served for 25 years in the Royal Navy and held all the top safety posts on nuclear submarines. On retiring, he joined Scottish Nuclear and, in 1992, was appointed safety and quality director, so I think that we can take it that he knows something about the nuclear industry and about safety standards within it. Yet, following the merger of Scottish Nuclear and Nuclear Electric into British Energy, he was invited to leave the company. Within a week, he was obliged to clear his desk and to pass on his safety responsibilities to a fellow director from Scottish Nuclear.

Mr. Killick said that the speed with which he was asked to pass on his safety responsibilities alarmed him and was symptomatic of "the fundamental flaw" in the privatisation of the nuclear industry. He claimed:

"There will be increasing pressures on people and safety as output and profit become ever more important".

That will not happen immediately—not in the first two or three years following privatisation—but in the longer term. As Mr. Killick puts it so chillingly, the Government "are building in latent instability".

Given the threat posed by a nuclear industry that is inherently unstable, the charge against the Government could not be more damning or serious. For the sake of a privatisation receipt, which they hope will allow them to introduce tax cuts and increase their electability at the next general election, they are prepared to put at risk the safety of the entire nuclear industry and, indeed, of the people of Scotland, whose interests they claim to be looking after.

Finally, there is the dumping of North sea oil rigs. The Scottish National party has never been able to allow a bandwagon to pass without trying to jump on it. It has done so again by trying to hijack Brent Spar for its own political ends. There has been a deluge of press releases from the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan, for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Perth and Kinross opposing deep-sea dumping of any sort in the North sea. We hear that the Government and oil companies cannot be allowed to dump rigs in the North sea. We are told that Scotland gets all the dangers and few of the rewards. Today, the SNP has again highlighted the benefits that the total removal of rigs from the North sea and recycling them on land would bring through the jobs that the process would create.

The hon. Member for Perth and Kinross went so far as to condemn the Government for adopting a case-by-case approach. That is all very well, but it is a different line

[Mr. McAllion]

from that taken by the Energy Select Committee in its 1991 report, "Decommissioning of Oil and Gas Fields in the North Sea".

It is nothing strange for the SNP to be at odds with the Energy Select Committee; it is strange that a member of that Select Committee was the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, who as part of the Committee, agreed to commend the Government for their case-by-case approach to the North sea. He also agreed that, on balance, environmental interests favoured the partial abandonment of at least some rigs, that environmental issues could not be used as an argument against deep-sea dumping of rigs and called on the Government to examine the claim that total removal was more dangerous than partial removal because of the dangers that it posed to the divers who would carry out the process. He even agreed that the Government would have to consider the possibility of using abandoned platforms as artificial reefs to encourage fish stocks. Finally, he agreed that the Government should preserve the options of toppling and deep-water dumping while permitted to do so by International Maritime Organisation guidelines.

I have no complaint with the hon. Gentleman agreeing to all that, because I was a member of the same Committee and agreed to it myself, but when the SNP starts to deal with such matters, it should do so responsibly, seriously and with due consideration of the scientific and environmental facts and not treat the debate as if it was something to read about in a tabloid such as *The Sun*. The issue deserves better than that.

Reference was made to the gulf of Mexico, where 945 rigs were moved on shore for recycling. The hon. Member for Perth and Kinross said, however, that 100 platforms in the gulf of Mexico, belonging to 36 companies, have already been dumped at sea as part of the rigs-to-reefs programme, which has been running for the past 10 years. It is a good programme which has many qualities so far lacking in what has been suggested by the Government. For example, all pollutants and hydrocarbons must be removed before a platform can be considered for disposal. Half the cost savings that arise from not having to dump rigs on land must be handed over to state Governments for long-term monitoring and research into the effects of dumping on marine life.

The programme is supported by local fishermen and environmentalists in America, and even Greenpeace in America does not oppose it. It is at least worth considering.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman has been busy reading the Scottish National party manifesto; it is a pity that he did not read the motion on the Order Paper. Does he not agree that the key issue is that the oil companies and the Government, because of taxation laws, have a vested interest in the cheapest form of disposal, which is often offshore disposal? Can he not bring himself to agree that we need an independent authority with no financial vested interests properly to supervise disposal?

Mr. McAllion: I have no problem agreeing with that, but I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman giving only one side of the argument and trying to disguise from the House the positions that he took some years ago. With complete inconsistency, he is about-facing on those positions and not owning up to it.

I appeal to the hon. Gentleman to deal with such important matters seriously and not use them as part of the usual knockabout stuff of party politics. We are talking about future generations. The document that Labour commissioned on environment policy states:

"We cannot go on living as if there were no tomorrow."

I would advise every political party to take that phrase to heart, because the tomorrow that we are discussing does not belong to the generation sitting here at the moment but to the generations that will come after us. We are not debating our future and environment but those of generations to come. They deserve a debate worthy of them, and they have not heard that from the SNP today.

5.3 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I wish to bring some realism to the debate instead of the rhetoric that we have heard so far.

We are, of course, concerned about what has happened in the Irish sea and the firth of Clyde. That needs to be—and is being—investigated. Until we get the results of the investigation, it is pointless to raise alarm and despondency before we find out what the true picture is.

We have to be practical. If there are problems in the Beaufort dyke hundreds of fathoms down, we have to find out whether the munitions are inert and whether there is any cause for concern. If there is, we must consider what on earth could be done about it, bearing in mind that nothing has happened for about 40 years. I suspect too, that the incendiaries and the possible flares in the firth of Clyde are from a different source altogether. It just happens that they have come together in public concern.

We should say to the Government that, yes, we want to know the results of investigation as soon as possible, but it is no use shouting from the rooftops until the experts have found what the position is. The sooner that that can be done, the better.

It is quite wrong of the Scottish National party to keep thumping away about toppling the Brent Spar in the North sea. We have never intended that any oil wells should be toppled in the North sea because it is far shallower than the Atlantic, where the Brent Spar might have been toppled. That is a different issue altogether.

Without in any way underestimating the Beaufort dyke question, I wish to deal with some more important long-term issues. We can say straight away that the Scottish National party is dead against nuclear power. Its candidates and members have been dead against it ever since the power stations appeared in Scotland after the war.

I live alongside Chapelcross; I brought up a family alongside it. I have no fears at all about the safety of living near a nuclear power station. The standards of the work force, the nuclear installations inspectorate and the Health and Safety Executive are extremely high. There is never any concern about safety in the area. Chapelcross provides 500 jobs. Think of the input that that makes to the local economy through the 500 families.

I cannot understand the concern of the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham), who is not in her place—I appreciate that she cannot be there all the time—about transport. Nuclear flasks have been transported between Sellafield and Chapelcross for

40 years. I cannot understand the worry about transporting nuclear equipment under the closest security and scrutiny. It is absolutely safe.

The thought that these flasks are going to catch fire on the road in central Scotland is unjustified. Again, the SNP and, indeed, others are raising alarms about an issue that is a non-runner. Perhaps hon. Members saw the television programme that showed a train crashing at high speed into a nuclear flask. The nuclear flask came off best. It is a safe form of transportation. Nobody could want it to be safer more than the nuclear industry.

It is wrong to say that we cannot effectively generate electricity from nuclear power or carry out reprocessing at Dounreay or elsewhere; our country has taken safety as its No. 1 priority. I believe that not only the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority but British Nuclear Fuels, which runs Chapelcross, and Scottish Nuclear, which runs its own stations, will keep their high standards as their top priority.

I am concerned about the long-term future of Chapelcross. I want it to continue. I am glad that, subject to safety checks, its future looks guaranteed for at least another 10 years. That is not on account of any support that we have had nationally from the Labour party, the SNP or the Liberal Democrats. I know that local candidates sometimes put a smudge on it, but, by and large, listening to the party conferences, I believe that there is no doubt that the other parties would support the future development of nuclear power.

I should like to be positive in this debate. The motion on the Order Paper must be one of the longest sentences ever composed. It contains the phrase:

"Government's failure to provide proper stewardship of Scotland's environment."

The Scottish National party must be completely out of touch with what is actually happening in Scotland. A great deal of progress has been made. The Minister made the case for Scottish Natural Heritage; the Government combined the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, of which I was a member for nine years, and the Countryside Commission for Scotland into Scottish Natural Heritage—precisely to develop the environment and heritage of Scotland. It has been extremely successful, and we should congratulate Magnus Magnusson on his good work.

We have also enhanced the value of Scotland's sites of special scientific interest. It is rubbish to claim, as some organisations do, that we are destroying SSSIs. Only a tiny percentage—one or two out of 3,000—get damaged from time to time, and that is only inevitable. By and large, the standards set by SNH in promoting and improving the environment, habitats, wildlife and heritage of Scotland are first class. We have also set up the Scottish Environment Protection Agency as an additional safeguard, to be up and running by next April, to deal with river pollution and sewage—an outstandingly serious issue in Scotland about which local authorities have done too little for too long.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall his meeting with me in Glasgow about chromium toxic waste sites in Rutherglen, when he committed the Government in principle to doing something about those sites and expressed great and genuine concern about them? Does he further agree that that commitment has not been honoured by his successors, who have repeatedly said that they will not provide the resources to make the sites safe?

Sir Hector Monro: I cannot say what has happened, but I well remember the hon. Gentleman coming to see me and the wish that I expressed that we could resolve the matter, which involved the regional and district councils and the enterprise company, all of which have a part to play in developing the site and removing the contamination about which he and I were rightly worried. I am sure that when he speaks in the debate he will express the strength of his feelings and try to encourage a more rapid solution.

It is most important to support the Government's policies in respect of agriculture, because, if we are to have a beautiful Scotland, with high standards of husbandry and great scenic beauty, we need profitable agriculture. That requires, in turn, support for our policies from Europe, and support for the farming community. That is essential if we are to raise environmental standards in Scotland. I believe that it is already happening; we are putting money where it matters.

We have developed the environmentally sensitive areas and management agreements, and we have helped farmers to farm more sensitively. We have put additional money into the less-favoured areas, particularly hill farming. All these factors contribute to improving the environment. We have introduced special conservation areas, under the habitats directive. Environmental grants are channelled through the wildlife advisory groups. We have promoted forestry and brought in woodland grants. Now that the forestry review is over. I hope that things will settle down, with the forestry authority and Forestry Enterprise in place, providing greater opportunities for access to the woodlands of Scotland.

We set up the Cairngorm partnership, after extensive consultation. David Laird is the chairman presiding over positive co-operation in the Cairngorm area. I hope that it will help to develop the ski areas of Aviemore, as well as the wilder areas in that part of Scotland.

We were also keen to develop the same sort of partnership for the Loch Lomond area. The investigation has been conducted and the report drawn up. The new councils that will come into existence next April will, I hope, get together on this matter. They have the additional powers that they need, but they must also see it as their duty and responsibility to develop opportunities around Loch Lomond, and not just leave it to the Government to bring in new legislation. They can do the task themselves.

The SNP motion also contains the phrase:

"without any semblance of public consultation".

What on earth was the SNP doing this summer? Did it not play its part in responding to the consultation document preceding the White Paper? Everyone in Scotland has been asked to submit ideas. When the White Paper is issued shortly, I hope to see that the SNP has fed in positive ideas. Its members cannot say that they were not consulted; probably no White Paper has ever been prepared more thoroughly than the one in the pipeline for Scotland. Claiming a lack of public consultation just shows how out of touch the SNP is with Scottish thinking—

Mrs. Ewing: We keep winning elections.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Lady looks very lonely sitting there on the Bench all by herself.

[Sir Hector Monro]

The forthcoming White Paper will highlight the development of rural communities, and that means everything in the countryside, including village shops and post offices.

We are therefore guided by good policies and by the principles of sustainable development and shared development, working with local people, who know better how to identify their own needs and find the best way forward. Local planning requires flexibility—if we are to develop farm buildings for alternative uses, for instance. We need imaginative planning, too.

At this point, I again put down a marker, well known in the Scottish Office and to many other people as well: I refer to my outright disagreement with wind farms. We cannot improve Scotland's scenic beauty at the same time as building wind farms. I know that we have a duty to find renewable energy sources, but it is difficult to justify erecting up to 20 wind farm propellers, given the desecration of the countryside that ensues and the small generating capacity of the plant. I hope that the planning authorities will be very strict when it comes to locating wind farms in Scotland.

There are too many other objective to mention today—housing, crime, rural transport and unleaded petrol, on which we have taken a lead. Our environmental policies are prominent in Europe and the world. We intend to conserve our natural assets. We will reverse any decline in wildlife. I do not have the time today to give the Red Deer Commission a pat on the back for its work to contain the deer herd in Scotland. We must maintain the diversity of our rural landscapes and remain determined to prevent environmental damage, especially to our green belt. We must not ease up in our commitment to retain it around our cities.

We must also provide people with opportunities to enjoy the countryside for recreational pursuits, offering them reasonable and responsible access. Everyone must have the right to enjoy Scotland without overstepping the mark, as a few foolish people tend to do. We can thus proceed, with good stewardship and a practical knowledge of Scotland, to make it even more attractive for the future.

5.18 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I congratulate the Scottish National party on initiating the debate, and the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) on her speech. I have no hesitation about doing that; as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said, we should approach this subject on a non-party basis.

I should like to pursue a point made by the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), who mentioned the industrial legacy that has been left in the west of Scotland, particularly in the central belt, as a result of the industrial revolution. The position in my constituency is similar to that in Dumfries. A chemical-producing company, Whites, operated in the Rutherglen area for around 150 years. During that time, the factory dumped its chromium waste not only all over Cambuslang and Rutherglen but over a wide area of south and south-east Glasgow.

Folk did not realise at the time the damage that can be done by such waste. I was born and brought up just a couple of hundred yards from that factory and used to play in the streams and the burns adjacent to it, despite the fact that the burn ran all sorts of colours as a result of the chemicals dumped in it. One did not realise the dangers at the time; it was only in later years that one realised the environmental mess that the place was in.

That company was castigated by no less than Keir Hardie around the turn of the century for its working practices and cavalier attitude towards the safety and environmental conditions in which the workers did their trade. My own knowledge of that company is further enhanced by the fact that my grandfather, four uncles, numerous cousins and my own brother worked there. It got to the stage in that factory where workers had chromium holes burnt into their skin through working with the chromium waste, which eventually was dumped all over Cambuslang and Rutherglen.

Eventually, the company moved away from Rutherglen and ended up out of business. I have tried to pursue its legal responsibilities and liabilities but am advised by legal opinion that there is no way in which I can do so. It has left a legacy in my constituency, and in adjacent constituencies, of chromium waste sites, which are now fenced off and barred to the public, with signs on them, saying, "Danger. Keep Out." These are not small, isolated sites; they are sites on which houses are built, and community halls and large secondary schools are built adjacent to them. There is a host of such sites throughout the area.

We came to realise that hexavelant chromium was lying in the sites, but, to its credit, Glasgow district council—with which I am not always in tune—commissioned a survey by Dames and Moore, which cost upwards of £150,000, so that it could get the facts and figures, not hearsay and ad hoc comments.

The survey outlined in specific detail what was wrong with each of the sites, and each category of chromium waste contamination of the sites. That has caused great worry and concern in the area about health. Four or five years ago, it was proven that there was an abnormal rise in the number of leukaemia cases in the Cambuslang area. The health board, at my instigation, carried out an investigation and confirmed that there was an abnormal blip in the number of leukaemia cases, but it could not link it to the chromium waste sites. In similar circumstances, it had found no explanation for the rise in leukaemia cases in different areas in Scotland.

Although I accept that it has not been proven, and I use that phrase advisedly, that cancer can be caused by these chromium waste sites, the fact that they exist and have been categorised by Greater Glasgow health board as causing health risks—that has been proven—heightens apprehension in the area.

Although one or two individuals in organisations have been over the top in scaremongering on this issue, I do not blame any family who is concerned about the health risk for children. I stay only five minutes walk from one of these sites. Families are quite right to be concerned and to pressurise and harass me to try to get something done. I, in turn, am passing the matter on to the Scottish Office. I do not blame folk for being concerned about the health risks. Greater Glasgow health board concedes that these sites are health risks if the chromium waste is disturbed; the dust can be breathed in, which can cause health problems. Problems can be caused if the chromium is

touched. If young children play on the sites and then put their hands in their mouth, swallowing the chromium can also cause them health risks.

I have pursued this environmental disaster with the Glasgow development agency and Scottish Enterprise, to which I had been referred by Scottish Office Ministers. The local enterprise councils made the point that they had no funding to take care of the sites. I then went to the paymasters—the Scottish Office Ministers—who said that there was an allocation for Scottish Enterprise and the Glasgow development agency to take care of the sites, at least to make a start. But then I came up against a policy that said that remedial work should be carried out on such sites only if there was an economic end use. It is quite wrong that people's health should be put at risk purely and simply because some bureaucrat in the Scottish Office says that, because there is no economic end use to remedial work sites, no work should be carried out.

I would like to record without hesitation the valuable support and encouragement that were given to me by the right hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) when he was a Scottish Office Minister, and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who was extremely helpful in trying to process grants.

Perhaps the Under-Secretary revealed a change of policy on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency when he said that it would have the ability and powers to tackle these contaminated waste sites. I hope that I can get some clarification from Ministers that the criteria of economic end use will no longer be applied to any work to remedy sites that have been contaminated in this way.

It was quite right that I paid tribute to the right hon. Member for Dumfries and to the hon. Member for Eastwood, but my meeting in Dover house, Whitehall with the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), was like bashing my head against a brick wall. That is the only description that I can apply to it. With me was Mr. Brian Kelly, Glasgow district council's director of environmental health. He was a totally neutral public servant. He was so exasperated that he asked the then Secretary of State whether someone would have to die or be proven to be seriously ill before he would act and give us some resources to try to get something done about the sites.

There are, unfortunately, swathes of land in the west of Scotland that are contaminated, but my constituency and surrounding areas are the only areas of Scotland that are contaminated by chromium waste. No precedent would be set by the Scottish Office in ensuring that resources were given for tackling this drastic problem in my area.

Recently, Scottish Enterprise allocated around £150,000 to Glasgow district council for experimental work in each of the sites to find the best solution for each site. That is certainly useful, but there was no commitment—I fully understand that—from Scottish Enterprise to make a start and to allocate the millions of pounds that will be required to make all the sites safe. I am a realist and am not looking for £20 million immediately, but I think that it is right that the Scottish Office, in conjunction with the unitary authority of South Lanarkshire and with Europe should combine different pots of money to tackle the problem. I know that not one pot of money is available to tackle it, but if there is good will and co-operation, the Government should co-operate and contribute other pots of money to tackle it.

There is hope that some of the sites will be tackled fairly soon because of the planned extension of the M74, which will run from Fullerton to the Kingston bridge. I emphasise that that is an extension, not a new motorway, and it is crazy that one small section should not be completed. I make no apology for supporting the M74 extension. It is right to do so.

There are potential benefits in that the motorway route runs through or adjacent to a number of chromium-contaminated sites. Those sites will be tackled as part of the motorway extension. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Dumfries, who initially suggested that, although the motorway extension might not be planned to go ahead for another couple of years, the associated works which will remedy the sites should be brought forward and the money spent now. That would considerably reduce the number of contaminated sites and reduce the amount of money required. That is a reasonable point of view, and I hope to obtain the co-operation of the Scottish Office on that issue.

I shall await a reply from the Minister and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on whether the requirement of an economic end use before contaminated sites are treated has now been removed and whether the sites to which I have referred, which have "only" environmental and health risk factors to be taken into account, can be included.

I make no party political point, but the Under-Secretary said that the Government were leading the way in treating Scotland's environment properly. I extend an open invitation to all Scottish Office Ministers to come to my constituency to see the sites and the scale of the problem there and to say whether they would like to have such areas in their constituencies, fenced off as a health risk to the public. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State, who has already come to my constituency at short notice. I invite Ministers then to look me and my constituents in the face and say that there is no way in which they can help. I look forward to receiving assistance.

5.32 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): First, I apologise for missing the opening speech. I was involved in a meeting with a Minister from the Department of Transport on an issue of great environmental and economic importance to my constituents—the opening of a new air route between Prestwick and Stansted in the not-too-distant future.

That route will have great environmental benefits, easing pressures on the roads, around other airports and particularly on Heathrow, which is undoubtedly overcrowded and where passengers have problems getting to the city centre.

I was surprised at the omission of roads from this environmental debate, particularly since at the end of yesterday's Scottish Grand Committee the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) had a debate on the Fochabers bypass, an environmental issue worthy of discussion. I understand that some progress was announced on the provision of bypasses yesterday.

The provision of roads throughout Scotland, particularly since 1979, has done much to remove the congestion and pollution resulting from the use of the motor car on roads that cannot cope with them. The progress on roads is one aspect of environmental improvement for which the Government can take credit.

[Mr. Phil Gallie]

I make no apology for referring to local road issues. I draw attention to the stushie about the M77 between Malletsheugh at the top of the A77 and the M8 in Glasgow. A great environmental row broke out over that road, which was destined to improve the environment for many people in Glasgow and certainly for my constituents in Ayrshire and those to the south of Glasgow who want to travel into the city or to the north.

We listened to the so-called environmentalists. For a period, there was trouble and strife, but now all that has gone quiet and I am pleased to say that the M77 is being built to what I hope will be time.

But another threat comes from the so-called environmentalists, and that is a block on the upgrading of the top end of the A77, where motorway standards are desired by the Government, by all in local government in Strathclyde and certainly by all Members of Parliament in Ayrshire.

Here again, we have objections from the mindless environmentalists—people who do not really look at the issues, but simply make a lot of noise. Again, they put in jeopardy the safety of my constituents and the constituents of others. I should like to think that Ministers could ignore their siren cry, but I understand that a public inquiry on the upgrading of that road to motorway standard will almost certainly be required in order to quell their arguments. Every so-called environmentalist who has objected to that road should have on their conscience any deaths or accidents that occur on that stretch in the immediate future. Great shame should be felt by such individuals.

Talking of shame, I come to some of the points that have already been made, in particular with regard to Brent Spar and the shame that should be felt by Greenpeace. It put up scare stories completely in line with those that we hear so often from Opposition spokesmen. We have heard inconsistencies and the distortion of facts—all the rubbish that comes from Opposition spokesmen on occasions which tends towards scaremongering rather than analysing the facts.

Shell considered the position, as did the Government over the years, and it came up with an acceptable proposal for dumping the Brent Spar. Yet that was stopped at the last minute by inaccurate and prejudiced comments.

The problem now is that Brent Spar is stuck in Norway and something has to be done with it. The safest solution was that previously proposed. That seems to be the view of experts across the board. But now other factors must be taken into account. Other risks are associated with the moving of the rig in the coming autumn or winter. If it ends up dumped in the North sea, it will be because of those who listen to Greenpeace and, perhaps, those in the SNP who give them such support.

While we are talking about dumping at sea, it is worth noting a matter of concern to all in the Clyde estuary—phosphorus sticks. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred to most of the dangers caused by those sticks, which I accept and endorse. However, I take exception to his comment that the Government seem not to be responding. Why does he believe that those particular sticks come from the Beaufort dyke? I shall give him the opportunity to reply to that. I understand that no one can identify their source, or establish whether they were used by the Ministry of Defence. It is not known whether their source is private—or even whether they were dumped over the side of a ship by some foreign merchant years ago. To say that they definitely came from Beaufort dyke is to make an unwarranted assumption.

Mr. McAllion: Will the hon. Gentleman reassure the House that he is certain that the sticks do not come from the Beaufort dyke arms dump? If he had listened to my speech, he would know that I called for a Government investigation of the source of the munitions.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman is rather late in calling for such an investigation. The Government have been examining the position for three or four weeks. I give credit to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) for raising the issue—and to the hon. Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). I even give credit to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who, along with others, accompanied me to meet representatives of British Gas.

We have all taken an interest in the matter; we are all concerned. But to suggest that the Scottish Office, the MOD and the Department of Trade and Industry have not registered the anxieties that have been expressed is a travesty of justice and a distortion of the truth.

It did surprise me that, at the time when we met representatives of British Gas, there had been no troughing along the pipeline that British Gas was running. While I was not prepared to point the finger at British Gas and identify it as one of the sources of the problem that had arisen in the short term, I am sure that my hon. Friends the Ministers will take account of that point and will stringently examine possible steps to end the threat to the entire Clyde estuary.

I am surprised that, in a debate on the environment, no one has mentioned the touchy subject of floods. That is particularly surprising in view of last year's events in Paisley. Recent correspondence from people in the area stresses that responsibility lies with local authorities: it is up to them to identify the remedies. They can now refer to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency for expert advice, and SEPA is obliged to provide that advice. I am sure that, if reasonable requests are made for capital allocations, the Government will use their limited resources to try to deal with this important issue.

Needless to say, the nationalists referred to nuclear matters. I do not understand why hon. Members who have every opportunity to examine the facts and consider the issues relating to environmental protection cannot be a bit friendlier to the nuclear industry. Nearly every aspect of the nuclear industry—for instance, air pollution and safety—make it to the top of the poll; it is certainly an environmentally friendly industry. As for alternative forms of generation—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Chernobyl?"] It is good that we have a capable nuclear industry that can deal safely with such matters, and can offer advice to those who operate plants such as Chernobyl to ensure that such accidents never happen again.

If we, like the nationalists, had buried our heads in the sand and refused to examine nuclear issues, we would not have been able to offer the rest of the world the expertise that can create the safe environment that these islands require. With nuclear power and other forms of

environmental pollution, these islands do not stand alone: we depend on the co-operation of other nations and industries to improve the environment.

Fears are expressed about safety in the nuclear industry. Whether it is in the private or the public sector, the responsibilities of the nuclear inspectorate do not change; nor do the safety factors. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me, but I am not aware of any Government plans to privatise the inspectorate. It will remain a Government body, charged with looking after nuclear safety. The hon. Member for Dundee, East confused the House by suggesting that safety would be a problem.

In his speech, the hon. Gentleman questioned the standing of others with respect to truthfulness. I noted the question put to him by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) about Trident. It would have been interesting and honest if he had told us precisely when he was converted to the Trident programme—a conversion that strikes me as being in line with many of the recent conversions of his leaders, and many of the about-turns that he himself has made.

Let me now deal with another form of beach contamination. I am concerned about sea water standards, and about the lack of effort exerted by Strathclyde regional council to keep beaches clean in my constituency and to enforce sewage control in the Clyde estuary. Its handling of the issue has been disgraceful for some years. Thank heavens, at long last we are to have a water and sewerage authority that will stand aside from political doctrine and intrigue and provide decent facilities for my constituents. I warmly welcome the interest already shown by the new West of Scotland board in future provision and sewage treatment.

Let us look back at the Government's handling of environmental issues in recent years. The condition of our rivers is better than it has been for centuries; fish are reaching the upper levels of rivers where they have not been for many years. Air standards have also improved, and—as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) pointed out—the Government's environmental legislation has undoubtedly improved the environmental well-being of the countryside.

The term "the environment" does not refer only to what happens in the countryside, or in towns and villages; it refers to what happens in our homes. Another of the Government's major achievements concerns energy provision. Energy prices have fallen, particularly following the privatisation programmes. That is important to elderly people who need warm, comfortable homes. I commend the Government on policies that allow elderly people to use various facilities, and to ensure that their homes are draught-proofed and warm during the colder months.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East registered another conversion when he spoke of the need for people today to consider the requirements of those who will inhabit our land tomorrow. Given Labour's past policy in government, in local authorities and in opposition, especially their economic policy—their "spend today, pay tomorrow" attitude—that is a conversion indeed.

5.49 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I too would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) and her party on bringing the debate to the House today. I notice that the Order Paper says:

"The Opposition Day is at the disposal of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party",

so I hope that she appreciates that the leader of that party is such a nice person.

Mr. Gallie: Which one?

Mrs. Michie: The only one—well, the only one for a federal party.

I was concerned about the rather dismissive way in which the two Front-Bench spokesmen talked about Dounreay. It made me feel that they did not realise what widespread anxiety exists. I understand that is possible—neither of them lives in the highlands region—but there is a great deal of concern and I would like to articulate it.

We have already heard about the unexplained discovery of radioactive particles on the foreshore at Dounreay, about the explosion in 1977 in an intermediate level waste disposal shaft, and about the proposals for reprocessing work to be undertaken at Dounreay to a far greater extent than has happened in the past. People in the highlands are asking: why should Dounreay and Scotland be the recipient of highly enriched fuel rods which other countries refuse to accept?

Mr. McAllion: If the hon. Lady thinks that the people of the highlands have such a strong view on that respect, will she explain why they continue to support her hon. Friend the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who takes a very different line from the one that she is putting forward?

Mrs. Michie: I will come to the reason why those people and indeed many of us support the work of Dounreay, but—

Mr. Bill Walker: On the one hand or the other hand.

Mrs. Michie: No, not on the one hand or the other hand. My hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is seriously worried about what is going on at Dounreay. All these problems raise questions about radiological hazards and there is further anxiety about the transport of nuclear materials to and from Dounreay, despite what people say. Those concerns have not been adequately dealt with by the Government, by the regulators or by the site operators.

From time to time, public anxieties about specific activities have been voiced. There was strong opposition to the location at Dounreay of a waste depository to be managed by Nirex, and we successfully saw that off. I and my party believe that nuclear waste should go nowhere. It should not be deposited underground, but stored on site above ground, where it can be monitored until the time comes—surely some time—when it can be neutralised.

The position today, however, is even more serious up north. There is now a more widespread questioning of the adequacy of the regime to protect the public and the environment from unacceptable levels of contamination and hazard. In particular—we have heard about it already—the report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on the particles in the vicinity of Dounreay, which was published in May this year, expressed concern that relevant information had not been communicated to COMARE by Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

[Mrs. Michie]

Dounreay operates under a licence from the nuclear installations inspectorate. Both the NII and Euratom frequently have inspectors on site, as has the industrial pollution inspectorate, supposedly applying internationally agreed safety standards. We must therefore ask why deficiencies were not picked up by those regulators before the COMARE report and properly dealt with. If the public cannot trust the mainstream regulators both to do a proper policing job and to communicate their findings, it is little wonder that widespread anxieties are aroused.

There has been a failure in communication and a loss of confidence about what is going on there and I ask the Government and relevant bodies to deal with that. They should not just dismiss it, but perhaps take it from me that there might just be a little problem.

We all appreciate of course that Dounreay employs many people and plays an important part in the economy of Caithness, but the Government should heed the concern of the people of the highlands, of the highlands and islands councils and of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, all of which are working to promote and project the highlands and islands as a clean, clear, pollution-free and beautiful region.

I would like to think that the Government could be considering Dounreay, which is already 40 years old, as a valuable resource for future research into matters such as alternative sources of energy. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has left the Chamber, because one of the things that they could be considering is how to develop tiny wind farms, which would not offend him when he looked out on the beautiful scenery.

I should like to give one other demonstration of the extent of the concern. The other day, I was faxed from the Isle of Mull a message drawing my attention to the fact that

"a ship containing flasks of plutonium nitrate being taken from Dounreay to Sellafield travelled through the Minches on the night of Sunday the eighth of October in estimated weather conditions of gale force six to seven.

The small vessel—the . . . Shearwater—is believed to have sheltered from force nine winds in Loch Eriboll"—

which is in Sutherland—

"the night before, then proceeded down the Sound of Mull where she was sighted at 0800 off Tobermory . . . She then proceeded over the Beaufort Dyke at a time when the Adrossan Ferry was cancelled due to the atrocious weather."

My constituents are trying to draw my attention to the fact that perhaps it was dangerous to set off from Dounreay to Sellafield with those rods in such bad weather.

I do not have much time to say other than a brief word about the offshore disposal of the Brent Spar and other North sea installations. In itself, the Brent Spar platform would have represented only a minor addition to the vast quantities of toxic sludge added to the waters every day, but a clear message was sent to the giant multinationals that have thrived for so long off the liquid gold buried beneath the seas, and to other Governments and our Government: abandoning waste at sea is simply no longer acceptable.

We are not talking about scare stories. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) spoke about our children and their future. He said that we were stewards of their future. There comes a time when the accumulated abuse of our common heritage comes home to roost and society then says no and decides to tolerate such abuse no longer.

When I see platforms such as Brent Spar or the rigs that are sitting in Invergordon waiting to be disposed of, I wish that we could introduce a second economy into the highlands. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked the companies at Ardersier and Nigg and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to examine the possibility of recycling and disposing of the rigs.

That brings me to Beaufort dyke and the serious events on the west coast of Scotland, in particular round the shores of Argyll and Bute during the past few weeks. Hundreds of incendiary devices have been washed up on our beaches, posing a real danger to public and polluting the environment.

The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) protests that the Government have done a lot, but to date there has been a lack of urgency in dealing with the matter and many questions remain unanswered. We went to meet the Secretary of State for Defence and he was very helpful in so far as he could be. He said that he would investigate that part of the problem which came under the remit of his Department. I wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland and asked him to make a statement in the House of Commons to let me, my constituents and others know exactly what is going on.

We still do not know where these devices come from. I am not sure whether they come from Beaufort dyke or further north, whether they were disturbed by the 40-tonne plough that was pulled along by three vessels trenching for cables or whether they came from the munitions dump at Beaufort dyke. We do not know whether the dump is being investigated and monitored—if not, why not? They started coming up some weeks ago and I do not know who is responsible for searching for the devices and clearing the beaches. Is it the police? Is it the coastguard? Who is it?

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Lady join other hon. Members in recognising that the emergency services have been incredibly good and efficient at clearing up the beaches in such unfortunate circumstances? It is the least that she can do for the services in her area.

Mrs. Michie: I am happy to do that. I do not understand why the Minister mentioned it in such a disparaging way. I shall tell the Minister who in my constituency is dealing with the matter. It is mainly the police and they are doing it very well. If the Minister had been patient, he would have heard me commend what they did the other day with regard to the little boy who was injured. The coastguards have also been involved, but the Minister will be aware that there are not many police around the Mull of Kintyre. There are not many coastguards and there are miles of shoreline, including that round the coast of the islands of Bute, Islay and Jura.

It is my impression that the buck is being passed from one Department to another. The Scottish Office says that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and the MOD says that it is the responsibility of the Scottish Office, so we seem to be going round in circles.

In response to my warning that something serious could and indeed might happen, the Secretary of State for Defence told me—and he was right, of course—that his

first priority was the safety of the public. Something did happen. My small constituent, four-year-old Gordon Baillie, picked up what he thought was a stick and he was about to throw it away when it ignited. Three fingers of his right hand and the bottom part of his arm were burnt. His clothes were on fire, but his family managed to remove them quickly before even more damage was done.

The following day, the Ministry of Defence arrived at his relatives' house and, without his parents' knowledge or permission, removed the clothes and the container in which they had been placed and burned them on the beach, destroying the evidence. I do not know how significant that evidence was. I know only that the police, whom I commend for their work—I hope that the Minister is listening—took photographs of what happened.

Gordon's mother is obviously very upset and worried. Nobody has really told her what is happening. She asks whether the Government are prepared to take responsibility for the devices, but nobody will tell her what is going on and when they will be cleared up.

Finally, having made that particular point about the incendiary devices, I would like to say again that we must get them removed. It is really important. I hope that the Government will understand that many of the issues raised in the debate cannot be ignored because the people of Scotland will not tolerate it.

6.6 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in what I think is an important debate, because I live in Scotland, which is an environmentally friendly place. The quality of life in Scotland is so good that we try not to tell other people about it in case too many of them come and join us. We have a splendid quality of life.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) was probably as interested as I was to learn that, along with the view of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) that it will probably be 100 years before Scotland can achieve independence, it will probably be 100 years before Scotland can be a nuclear-free country.

We have heard a great deal of humbug and nonsense about transportation of nuclear materials on Scottish roads. I have to declare an interest, as a large part of it goes through my constituency. Nuclear materials have been trundling around on our roads and railways very safely for 40-odd years.

Opposition Members are trying to scare the people of Scotland by overstating the problem that could or might arise. When I asked how many people had died as a result of nuclear accidents on our roads and railways, the answer was none. However, under normal driving conditions, someone dies on the A9 every weekend. It is much more dangerous for reasons other than the movement of nuclear materials, because of the splendid controls. It ought not to surprise us.

In 1993, the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) was advocating civil disobedience against any laws that might be made in Scotland. How can we take seriously any debate introduced by someone who is trying to occupy the moral high ground when we know that she has publicly advocated civil disobedience? That is the type of nonsense that we must expose in the debate.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East skilfully revealed the double standards of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who supports one thing in Committee and then adopts an entirely different position simply because of his political opportunism.

The plain truth is that the nuclear industry in Scotland employs many people, and is a good and safe employer. I accept that people should question how things are done in that industry from time to time. Such questioning is part of the monitoring process carried out by the House.

I have no criticism of the way in which the hon. Member for Dundee, East addressed the issue. He is right to say that we are talking about our grandchildren's inheritance. We should address the issue logically, sensibly and objectively. Frankly, I do not care when the hon. Member for Dundee, East changed his mind, if he did, on Trident.

We are talking not about that but about the motion on the Order Paper and the humbug that we have had to take from members of the Scottish National party. We must expose it for what it is. The SNP is not interested in environmental issues; rather, it is interested in trying to scare the Scottish people by presenting them with untruths and scare stories. It manufactures facts to suit its own ends.

The hon. Member for Perth and Kinross has criticised the Government for their ad hoc approach, but let us consider how they have dealt with the incendiary devices that have unfortunately been washed up on beaches in south-west Scotland. No one knows where those devices have come from, but we all know that the problem must be addressed.

For the hon. Lady to suggest that no inquiry has been launched, and no one has done anything about the devices, is absolute nonsense. The truth is that Labour and Conservative Members have seen Ministers to express their concern. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) has quite properly seen Ministers to express her concern about the injury to one of her constituents' children. That is what Parliament is for, and we have done our job effectively. We must not, however, make definitive comments that cannot be substantiated. None of us knows for certain where those devices have come from.

We are aware that certain recent activities in the sea may be related to the appearance of the devices. That is not an unreasonable suggestion, so it is right and proper to consider all the relevant facts. After all, dumping in Beaufort dyke has been going on since the end of the second world war, so it has been agreed by successive Governments. There is no question about the Government, whoever they were at the time of the dumping, being held accountable for the munitions dumped in Beaufort dyke. Should those devices belong to the Ministry of Defence, or the Air Ministry, or whatever it was known as at the time of the dumping, it should be possible to work out exactly when they were dumped.

Because of my background, I happen to have some slight knowledge of the type of incendiary devices carried on aircraft. I do not know whether such devices have been washed up on beaches recently, but once the identity of those devices has been pinpointed, it should be possible to find out how they ended up in the water. Until that happens, it is all down to guesswork. I commend the Government for what they have already done to solve the problem, and I believe that they will find the answer and

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deal with those devices effectively. I expect them to do just that, not least because that that is what we are required to do by numerous statutes.

I commend the Government for the various statutes they have introduced—for example, the Environmental Protection Act 1990—and for those that have led to the introduction of Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, as well as the agency to monitor air pollution. They represent a deliberate attempt to address current problems, some of which were created by our forbearers.

We must accept that certain problems must be addressed, but we must not overstate them. Scotland is a superb place in which to live. We do not live under the threat of a nuclear holocaust, as has been suggested. We do not live with the threat of former drilling rigs, research rigs or loading rigs being dumped in the North sea—that has never been proposed. To suggest that they might be dumped somewhere near Scotland was equally inaccurate.

It is right that we should debate the environment and find answers to the problems that face it. I agree with the hon. Member for Dundee, East—I hope that that does not make him feel uncomfortable—who made a telling speech, which deserves credit. His speech showed the way in which we should tackle the matter. He is right to say that we must find the right answers to certain problems, because we have a duty and a responsibility to do so. That does not mean we cannot display the normal party divisions and differences, but there is common ground between us on environmental matters. We should all recognise that.

What I am attacking is the humbug displayed today by members of the SNP. Their motion does nothing for Scotland's interests or the confidence of the people who work in the nuclear and oil industries. It does nothing to allay the concerns expressed about devices found on west coast beaches. Their motion is all about fear. The SNP may argue that it will give people a nuclear-free Scotland, but the hon. Member for Dundee, East extracted the truth—live long enough, say 100 years, and one may see that happen.

The truth is that the SNP is interested in scoring narrow political points. It has no interest in benefiting the Scottish people or the environment of Scotland.

6.16 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I compliment the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) on her introduction to the debate.

We were all concerned to hear about the injuries suffered by the young constituent of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). As for the passage of certain vessels through the Minches, I have long argued that vessels ploughing the sea bed, along with heavy tankers, should stand to the west of the Western Isles, especially in heavy weather. I said that to the former Secretary of State for Transport, who is now masquerading as the chairman of the Conservative party. He promised me across the Floor of the House that he would examine my request, and that he would seriously consider instructing such vessels to stand clear of the Minches and the Western Isles.

The right hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) criticised the Opposition parties for presenting a distorted picture of the Government's environmental record—for example, in relation to sites of special scientific interest. For his part, he failed to remind the House of the appalling carelessness of Scottish Office Ministers and officials—I believe he was a Minister at the time—when they designated a development site on a SSSI within the Inverclyde enterprise zone.

I refer to the Parklea site. I warned at the time that such designation would fall foul of the European Union's flora and fauna directive. That site will never be developed because of that. They were equally careless in selecting as another site for potential development the Gourock rope works, a listed industrial building. Six years later, that site is still derelict, but those Ministers and their complacent officials have walked away from their mistakes.

I have a couple of questions for the Minister about the Beaufort dyke scandal. The right hon. Member for Dumfries said that we should not cause alarm and despondency among the people who live on the firth of Clyde and surrounding areas. He is absolutely right. Yet those events have caused deep concern among our constituents, so it is right and proper that we hold the Government to account over the rigour of their investigation and the efficacy of the prescriptions that they offer to solve that dangerous problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and others have made serious allegations about the presence of highly dangerous substances in shallow waters outwith the Beaufort dyke. That is a very serious complaint, especially to our fishermen who fish those shallow waters with their demersal gear.

I know that the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), is not responsible for fisheries, but all Ministers bear a responsibility, not only to our youngsters and others who walk along our beaches, but to our fishermen who fish those shallow waters. My hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and I are honorary presidents—

Mr. Foulkes: And the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie).

Dr. Godman: I am sorry, and the hon. Lady. I do not know how I missed her. My sincere apologies to the delightful hon. Lady. We are honorary presidents of the Clyde Fishermen's Association and our members fish close to that area outwith the Beaufort dyke. I was pleased to hear the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), say that he would study the video and other evidence exhaustively.

I want to ask the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside a couple of questions. If such substances are scattered about in shallow water—wherever there is shallow water around our coastline, there are traditional fishing grounds: no one can dispute that—would he give serious consideration to their recovery? Could not the squadron of mine-laying vessels which are to be based not so far from my constituency be used in such an operation? Or would it be possible to adapt the gear of a big freezer trawler so that it could trawl those seas and make the seas clean for our fishermen?

I remind the Under-Secretary—I do not need to remind the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, because he is a fisheries expert—that a big-sterned trawler can shoot its

gear and drag its trawl upwards of a mile astern. It seems that the Under-Secretary should consider such matters in thinking about cleaning the seas. Our fishermen deserve that consideration. A big freezer trawler could be used.

Incidentally, I am not looking for a job for my brother, who just happens to be the mate of such a vessel. If a freezer trawler cannot be adapted, minesweeping vessels could be used so that, outwith the Beaufort dyke, our fishermen can safely go about their lawful business.

While talking about clean seas, I wish to say a word about the disposal of redundant offshore installations and pipeline networks. I maintain—here I disagree fundamentally with the hon. Member for Ayr—that those seas where and whenever possible should be swept clean in the interests of our fishermen who have played the game by their agreements with the oil and gas companies.

Part I of the Petroleum Act 1987—

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Godman: In one second.

Part I of the Petroleum Act allows the Government—not these Under-Secretaries, unfortunately—to reject the disposal proposals made by an offshore oil or gas company in relation to a redundant platform or redundant pipeline networks.

I listened closely to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) when he talked about the recommendations and the findings of the Select Committee on Energy. That report makes a lot of sense about some installations. I do not believe that we will be able to shift the big concrete structures—we might have to put Christmas tree fairy lights on them as navigational aids—but many other structures can and should be removed.

Mr. Gallie *rose—*

Dr. Godman: Sorry, I have run out of time.

I remind the House that, during the passage of the Petroleum Bill in 1986, the late and much-lamented Alick Buchanan-Smith claimed that the disposal of redundant rigs could lead to much employment in the highlands and islands and elsewhere. I would like to think that the law applied. His successor, Mr. Peter Morrison, when Minister at the Department of Energy, said in a speech in Aberdeen that perhaps upwards of 3,000 jobs could be created in dealing with the safe and efficient disposal of those redundant platforms and pipeline networks.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman referred to the disposal of rigs at sea and the threat to fishermen. The Government have made it quite clear that the Brent Spar was a one-off situation. It was to be buried in deep water where there was no fishing interest, and there were no protests from the fishermen—they accepted the situation. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that?

Dr. Godman: I am not so sure that all the fishermen to whom I spoke accepted the sense of dumping that structure west of the Hebrides. There was no question of it being dumped in the North sea—we all know that—but, nevertheless, reservations were voiced about it. What will happen to this North-west Hutton platform and other installations which need to be disposed of other then by toppling them? I am on the side of the fishermen. The sea should be swept clean, because the fishermen have played the game by the multinationals. The multinationals should play the game by our fishermen.

6.26 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for leaving me a few minutes in which to speak mainly on a constituency point concerning phosphorous flares. I shall first make a couple of references to the debate.

I am grateful for the opportunity of this debate. Unfortunately, it seems to have been narrowly focused. There are many environmental issues that are much more pressing than those the debate addresses. I speak in support of the Scottish nuclear industry—nuclear with a small "n". The hysteria about Dounreay does no credit and pays no respect to an industry that has given good-quality employment to thousands of people in the highlands over the past 40 years or so.

There is not the remotest evidence of anyone being killed or injured by the activities at Dounreay. When we have a first-class Scottish industry, why it should be in anyone's interest to run it down I honestly do not know. The heads on the Conservative Front Bench will stop nodding at this point.

The threat to this nuclear industry of ours, which has a fantastically safe reputation, comes not from Dounreay but from privatisation. That is what will run down the skills. *[Interruption.]* I assure the House that I would be worried if Conservative Members spent the next five minutes nodding, but I am not worried about the fact that they are now disagreeing. The core of expertise in the nuclear industry is going to be run down as the new company—if it ever happens, and it is a very big "if"—moves away from nuclear to other sources of generation.

The second brief point that I want to make is about land. Again, it disappoints me and I find it extraordinary that a debate on the Scottish environment does not encompass the issue of land, particularly in the week after the Secretary of State for Scotland set one of his frequent hares running in an initiative that seems to contain no substance at all.

By raising the issue of the Scottish Office crofting estates, the Secretary of State will have caused a great deal of apprehension on those estates, for this is the third time that the possibility of the estates being sold off has been raised since 1979. It would be helpful if, in one sentence, the Under-Secretary gave an assurance that there is to be no compulsion attached to the proposed sale of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland crofting estates. I should also like the Minister to tell us whether it was just wind when the Secretary of State for Scotland talked about the proposals applying to private landlords. Everyone in the House knows—whether they admit it or not is a different matter—and certainly all Opposition Members know that the problem with crofting estates in Scotland is not with the publicly owned estates but with the privately owned ones. To talk about an initiative or a reform that does not touch the privately owned estates is a fraud, as the Minister will perhaps acknowledge as well.

I now turn to the phosphorus flares which have cropped up regularly in my constituency and which have caused a great deal of apprehension. I agree entirely here with the

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hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I do not know where the flares are coming from and my hon. Friends the Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) do not claim to know, either. What we do know is that there is a problem. It is common sense that, if there is a problem, one does not risk exacerbating it.

I also acknowledge that it is very likely that the stuff that is being thrown up and a great deal of what is in the Clyde and the northern approaches comes from a period either during or after the second world war. I should have thought that everyone in the House would thank God for the fact that we were at that time a United Kingdom. To turn around now and to complain that the Clyde was used as a dumping ground on some sort of ethnic basis seems to be carrying nationalism to its logical absurdity.

We know that as well as phosphorus flares there is a lot of other material in the Clyde and in the northern approaches. The point that we made to Cedric Brown when my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)—I know that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) would have been there—

Mr. Gallie: I was there.

Mr. Wilson: I apologise. We always take the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) along.

Nobody is interested in which Government Department is passing which buck to whom. However, if British Gas goes ahead with the operation in the full knowledge that there is potential for further disruption and for far more serious substances and materials to come ashore, responsibility will lie exclusively with British Gas and with nobody else. That point was made forcefully. What happened at the weekend near Campbeltown only reinforces that point.

We must have better information about what is in the Clyde and in the northern approaches. In the meantime, we must have a freeze on activities that common sense suggests are likely to disturb the area and to cause substances to be cast up. Nobody is making accusations, but we are all entitled to make reasonable assumptions about what is possible and what is not possible. My plea is that there should be no further activity to disrupt these materials until we have a far more comprehensive survey of what is there and what the potential is for disturbance of the materials and, therefore—heaven forbid—for much more serious injuries or worse to our constituents.

6.32 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In concluding this debate on behalf of the Scottish National party, I thank all right hon. and hon. Members who have participated in it. It is clear from the attendance this afternoon and from the vehemence of some of the arguments that there is a great need to debate environmental issues pertaining to Scotland. The motion was, of course, constricted in certain ways, so I hope that there will be other opportunities to open up some of the points that have been touched on in this debate. None the less, the debate has been extremely worth while.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) on the way in which she moved the motion. All of us recognise that she has been in the House for only a short time—indeed, it was only her second speech in the House. She put forward with great authority a strong, coherent and well-researched case and she dealt effectively with interventions from both sides of the House. She deserves our congratulations.

I want to comment on one or two points raised by hon. Members during the debate. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), went at one stage into what can only be described if not as a purple passage, certainly as a green passage during which it was quite difficult even for him to keep his face straight. He referred to the Scottish National party trying to claim moral absolutism. The SNP is not trying to do that in this debate. We are raising issues that are of genuine concern to people the length and breadth of our country and beyond. We are also talking about the economic realities of what faces the people of Scotland if environmental issues are not addressed effectively and thoroughly.

The Minister should, perhaps, look at the report from the conference in 1990 which resulted from a meeting held in Inverness, sponsored by Highland regional council, at which members of various of the political parties and local representatives participated. They talked then about the problems of looking at Dounreay as being the Nirex centre for the disposal of nuclear waste. We had people there from the National Farmers Union, from the Scottish shellfish growers, from Highland Fine Cheeses, from distilleries and from all sorts of businesses the length and breadth of the area. They all made strongly the case that we needed to protect our environment because our industries and our employment were dependent upon the perception of a clean environment. Those arguments hold true today and I suggest that the Minister acquires a copy of the report. We are talking not about moral absolutism, but about economic realities.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said that the SNP did not seem to be prepared to accept responsibility for the disposal of nuclear waste in Scotland. We have always argued that the disposal of nuclear waste by any organisation in our country should be on site and above ground where careful monitoring should take place. If the hon. Gentleman read the *Official Report* more carefully, he would see that I said exactly that on 25 April 1991 in a debate on the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill. I said:

> "The burying of nuclear waste is the greatest danger we face, because no one can predict seismic or underwater movements. The waste will need to be monitored for centuries, and that is why it must be stored on site and above ground."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1991; Vol. 189, c. 1234.]

It would not be a victory for us if nuclear waste were to be buried at Sellafield. The point was made clearly. We accept the responsibility for what is happening in our country, but we tell the Minister that because contracts have been made in the past that may involve the transportation of nuclear waste and so on, we should ensure that any contracts made in future do not create any further difficulties.

It also seemed that the Minister was backing off from the issues that have been raised in the context of the Brent Spar. He said that he thought that what my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) had said in the Select Committee on Energy was wrong. We spoke then about a case-by-case attitude, but when such an attitude is discussed, the discussions should obviously

not include people who have vested interests with financial advantages. That is the case in the disposal of many of the platforms. Both the companies and the Government have financial interests at stake.

I now turn to my main remarks. I shall concentrate essentially on the Beaufort dyke because hon. Members here this afternoon have stressed the issue and it is concentrating the minds of the people of Scotland. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) had the unfortunate experience of the youngster in her constituency this weekend and various other incidents have caused a great deal of concern.

At our meeting with the Ministry of Defence, it was made clear that there was no identification of the phosphorus objects that were being washed up along our coastline. I find that rather hard to believe, because, with the scientific back-up that is available to any Government Department, there should surely be some ease of identification. It was, however, made clear to all of us in the all-party delegation who met the Secretary of State for Defence that under any agreements, mainly coming from Oslo and Helsinki, the dumping of unused munitions at sea should be safe and that such dumping was probably the safest method. However, it was also said that such munitions should not be disturbed and should remain as much as 263 fathoms under the sea.

When we had the all-party meeting, the pipeline that is being laid across the sea bed was still on the surface of the sea bed and we were told that it would remain so for some time because of the concerns that had been raised. Yet the same group who met less than 24 hours later with British Gas was told that approval had been given by the Ministry of Defence and by the Department of Trade and Industry to commence troughing on the sea bed.

Apparently that permission was given less than one hour after we left the Ministry of Defence building in Whitehall. British Gas received a fax via Vauxhall barracks at Didcot timed at 11.39 am on 18 October, although the letter was dated 17 October, which was the day of our meeting at the Ministry of Defence. The letter giving permission and raising the prohibition order was written an hour after we left.

That was a despicable way in which to treat concerned Members of Parliament. It shows a complete lack of co-ordination and gives contradictory signals to people who are paying attention to the issue. Now we hear that alternative attitudes may be taken, and I shall talk about those in due course.

I have other questions to raise in the context of what is happening at Beaufort dyke and what has been dumped there. Many of us are not clear exactly what was dumped not only in the dyke but in the areas immediately surrounding it.

I have been given information about a farm at Smarden, in Kent, where in January 1963 two acres of ground were sprayed with the pesticide fluoroaceteamid. The cows on the land died in convulsions, because it was highly toxic, and 2,000 tonnes of contaminated soil from the farm were removed and loaded into a boat called the Halcince, which sailed from Rochester in March 1964 with the aim of dumping the contaminated soil at an unidentified Atlantic site.

If Ministers cannot confirm that tonight, will they at least have the courtesy to write to me and to the other members of the all-party group who have been raising the issue of dumping contaminated substances at sea?

At our meeting, the Secretary of State for Defence promised that he would place as soon as possible in the Library all records and information held by the Ministry of Defence on the disposal of munitions. Of course, the choice of such records will depend on classification, and they will relate only to conventional munitions and explosives. Who will have access to information about chemicals, and perhaps civilian nuclear waste? I understand that the Atomic Energy Authority may have disposed of civilian nuclear waste, and possibly nerve gas, in the area. All that information must be made available.

In his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross the Minister said that there would be co-ordination, spearheaded by the Scottish Office, of the investigation into what is happening to the Beaufort dyke. Presumably that would mean co-ordination between the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as well as the Scottish Office.

Which Department will have the final say? Who will take the final decision? I should have thought that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would have a particular interest, because his constituency is affected.

I should also like to know whether close links are being maintained with the local authorities with responsibilities for planning and economic development in the area. It is most important that they be involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross has already referred to the remarks made by Alastair Geddes of Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Ewing: Before I do, I should emphasise that Dumfries and Galloway will be especially interested, because there is the possibility of drilling and exploration for gas off its coast, which could have a huge economic impact, especially in an area of high unemployment.

Since the Minister spoke earlier in the debate, it has come to my attention that information has been released by Lord Lindsay to the Scottish press, making a concession on the issue. Hon. Members taking part in the debate have attempted to get hold of the exact information, and I now understand that the main part of the speech for the Minister who is to reply to the overall debate will say that a fully independent environmental inquiry will be made by the marine laboratory in Aberdeen, to be completed before Christmas.

I find it amazing that, since we arranged for the debate—it was well known what it was about and it appeared clearly on the Order Paper; Ministers knew what it was about—even though I had telephone calls from the Scottish Office this morning, no information has been given to hon. Members on the subject.

Mr. Foulkes: I have been trying to get a copy of the announcement all afternoon. It was made by the Earl of Lindsay, and it is improper that it was not made to the House of Commons by the Minister earlier. We do not know exactly what the announcement says, but assuming that there will be an independent marine survey, that is to be welcomed. It is a victory for those of us who have been campaigning on the issue. Does the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) agree that, until that independent survey is completed, all commercial operations in the area

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must stop? It would be outrageous if British Gas were to continue its operations while the survey was being undertaken.

Mrs. Ewing: I agree. It was extremely discourteous of the Government not to advise us of the announcement. Of course we welcome it, if the news is true. We await confirmation from the Minister, and I know that Lord Lindsay has listened to most of our debate. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) that troughing and all other activities in the area should stop until the full results of the inquiry are placed before us.

I trust that the inquiry will cover representations from the local communities, so that they are well aware of what is happening, and from the Members of Parliament who have pursued the matter ruthlessly for some time. The subject was first raised in 1985 by my predecessor, the right hon. Donald Stewart—a greatly respected man in the House—and it is a matter for great concern. Why has it taken the Government so long to concede eventually that a real inquiry is needed? I regard the concession as a victory for those of us who tabled the motion, and those who have worked together in the all-party group to place the issue before the Government.

6.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Kynoch): This has been an interesting debate, which has largely concentrated on three main issues—Dounreay, Brent Spar and the phosphorous flares that have appeared off the south-west of Scotland.

I am afraid that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) hit the nail firmly on the head when he said that although several Opposition Members had made responsible speeches—I commend them for the fact they have often kept party politics out of things, and there has been rational discussion of the issues—the Scottish National party, typically, has tried to go for the cheap headline rather trying to address the environmental issues in Scotland. Scottish National party Members seem intent on looking at the negative rather than at the positive.

I shall start by dealing with some of the questions asked by Opposition Members. I noticed that the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) press-released her speech on Monday, obviously fearful that the representatives of the media would not be interested enough to attend the debate. Looking up at the Press Gallery, I conclude that she was right—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I apologise; Opposition Members tell me that the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, ever attentive to issues involving Scotland, is here in strength.

Mr. Wilson *rose—*

Mr. Kynoch: No, I shall not give way now. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will claim to be a member of the press, and I trust that, if so, it is firmly declared in the Register of Members' Interests.

Clearly it is for the chief inspector of Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate to decide whether the application from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for authorisation of radioactive discharges at Dounreay is to be granted. The chief inspector has not yet determined UKAEA's application, but in doing so he will take full account of any comments received in consultations with local authorities and other public bodies yet to be undertaken.

Such consultation will include Government-funded committees, the radioactive waste management advisory committee and the committee on the medical aspects of radioactivity in the environment. The committees have not hesitated in the past to provide constructive criticism where necessary, and I have every confidence that their input will continue to be valuable in the future.

The hon. Lady said that there had been a significant delay in the issuing of discharge authorisations, but I can assure her that consideration of the applications is being carried out with great care by HMIPI. Account has had to be taken of a ruling by Lord Justice Potts about the factors which should be considered in such processes, and HMIPI has obtained further information from the Atomic Energy Authority to ensure that all the relevant factors are considered. Inevitably, this has resulted in some delay. I trust that the hon. Lady wishes to ensure that the case is looked at properly, and I hope that she does not want a conclusion to be reached before the case is judged.

In the motion tabled by her party, the hon. Lady states that she wishes no further discharge authorisations to be given. That would be counter-productive to the interests of Dounreay, but much of what she said was counter-productive to Dounreay. I noted the remarks of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for fisheries in his opening speech about the significant employment prospects for people in the Dounreay area. At present, some 1,200 staff are directly employed at the Dounreay site, while 400 contractors and a further 250 people in the local economy are employed in jobs associated with the site.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is not in his place, because I am sure that he would have introduced on behalf of his constituents a note of balance to the comments made by his hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). I suspect that the hon. Lady's comments would be out of line with what the hon. Gentleman would have to say on behalf of his constituents.

Much of what was said by Opposition Members was put in perspective by the positive speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). The latter has been a significant force in the Scottish Office for many years, particularly on the environmental front, and he made a constructive and balanced speech. My right hon. Friend deserves all our commendations, and I expected nothing less than a constructive contribution from him.

Much has been made of the concerns about the transportation of radioactive materials. We must look at the situation with regard to research reactors in Britain and the history of MTR fuel reprocessing here to put the possible US contracts which have been talked about in their proper perspective. MTR fuel reactors exist primarily for research purposes and to produce radio isotopes for medical use. The Atomic Energy Authority has provided a fuel manufacture and reprocessing service to its materials testing reactor customers since the 1950s.

Spent fuel from such reactors has therefore travelled northwards to the reprocessing facility at Dounreay for about 35 years.

During that period, some 12,500 spent fuel elements have been reprocessed. Most came from the UK, but some 25 per cent. were reprocessed on behalf of overseas customers. Because of the steady volume of business, the MTR reprocessing plant has been regularly updated to ensure that it fully complies with the latest technical standards. A new programme of work will ensure that it can operate safely for the next 10 years.

The transport of radioactive material, such as spent fuel, is carried out only in containers which meet the most stringent requirements of the International Atomic Energy Authority, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries clearly pointed out. I wish that the Scottish National party—and the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) in particular—would be more constructive and positive about the successes achieved by the workers at Dounreay, rather than doing its usual job of running Scotland down, selling it short and ensuring that the task of those who are trying to make a constructive contribution to the economy is made all the more difficult.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During the debate, we have heard that an announcement has been made to the press outside the House which concerns this debate. There are six minutes left in the debate. After the earlier abuse of procedure, are we not at least entitled to hear the Minister's comments on that announcement so that he can be questioned by hon. Members?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): That may be a point of debate, but it is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Kynoch: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has again tried to get a sound bite and a headline by wasting the time of the House. I am trying to answer the points which have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House during the debate.

Moving from Dounreay to the subject of the Brent Spar, much nonsense has been—

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman may wish to ask about the phosphorous and Beaufort dyke. I shall come to that last. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, while there is no definite time limit of 7 pm, I shall be seeking to wind up as close as I can to that time.

Much nonsense has been talked about the content of the Brent Spar and the effect of deep sea disposal on the marine environment. That is indefensible when Shell was put to the trouble and expense of producing a thorough best practical environmental option. Account must also be taken of the fact that the marine laboratory in Aberdeen carried out a detailed scientific investigation to assess the site selection, as well as evaluating any likely impact of deep sea disposal on the surrounding environment. In other words, the facts and the science have been conveniently ignored by those seeking merely to sensationalise the situation with regard to the Brent Spar.

I was surprised to find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who made one of his more rational speeches, when he referred to the fact that the Select Committee advocated that each individual case should be looked at on a case by case basis. I believe that it will be in the best interests of Scotland and of future generations if we get rid of the Brent Spar in the most environmentally friendly and cost-effective way. We should not be forming preconceived opinions, as the SNP is doing, and Opposition Members should think about the matter carefully and ensure that they are making rational arguments.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) referred to the chromium waste sites in his constituency. I heard everything he said, and I am enthused by the prospect that the situation may be alleviated by the extension of the M74. I understand that the district council's investigations have found that a significant public health risk is not present at any of the sites. However, I take on board the comments of the hon. Gentleman and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, and I shall make sure that my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the environment in Scotland hears everything that has been said.

I come now to the situation with regard to phosphorous canisters, and particularly to the comments made by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute. I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister in his opening speech. There is no doubt that this was a very unfortunate incident involving public safety about which we all share concerns. I should be disappointed if hon. Members from either side of the House sought to belittle the efforts of the voluntary forces and of the Government in trying to get to the bottom of the problem.

I was sad to hear of the incident involving Gordon Baillie, the young constituent of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute. Obviously, we shall try to prevent similar incidents arising in future, and the emergency services are trying to clean up the beaches to ensure that the risk of such an incident occurring again is minimised. With regard to the incident relating to clothing, that is the first that I have heard of that incident and I was alarmed to hear the hon. Lady's account of it. I will ensure that the Ministry of Defence is made aware of her interpretation of events and that my colleagues there write to the hon. Lady on that point.

We are all trying hard to ensure that the origin of the phosphorous canisters is discovered. I understand that the Ministry of Defence has undertaken to provide local Members of Parliament with as much information as possible about the disposal of munitions in the Beaufort dyke area. Much has been made in the past few minutes about an announcement. It has been blown out of all proportion. My colleagues and I in the Scottish Office have sought to ensure that we play our part in getting to the bottom of the problem. There was to have been a scheduled survey of the Beaufort dyke area next spring. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the environment in Scotland has announced this afternoon that he is bringing the survey forward to commence before Christmas.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman has already intervened twice on the subject. I am trying to be fair to

[Mr. Kynoch]

the House and finish my speech, so I will not take his intervention. The survey will now take place before Christmas. That will give us a better understanding of this complex issue.

Mrs. Ewing: When will it be completed?

Mr. Kynoch: How long is a piece of string? I hope—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Kynoch: Hon. Members must simply be patient. I hope that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) wants the exercise to be carried out thoroughly and efficiently to ensure that we get the best possible information.

In general terms, this afternoon's debate—

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister must tell us whether the British Gas work will be suspended.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Kynoch: In conclusion, I hope that the House wishes to ensure that issues such as Brent Spar, the dumping of munitions and the problems arising therefrom are viewed objectively rather than emotionally. The nationalists unfortunately put an emotional slant on everything, ignoring the facts and the anxieties of the Scottish people. Most important, there should be respect for the scientific evidence and expertise, of which Scotland has a right to feel proud. By adopting that approach, Scotland's excellent environmental image and reputation will not be unfairly tarnished.

I ask hon. Members to reject the nationalist motion, and I commend the Government amendment to the House.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 159.

Division No. 222] **[7.02 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Cunningham, Roseanna
Dalis, Cynog
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Harvey, Nick
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maddock, Diana
Marek, Dr John
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Randel, David
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Elfyn Llwyd and
Mr. Alex Salmond.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Liam Fox and
Mr. Michael Bates.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House 'congratulates Her Majesty's Government on their environmental achievements in Scotland and applauds their continued commitment to the further protection and enhancement of the environment, notably through the creation of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; supports the Government's view that United Kingdom's Atomic Energy Authority should be allowed to continue to undertake reprocessing of spent fuel, subject to the appropriate regulatory requirements being met, and that sound science and careful cost benefit analysis should continue to guide the Government in their consideration of issues affecting the marine environment, the matters of safety always to the fore.'.

Pensioners (Wales)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have to announce that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.13 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I beg to move,

That this House notes with concern the rapidly falling standard of living of people of pensionable age in Wales; calls upon the Government to uprate the state pension to one-third of average earnings for each pensioner immediately and, over a reasonable period, to link them to average earnings as opposed to price inflation figures; and further calls upon the Government to introduce a statutory disregard of capital resources for those in need of long-term social and nursing care, to make the well-being of this section of society a priority, and to cease to marginalise their interests and concerns in such a deplorable way.

I am pleased to be opening this important debate. Some weeks ago, I had the privilege of addressing several hundred pensioners at an all-Wales rally at Llandrindod Wells in Powys. It has since become known as the "Pensioners' Parliament for Wales". I must say that the standard of debate and discussion in that parliament is far higher than that in this Chamber.

The overwhelming impression that remained with me was of respect for that large percentage of the population—a body of people who, for so long, have felt marginalised by Government, presumably because the Government believe that they cannot fight back. That conference showed me that they most certainly have the ability, integrity and will to fight back. In opening this debate, I respectfully remind the Government that 20 per cent. of the population of Wales, numbering some 581,000 people, are of pensionable age. They are therefore a powerful constituency, and their case obviously deserves a full and fair hearing.

I must repeat something that I said in my address to the rally, which is that there are two widely held popular myths about people of pensionable age. The first is that they are powerless to fight back, and I have already dealt with that. The second is that, when people reach pensionable age, in some strange and inexplicable way their potential contribution to society suddenly diminishes. There is a saying in Welsh, "Yr hen a yr, yr ifanc a dybia." I shall write it down for *Hansard*, as I usually do. Translated, it means, the elderly know, but the young think that they know.

On a personal note, by profession I am a solicitor.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): And a very good one.

Mr. Llwyd: I am much obliged.

I am one of those at Westminster who has moved comfortably from one profession that is not held in unqualified esteem to another. When I served my articles of clerkship, effectively training to become a lawyer, I was articled to a highly respected solicitor who, even then, was of pensionable age. I should never have qualified as a solicitor without his expert guidance. That fact will remain with me for the rest of my working life. It is something for which I owe a debt of gratitude.

There is no doubt that matters affecting pensioners have not had due priority in the past 20 years. It is a disgrace that the Government appear to be so dismissive of the genuine and heartfelt concerns of such a large proportion

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of modern society, and it is more so when one considers the contribution that that section of society has made to our well-being. I am reminded of the bravery and valour of those who gave everything to defeat fascism and tyranny 50 years ago. They deserve better; Plaid Cymru and I are determined that they shall have better.

It is often said that one of the marks of a truly civilised society is the way in which it treats its elderly. On that basis, the situation in the British isles leaves a great deal to be desired.

From those general remarks, I shall move to the particular. Given the time allotted, I cannot hope to refer to all policy matters affecting pensioners. I am sure that one of the main areas of concern is the level of pensions and how they have lagged dramatically in real terms in the past few years.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Llwyd: No.

The average weekly income figures are £71.51 for a single pensioner and £114.21 for a couple where the main source of income is state pension, and £185.49 and £224.41 respectively where it is not. I remind the House that the average income of pensioners in Wales is 12 per cent. lower than that for the whole of the United Kingdom. I will now give way to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan, if he wishes to intervene—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is asleep."] Oh, he is asleep. Okay.

Under the present regime, benefit to pensioners increases with price rises, not earnings. As a consequence, pensioners who rely solely on state benefits will not share in any economic growth. Tens of thousands of pensioners in Wales are therefore set increasingly to fall behind and the gap, I am afraid, is set to widen.

Retirement pensions are inadequate. Although pensions have risen in line with price inflation, since 1980 they have fallen drastically behind average earnings.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I am listening with some care to the hon. Gentleman's argument and trying to follow it. What does he understand to be the definition of average earnings?

Mr. Llwyd: In Wales, the average figure is £97.13.

Mr. French: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Llwyd: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. French *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) is giving way again.

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. Gentleman asked a question; I gave him the answer.

Pensioners are increasingly dependent on means-tested benefits in the form of housing benefit and income support. In 1993, 15 per cent. of retirement pensioners in Wales were in receipt of income support. While pensions in Britain have failed to keep up with earnings, there are far more generous benefits for pensioners in other EC countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Roderick Richards): I understood the hon. Gentleman to say that average earnings in Wales were £97. Perhaps he could check his figures.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) was referring to the definition of average earnings, which is a key factor in the hon. Gentleman's motion.

Mr. Llwyd: It is not my fault if the hon. Member for Gloucester is unable to ask a question. It is not for the Minister to cover up for people who cannot ask planted questions properly.

In July, Age Concern published a report as part of its "Short change" campaign entitled "Modest But Adequate". This showed that a single pensioner would need a minimum weekly net budget of £121.08 to ensure what it describes as a modest but adequate income. Using the same formula, a pensioner couple would need a minimum of £204.49. In contrast, the most recent Government figures show that single pensioners have a net median income of £86.30 while pensioner couples have a net median income of £162.90.

The statutory requirement on the Secretary of State to review the value of pensions annually was first incorporated in the Social Security Act 1973. Under that Act, he was given scope to consider a number of factors in setting new benefit rates, including the general standard of living and other matters thought to be relevant. That was amended by section 5 of the National Insurance Act 1974 under which he is required to estimate the general level of earnings and prices in such a manner as he thinks fit and to have regard either to earnings or prices depending on which he considers more advantageous to beneficiaries.

Since 1980, earnings have tended to rise considerably faster than prices. The breaking of the all-important link between uprating and earnings in 1980 is cause for major concern. If the link had been maintained, the basic pension would be significantly higher than it is. We want an end to the tinkering; we want a basic retirement pension of not less than one third of average earnings for each pensioner so that we can uprate at a glance and not leave pensioners lagging behind.

The Government's response will inevitably be that the cost would be astronomical: restoring the link with earnings could mean that employer and employee contributions would have to rise gradually from around 18 per cent. of gross wages to around 26 per cent. We do not say that that could happen overnight, but serious thought should be given to introducing it gradually. That is a sensible approach, which I hope that the Government might be able to follow.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that increasing the basic pension as he wishes would reduce the scope for the Government to give special help to those who need it and act as a deterrent to people taking out private pensions? Does he accept that the average pension has increased by 50 per cent. since the Conservative Government came to office in 1979?

Mr. Llwyd: My point is that there are those who rely utterly on the state pension. I agree that they should be

targeted, but currently they are not being targeted; they are being left behind. The point is simple. I do not disagree with the thrust of what the hon. Gentleman said, but those people are not being helped.

The rise needed to bring people up to the level to which I referred would not be greater than about 5 per cent. of GDP over the next 40 years. It is interesting that that rise would be no higher than the increase in Government expenditure over the three years from 1990 during the depths of the recession, when they increased public spending ahead of the general election. It is clearly not unaffordable. What is required is the political will to make it a reality.

Even so, were it to happen tomorrow it would be considerably less than the percentage of GDP spent in Italy, Scandinavia and France, to name but three countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Oliver Heald): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons that those countries are coming to Britain to see what we are doing is because their GDP-debt ratios will be disastrous in the year 2030?

Mr. Llwyd: I am not sure about that. I am trying to concentrate on the plight of pensioners in Wales. *[Interruption.]* Ministers may well laugh. To them, it is probably a laughing matter.

The jewel in the state crown was always the national health service. It was, at one time, the envy of the civilised world and it had its roots in Wales. The imposition of the internal market mechanisms has all but destroyed it.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): In respect of the Minister's question, has the hon. Gentleman read the chapter headed "The Demographic Myth" in the book "The Age of Entitlement", in which it is made clear and argued with great precision and knowledge that the Government have used the myth of the demographic time bomb to cut pensions and exaggerated what will happen in the next century? It is interesting that the author of that book is the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), a Government Whip.

Mr. Llwyd: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that that was a valuable contribution to the debate.

The imposition of internal market mechanisms has destroyed the national health service. Purchasers and providers may well be reasonable in business generally, but the national health service is—and always has been—a service, not a business. Other people and I believe that the system is top-heavy with administrators on large salaries, often people who have no connection with medicine and health care. Those bureaucrats have been funded at the expense of nurses, junior doctors, technicians, auxiliaries and the like. All these men and women are at the sharp end of service delivery and health care. Their loyalty is beyond doubt, but even they are now under strain.

I am often angered when constituents attending my surgeries say that they have waited three or four years for hip replacement surgery, suffering bouts of extreme pain—and suffering in dignified silence, in the disgraceful knowledge that, if they had paid privately, it would all have been over in a matter of months.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): All colleagues in the House will have had experience of the fact that people who can afford to buy private health care get treated while those who cannot stay on waiting lists for long periods. Will my hon. Friend, however, also apply himself to the difficulty facing pensioners and those with no private resources at the end of their treatment in NHS hospitals? They are immediately moved out, even though they are not fit to return home, and transferred to private nursing homes or private residential homes, sometimes against their will. They have no choice in the matter.

The responsibility that used to lie with the state to provide all health care for those in need is being eroded, while the requirement to pay for private nursing homes is taking over from the responsibility that the state once had.

Mr. Llwyd: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, to which I shall turn in detail later. I know that one of my constituents' biggest worries is where they are going next after hospital at a time when they are in dire need.

What kind of society can accept such a state of affairs? Like all Opposition Members, I want a return to a fully funded NHS that is truly free at the point of delivery and in which waiting lists are minimal. If that takes a penny or two on income tax and a rescheduling of priorities, so be it. We must grasp the nettle now, because figures show that there are ever more elderly people in our country. I take the point that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made earlier—that there is a great deal of Government scaremongering going on. We must tackle it now.

Consultants who tell people that they will have to wait two years for an operation unless they undertake to pay privately and have it done in a month should be weeded out of the health service. If they want to do private surgery, let them do it—but not in NHS contract time. We must sweep all that away; the internal market created it. It is drastically destroying the service. I commend my party's extensive health policy document to hon. Members. Among other ideas, it would institute fully salaried doctors and consultants who would not work outside the NHS.

I am also concerned about a serious conflict of interest surrounding fundholding practices. Anyone with the slightest grasp of what is going on can see the conflict. That the Government are setting about dismantling the welfare state is, I am afraid, glaringly obvious. Poverty, especially among the elderly, is an increasingly serious problem, more so in the rural areas of Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Would the hon. Gentleman agree that most rural practices that have adopted fundholding now regard it as a poisoned chalice that has forced a great deal of extra work on them, and that most fundholding doctors believe that it offers no fair advantage to any of their patients?

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. and learned Gentleman is on to an accurate point. I have heard the same from GPs in my constituency. I wonder what the future of fundholding in Wales is—no doubt it will become clearer in the next 18 months or so.

In 1979, 10 per cent. of elderly people of Wales lived on an income below half the average. Today, 25 per cent. of elderly people do. Professor Julian Le Grand of the

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London school of economics was reported as saying, in an article in *The Guardian* of 24 September, that things would be much worse without the welfare state:

"Welfare services are arguably the only bulwark against increasing poverty and ill health, social misery and perhaps social instability. The question is not whether we can afford to have a properly funded welfare state; it is whether we can afford not to".

In the same article, Andrew Dilnot, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said:

"The issue is not really about affordability. In the literal sense these services can all be paid for. What is at stake is a political decision about whether to pay for them communally or individually. If we do it communally, through taxation, then we redistribute from the affluent to the less affluent. If we do it individually, then people get what they pay for. The better off will do better, but at the price of more inequality. It is really that simple a choice."

Instead of scrambling around looking for tax cuts to try and save their own political skin in 18 months' time, the Government—if they have any social conscience—should be looking for tax increases—certainly in the higher rates.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is it not also true that, during the Conservative years since 1979, the gap between the rich and the poor has accelerated here faster than in any other country except New Zealand?

Mr. Llwyd: Absolutely. It must be on the Government's agenda, for it has been going on year after year. Those who were less well off 10 years ago are considerably worse off today. The Government must be well aware of their plight, but they seek to do nothing about it.

I believe that the higher rates of income tax should be rescheduled so that the health service and other social priorities can be allocated the expenditure that they deserve.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's fiscal and taxation policies have been directed to damaging elderly people? The shift from direct to indirect taxation has been particularly damaging to people on fixed incomes. The Government's imposition of VAT on fuel and the many other indirect taxes and VAT increases that they have brought in have hit people on fixed incomes in Wales—the unemployed and pensioners—like those in my constituency.

Mr. Llwyd: I agree. I hope to refer shortly to the problem of fuel and poverty. The effects of indirect taxation have been regressive for the elderly population.

Anything less than giving higher priority to the health service and ensuring an adequate service for the elderly and the rest of us is simply an abrogation of the Government's duty to the people whom they serve. The very notion of declining to treat a person because of his or her age fills me with disgust and rage. I hope that we will see no more of it, but I am afraid that there is a tendency to spend less on people the older they get—they are regarded as expendable. That is an obscene idea, but I fear that it is increasingly prevalent.

We also need to stem the tide of closures in NHS hospitals which has been created by the movement of funds from hospital care to community care. The Government must provide and ring-fence adequate funding for local primary health clinics within the community care programme, if it is to last. I also know of the worries about the funding of residential care and nursing homes—it is an important topic at the moment. I think particularly of the shortfall experienced by many residents between the payments met by income support and the fees charged by private homes. People going into private or voluntary homes since 1 April, when the community care changes were introduced, have their funding met in a different way and hence do not suffer shortfalls in exactly the same way. Sally Greengross, director general of Age Concern, recently said:

"It is wrong that a state-funded system should be forcing people to seek charitable help or make relatives feel obliged to pay for essential care; yet it is happening."

Continuing care and the responsibilities of the NHS are also of great concern. As we all know, if care is provided in the NHS sphere, it is free, and if it is arranged by the local social services department, the individual will be assessed on his or her ability to pay. Put simply, the NHS provides "health" care and social services "social" care, but very often that distinction is blurred and far from clear. I hope that people who are aware of the content of the debate know that they still have rights and that they can decline to move from an NHS bed if their case is valid. Too many people, when a consultant assesses them and says, "You're fit to go home," go home and think that the consultant must be right, because consultants are people in authority. People are cogs in the system, and the system, I believe, is wrong.

I have received a letter from a constituent of the Minister who will reply to the debate, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). This gentleman represents Pensioners Voice in Clwyd. I do not know whether the Minister has received the letter. Doubtless he will not act on it anyway, but were he to act on it—possibly even read it—he would see that it contains many valid and reasonable concerns. I shall refer briefly to what Mr. Alan Roberts, BSc, says in his carefully written letter. He said that it is worrying that the change in policy on NHS provision of continuing health care has come about. He continues:

"The 1990 Welsh Office circular WHC(90)1, paragraph A5 in the Appendix gave the—

Mr. Richards: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is raising an issue of a letter that allegedly is from one of my constituents. He did not inform me before the debate that he was going to raise that issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would not regard that as necessarily a point of order for the Chair, but it is perhaps the subject of an intervention.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Minister wish to intervene at this stage?

Mr. Richards: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has invited me to intervene. Mr. Roberts is well known to me. He corresponds with me regularly. I see him regularly at my surgeries and I have discussed with him many issues relating to pensioners and other people since I became a Member of Parliament more than three and a half years ago. It would have been a courtesy if the

hon. Gentleman had told me before the debate that he was going to raise an issue that one of my constituents, whom I know extremely well, had raised with him.

Mr. Llwyd: I know that the Minister is famed for his own personal courtesy always.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Did the hon. Gentleman have the courtesy to tell Mrs. Sally Greengross that he was going to mention her as well?

Mr. Llwyd: I am afraid that I slipped up there as well.

On an obvious point, and without delaying the House, I should like to say that Mr. Roberts represents a society, so that point is quickly dispatched, as points raised by the Minister usually are.

I shall quote three paragraphs from the letter by from Roberts, as they are rather important. He said:

"The 1990 Welsh Office circular WHC(90)1, para A5 in the Appendix gave the elderly chronic sick clear rights, including the right to refuse to be transferred to a nursing home if they did not wish to pay the fees.

Government Ministers"—

he refers to a certain written answer—

"made it abundantly clear that patients exercising this right, if they were adjudged to need continuous nursing care, would remain in the care of the NHS, whatever form that took."

He went on:

"These rights have now been cancelled in the Feb., 1995 circular WHC(95)7. In a letter to me, Mrs. B. J. Wilson, head of the Social Services Division at the Welsh Office, implied that only those patients requiring 'specialist' as opposed to 'general' nursing care in a nursing home will remain an NHS responsibility."

That is the change to which I referred.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is the hon. Gentleman going to mention pensioners' fears about losing their home and inheritance, which were expressed in a pensioners' meeting that I had during the recess? I realise the difficulties that are involved in dealing with this issue; nevertheless, it is one of the most serious fears that is expressed to us time and again in every single pensioners' meeting.

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. Gentleman is quite right, and I shall conclude my speech later on that point. It is one of the most important in the whole debate. I agree with him on that.

Another live issue was raised by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson): fuel poverty and the problems that the elderly face. It is not known precisely how many people die from hypothermia each year, but excess winter mortality in the United Kingdom has ranged from 29,000 in 1986-87 to 55,000 in 1985-86, which is up to three times greater than that experienced in countries such as Germany and Sweden, where winters are even more severe but homes are warmer. The death rate in winter for those aged 60 to 69 is on average 12 per cent. higher than in the summer; this increases to 17 per cent. for those in their 70s and 26 per cent. for those aged 80 and over. It has been estimated that there are 8,000 excess deaths for every degree celsius that the winter is colder than average.

Older people are more likely to experience the circumstances that cause fuel poverty: low income, poor quality housing with little or no insulation, and reliance on expensive—often inefficient—heating systems. They are also likely to have greater need for heating than other groups because they spend more time at home. The general household survey in 1993 found that 31 per cent. of single, retired households mainly dependent on the state pension do not have central heating. "Cold Comfort", a national survey of 900 people over the age of 65 by the Age Concern institute of gerontology, published in February 1993, found that 26 per cent. had no loft insulation, compared to 10 per cent. of the general population. Some 18 per cent. compared to 6 per cent. did not have hot water tank insulation, and 64 per cent. compared to 60 per cent. had no double glazing.

I am an executive member of the all-party warm homes campaign, and there is a growing appreciation in the House of the fuel poverty issue. According to the World Health Organisation, the minimum bedroom temperature should be 21 deg C. A recent Age Concern survey showed last winter that 91 per cent. of pensioners fall below that level. Hypothermia is indeed a menace. I think that we need VAT to be zero-rated and not imposed in such a regressive manner. It is truly regressive because those on modest incomes spend a far higher proportion of their incomes just to keep warm than other people. I want to see a standard cold weather payment system over the whole winter, beginning on 1 October and ending on 31 March. That would be a great step forward, rather than tinkering with thermometers, as now seems to happen.

I also believe, as a matter of good sense, that we should extend the range of measures for home insulation, with mandatory council renovation grants for low-income elderly home owners whose heating systems are deficient, and an improved compensation package. The all-party group will meet tomorrow and throughout the year. We hope to enhance some of these thoughts and to push the debate further. The cold weather payment is inadequate and pathetic and in no way makes up for the deficiency.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the Government really wanted to be portrayed as caring, they could zero-rate insulation materials in the forthcoming Budget? Is it not completely ludicrous that VAT on insulation materials is 17.5 per cent. but only 8 per cent. on the fuel consumed?

Mr. Llwyd: I agree entirely, and I am sure that that would also create jobs. It is good common sense.

Much has been heard this year of the plight of war widows. There were significant improvements for war widows in the 1970s, but the situation should now be reconsidered urgently.

Another huge issue is law and order—the so-called battle for the streets. We all fondly recall the time when the front doors of houses in villages and towns were held open by a stone. Those days, alas, are gone, but we could realistically see them again. It is no use the Home Secretary talking about boot camps. What we really need is better financing for the police to enable them to extend community policing—by far the most effective but also the most expensive form of policing.

In that regard, I am sure that prevention is far better than cure. We need to prioritise spending on policing and on building good relations between youngsters and the police. We need to encourage young people to make their voice heard, to take pride in their localities and to play a full role in community life.

Time and again I hear, especially from the elderly, that the village bobby has gone and that they do not know to whom to turn. I do not wish to scaremonger, but even in

[Mr. Llwyd]

a village such as Betws-y-coed in my constituency, the elderly are saying that it is risky to go out after dark. I remember that village when there was never any risk, despite the fact that it was on a main trunk road—the A5. There is much that can be done, and the Government should be doing it, to make the elderly in society more comfortable.

I want to see free or reduced cost travel on public transport for the elderly and I want it to be extended. Like many hon. Members, I have often been lobbied on the subject of television licences. Many of us have argued long and hard for an amendment to the Wireless Telegraphy (Television Licence Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1995 and I am sure that the campaign will continue. There is a case for a free television licence for the elderly and the retired.

I also want to see the abolition of standing charges for gas, water and electricity for the elderly. Again, they are often disproportionately high in comparison with the actual values consumed—another point referred to by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson).

Some three years ago, I introduced a ten-minute Bill on water charges. It attempted to secure a water charges benefit for the elderly and two other classes of society. We need a change and that change is overdue. That matter was brought to my attention quite dramatically by a constituent of mine from Bala, an elderly lady who said that she had never been in debt in her life and that the prospect of gas and electricity bills and, in particular, spiralling water bills, was making her ill. She was visibly anxious and upset and, when I noted the details of her latest water rates demand, I saw that she was paying £5 per annum more than my household where two of us are wage earners—and we have two teenage children whom I am sure use a great deal more water than that elderly lady.

The truth is that there is no regard for the all-important factor of ability to pay, and that is iniquitous. Even the despised poll tax had some regard to that principle. The Government will undoubtedly say that that is nothing to do with them, but it was the Government who privatised the utilities—those bare necessities on which life depends. It is no use hiding behind the water companies. The Government should intervene, and I commend my Bill to the Minister for reconsideration.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred to the elderly being deprived of their homes. That is a serious problem. It is estimated that some 40,000 family homes in the United Kingdom are sold each year just to meet the cost of care—note the use of the word "home" rather than house or property. People, in the autumn of their lives, are subjected to the ordeal of having their home—which they have worked hard to pay for—taken by the state which had guaranteed them state-funded care from the cradle to the grave. They are industrious people who have paid their dues in the form of taxes and national insurance and who were relying on the contract with the state. Now it has been decided to move the goalposts and, effectively, make them pay twice. That is disgraceful and cannot be justified.

The Government must reconsider urgently. I strongly suggest that the home be kept out of the equation altogether and that the £8,000 savings limit or capital threshold should be raised considerably. I have a figure of £20,000 in mind, but it should be at least doubled so that the elderly can live with dignity. I understand that that is a live issue in Cabinet and change is overdue. I hope that the Government will conclude that the current position is untenable and should be changed without delay.

How can the Government, who are actively considering the abolition of inheritance tax, not accede to that call for change? It is viewed by many people across the political spectrum as an absolute scandal, which I trust will shortly be addressed. If the Prime Minister's nest egg speech was anything other than empty rhetoric, we should see much-needed change shortly.

I have two outstanding points to make. First, the Government should reintroduce free eye testing and dental treatment for the elderly. They should also provide dental treatment for all in society. In my constituency, as elsewhere in Wales, there are areas with no dentists. The position is complex. Some steps have been taken, for which I give due credit, but more should be done. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the matter. That is an acute problem in many areas in Wales.

The elderly are put off going to the dentist because they believe that that will be expensive, they do not have the money to pay and they are worried about huge bills. Opticians tell me that they come across glaucoma and similar conditions more often now and more often at an advanced stage because people feel that they cannot afford to have their eyes tested. Such conditions can lead to blindness. The problem is becoming acute. Therefore, I ask the Government to reconsider the question of free eye testing and, in particular, free dentistry for the elderly in Wales.

Many pensioners in Wales are concerned about mobility. Efforts must be made to assist local government in the provision of cheaper public transport for the elderly.

If all this sounds like a continuous moan or, as the Secretary of State for National Heritage would have it, whingeing, I make no apology. It is simply impossible to discuss the current situation of pensioners in Wales without turning to a catalogue of real and serious complaints.

I trust that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree when I say that it is high time that pensioners' concerns received due priority. My party intends to do just that, and I am sure that other Opposition parties will do likewise.

I want society's natural respect for the elderly to be translated into action. The younger generation owes much to today's senior citizens and it is about time that we set about paying off that debt of gratitude.

7.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Oliver Heald): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the rise in pensioners' living standards throughout Wales and the rest of the UK since this Government took office; applauds the fact that pensioners' average incomes have increased by 51 per cent. in real terms since 1979, compared with only 5 per cent. between 1974 and 1979; welcomes the extra help, amounting to £1.2 billion per year above the rate of inflation since 1988, awarded through improvements to income-related benefits for pensioners; believes it is far better to target benefit resources on those in the most need; applauds the fact that this Government has provided a solid basis for income in retirement by maintaining its pledge to

increase basic retirement pension at least in line with prices; and welcomes wholeheartedly the wider and substantial benefits delivered to pensioners by this Government's policies, particularly the control of inflation."

I am delighted to have the opportunity to discuss the position of pensioners in Wales. I assure the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) that I am no less concerned than he is about Welsh pensioners—indeed, about all pensioners. He was right to pay tribute to those who fought so bravely in the second world war to protect us all from fascism, as I know hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree.

At the beginning of his speech, the hon. Gentleman pointed out that he is a solicitor. As a lawyer, he will be acquainted with the well-known legal expression, "Do not let the facts get in the way of a good speech." I do not intend to start by commenting on whether it was a good speech—that is for others to judge—but he certainly did not let the facts get in the way.

Let us look first at the hon. Gentleman's central argument that pensioners' living standards are falling rapidly. That is just plain wrong. Pensioners' real incomes have risen by an average of 51 per cent. since 1979. Furthermore, when the hon. Gentleman referred to the average income of individuals—the earners—he referred to what is now £301 per week gross in Wales.

Mr. Hanson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Heald: I should like to make some progress first.

No one listening to the remarks of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy would have known that pensioners' real incomes have outpaced those of earners in Wales since 1979: pensioners' average real incomes have increased by 5 per cent. more.

Mr. Llwyd: The figure that I gave was £97.01, one third of £301. That is one fact on which I did not slip up.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman may be a little confused. The figure for average earnings in Wales is £301, not £97. The hon. Gentleman seemed to have a little difficulty with the question. Pensioners' real incomes in Wales have risen by more than those of earners. That is the point that undercuts the hon. Gentleman's entire argument about Welsh living standards.

Mr. Hanson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Heald: In a moment.

The fact that there has been a guarantee of index linking of retirement pensions is important; but the overwhelmingly important issue is the way in which private provision has been encouraged, and has supplemented pensioners' real incomes. That is one of the great successes of the current Government.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister disaggregate that figure, and reveal the effect on those who depend purely on state pensions?

Mr. Heald: The lowest amount that could be received by a pensioner couple on income support, with no private or occupational pensions, is just over £100 per week, excluding the cost of renting their homes. The difference is substantial. The Government's achievement has been to encourage private provision and occupational pensions: as a result, pensioners have improved their position. Meanwhile, their savings have retained their value. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) makes his comments, but under Labour, pensioners' savings were ravaged by high inflation. The present Government have presided over the longest period of sustained low inflation since 1961.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. William Hague): And Labour pinched the bonus.

Mr. Heald: Indeed.

Had it not been for that long period of low inflation, pensioners' savings would be nowhere near as strong as they are today, and their investment income would not be coming through.

Pensioners in the private sector are more secure than they were because of the reforms in the Pensions Act 1995, and spending on health and care services has risen rapidly. The hon. Gentleman was wrong to say that living standards had fallen; he was wrong to say that average earnings had exceeded the income of pensioners; and he was wrong to say that nothing had been done about heating. I shall deal with each of those issues shortly.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that, in 1995, pensioners who are dependent on their state pensions are relatively far poorer than those who have the advantage of private pension provision, and that the difference is greater than it has ever been?

Mr. Heald: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a trite point. It is obvious that pensioners who take out private occupational pensions—the Government have encouraged them to do so, and 5.6 million more are doing so—are in a better position than those who do not.

In Wales, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, pensioners' average incomes have risen at today's prices. In 1979, the figure was £95.60 per week; in 1993—I am quoting real figures—it was £138.60. That is the latest information that we have. Across the United Kingdom and in Wales, pensioners' average incomes have risen; and, if housing costs are taken into account, the position is even stronger. The increase is explained by index linking of the retirement pension, by the impact of income support and by the Government's policy of encouraging occupational and personal pension provision. Retirement pensions have maintained the value that they had in line with inflation, and constitute an essential building block in retirement income.

Sir Wyn Roberts (Conwy): Will my hon. Friend confirm that eight out of 10 pensioners have income from other sources—occupational pensions, savings or investments?

Mr. Heald: That is true. More than half the pensioners in Wales now receive occupational pensions, amounting on average to £74 per week. A substantial proportion—two thirds—now receive income from investment, averaging £37.40 per week. That improvement is the result of the Government's policies.

We should not forget that the approach of targeting help through income support means that the pensioners who are least able to make provision for themselves have a benefit that has been uprated ahead of inflation by £1.2 billion since 1988. As I have said, the lowest rate for a pensioner couple receiving income support is now more than £100 a week, and that couple's housing costs will also be met.

[Mr. Heald]

Occupational and personal pension provision has dramatically increased the incomes of pensioners in the United Kingdom and Wales. There are 5.6 million individual personal pension holders in the United Kingdom. That has not happened as a result of coincidence; it has happened as a result of low inflation, which has made saving worth while. As I have said, we have experienced the longest period of sustained low inflation since 1961. The encouragement of occupational and personal pensions, and low taxes for individuals, have enabled people to choose how to spend their incomes and to take out such pensions.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I thank the Minister for giving way at last. I just wanted to know whether he had any figures on the disposable income of pensioners in Wales and on the effect of VAT on fuel on that income.

Mr. Heald: It is right that the increases in relation to VAT on fuel were made across the board, but the effect on pensioners was mitigated by a substantial package of help, which was introduced, as the hon. Gentleman should know, in April 1994 for all pensioners, most disabled people and all people on income-related benefits. Fifteen million people benefit from that aid package. In 1994-95, the Government provided £420 million of extra help. That will rise to around £700 million extra during this financial year.

The Government are not in a position to dictate the charges that are made by various industries. Where possible, however, we try to influence the industry and, if necessary, increase or introduce grants to offset the costs. Value added tax is a broad-based tax: the supply of most goods and services is subject to VAT at the standard rate. This is the only sector where a lower rate applies. Standing charges are not part payment for supplies of domestic fuel and power—which would mean that they would be covered by the reduced rate—so they are taxed at 17.5 per cent.

The Government's policy on pensions has brought the prospect of increased prosperity to millions. We have more employer occupational pension schemes and more people taking responsibility for their retirement income. We have built a solid foundation of funded pension provision that is the envy of the rest of Europe, and we have done that through providing more choice and opportunity. That will remain the Government's policy. It is not "deplorable"—the word in the motion. It does not marginalise pensioners; it places their welfare at the heart of Government thinking.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) raised the issue of health and care. We recognise the importance to older people of the care services provided by the national health service and by local authorities. We have been active in our reforms to ensure that the right services reach the right people at the right time. The patients charter has set exacting standards for the NHS in hospital and community services. That is shown in Wales by the rise in the workload of hospitals. The number of cases that are being dealt with by Welsh hospitals has increased dramatically year on year.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I hope that the Minister accepts that I am assisting him in this intervention to enable him to consider various matters, but does he not accept that, although there has been a substantial increase in the throughput of people dealt with in hospitals, there has also been a substantial increase in return visits by people because they have been sent home too early?

Mr. Heald: I do not accept that argument. The figures for new out-patients are up by 5 per cent. year on year—from 601,827 to 635,984. The figures on day cases are up from 204,398 to 238,696—an increase of 17 per cent. It is easy for the hon. Gentleman to make his point in the way that he does, but the statistics show a clear rise in the number of patients being treated.

The national health service is more focused than ever on providing primary health care. When I heard the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy criticising the arrangements in place for general practitioners and fundholding in particular, I thought that he was ignoring patients' interests. Patients now receive the sort of health checks that we all know about, and the sort of care that doctors provide as fundholders. That system is clearly providing new benefits. It puts GPs at the forefront of caring for their patients. It is nothing other than a direct benefit not only for pensioners, but for all patients.

As in the rest of the United Kingdom, people in Wales are living longer and staying healthier for longer. Thirty years ago, Her Majesty the Queen would send out a dozen telegrams a year to centenarians; this year I believe the figure is 3,000. That improvement in health care and in longevity is the result of the Government's health care policies and of the income that is being provided.

Likewise, if one considers community care, our policies mean that more people are receiving the care that they need in their own homes, in residential care or in nursing homes in their communities. Pensioners are now involved to a much greater extent in decisions about their own care, what they need and how it is delivered, and local community charters will further those improvements.

Mr. Llwyd: What would the Minister say if he had constituents, as I have in Bala and Dolgellau in my constituency, who cannot receive any assistance from a dentist within 50 or 60 miles? Is that delivery of primary health care? What will the Minister do to ensure that those people have treatment under the national health service?

Mr. Heald: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the family health services authorities in every part of the country can provide details of dentists who work on the national health service and I commend him to take that course. He seems to be suggesting another expensive pledge in what I describe as one of the most expensive wish lists that any country has had placed on it.

Often, there are misunderstandings in relation to the issue of charging for residential care. Local authorities are required to charge up to the full economic cost of residential care, depending on the individual's means. The charging rules are closely aligned with income support rules—both capital and income is taken into account by the local authority when assessing an individual's ability to pay. Capital includes property and savings; income includes most social security benefits, occupational pensions, trust income and earnings.

If the individual owns a home, the social services department will generally take its value into account when it considers capital assets, but it must ignore its value if

one of the following people is still living there: a husband, a wife, a partner, a relative aged 60 or more, a relative under the age of 60 if the individual supports them, and a relative who is incapacitated. Social services may also ignore the value of the property in other circumstances, such as if the person who has been caring for the individual still lives there.

The Government's view has consistently been that people who can pay for residential care should be expected to do so, taking into account their ability to pay, but it is worth bearing in mind the rules that protect the position if someone remains in the home. It is only in circumstances where the home would otherwise be empty that it is taken into account in the calculation of residential care costs.

Residential and nursing homes set charges that represent the individual's on-going accommodation, food and care needs, just as if they were living in their own homes. It was never intended that individuals should be released entirely from the cost of their accommodation and upkeep.

In principle, it is right that people should look to their own resources before they look to the taxpayer to meet the cost of care. In that way, resources are targeted where they are most needed. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy will know that there is a capital disregard in these cases, including the value of the home in certain circumstances such as those that I have outlined. The Government, however, keep those rules under constant review.

He will also know that we have recently announced an important change to the way in which occupational pension income is dealt with when assessing the means of another member of the couple who goes into residential care. From next April, spouses remaining at home will have an automatic entitlement to half the occupational pension when their husband or wife enters residential care, recognising their continuing financial need. Of course, there is a discretion in the local authority up to that time to deal with it in that way.

The Government's objective will always be to target help in the most effective way on the people who need it most. There has been much speculation in recent weeks. All I can say is that the matter is being reviewed. I have no announcement to make and no hints to drop. I suspect that if I had any hints, I would not be giving them to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy—*[Interruption.]* That was not meant in a churlish spirit. The issues should remain under review and that is what is happening.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy suggests increasing the retirement pension. His motion calls for large increases in state pensions—immediate uprating to one third of average earnings followed by a restoration of the earnings link. I should like to commend the hon. Gentleman. At least he was open about it and revealed what his policies would be. I should also commend his decisiveness. At least he has plumped for a policy. The same cannot be said for others and it would be interesting to hear in due course how the matter is being resolved on the Labour Front Bench.

All serious commentators—including the World bank, the National Association of Pension Funds and the Institute of Fiscal Studies—have recognised that to increase the value of the state pension, which is paid regardless of income and goes to virtually all people over pension age in the United Kingdom and in Wales, is not a sensible use of taxpayers' money. It would cost more than £22 billion in 1996 to uprate the basic retirement pension to one third of average earnings. That is equivalent to 12p on standard rate income tax. Even at current rates, restoring the earnings link would cost £9.6 billion, or more than 6p on income tax.

Such an increase would mean an extra £15 a week for the average national insurance payer. Even if the cost were divided between the employer and the employee, the employee would make an extra payment of more than £8 per week. It is worth bearing it in mind that figures on income and expenditure for the United Kingdom, including Wales, show that the group who are hardest pressed are those aged between 30 and 50 who have greater commitments. Increasing taxation levels on them in that way would be not only ruinous, but extremely unfair to people on modest incomes who have an expectation of tax levels at approximately the present level.

In Wales, the balance between pensioners and active members of the work force is slightly lower than in the United Kingdom as a whole, so if Wales were to become an independent country—as the hon. Gentleman believes it should—the costs would be even higher than the very high figures that I have already outlined. Such a policy would be bad for the people of Wales and bad for those on modest incomes who are paying taxes and national insurance and I do not believe that it is what pensioners want. It would also have the effect of undercutting occupational pension schemes and personal pension provision—one of the successes of the Government's policy.

The issues put forward by the hon. Gentleman—and I shall go into them in a little more detail—are the policies of opposition; it is a wish list drawn up without regard to responsibility or cost.

Has the hon. Gentleman really thought of the consequences of requiring people across the United Kingdom—and indeed in Wales—to pay an extra 12p on income tax or £15 on national insurance? Where would he find the money? He has not thought it through seriously. He is pandering to the interests of a group that has a wish list of its own, but that is not how a Government can approach the matter. The hon. Gentleman should rethink the matter and perhaps he will.

Looking at the other side of the coin, increasing employers' national insurance contributions by some £7 or £8 per week—which would divide the cost—would put an intolerable burden on business. It would damage those businesses in Wales which are having economic success and providing jobs for people who need them. Again, the hon. Gentleman should consider the matters before making wild promises which pander to a populist instinct and are not responsible policies.

By contrast, the Government have thought the issues through. We are not in the business of making promises we cannot keep. We are in the business of looking to the future and taking some of the decisions that are often hard to make. They are not the easy decisions that parties can make in opposition.

One of the Government's successes has been to defuse the demographic time bomb. Across the world, Japan, Germany, Italy and France all have debt to GDP ratios at the year 2030 that are almost disastrous. The percentage

[Mr. Heald]

figure for Japan is 290 to 315 per cent. of GDP; for Germany, 95 to 105 per cent.; for Italy, 125 to 145 per cent.; and for France, 90 to 105 per cent. of GDP.

It is instructive to read what the OECD said about Britain in its survey earlier this year:

"In the United Kingdom with the advantages of a good starting position and a public pension scheme that runs only a small deficit, net debt as a percentage of GDP falls to very low levels and by 2030 even turns into a small net asset position."

It continues:

"The assumption of unchanged policy for spending and taxes may well not be realistic, policies might tend to be less restrictive with the evolution of debt being less favourable."

I believe that the OECD is talking about the prospect—unlikely though it may be—that an opposition party might form a Government and do some of the disastrous things that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

At the moment, countries across Europe are looking at the way in which we have made state pension provision affordable and encouraged private and occupational pension schemes. It would be typical of the Opposition and the hon. Gentleman's party at a time when we have got it right in terms of affordability to say, "Let us throw it all away." That is what it amounts to—throwing away the advantages we have and the position described by an independent commentator, the OECD.

Our policy is to target resources on those who cannot help themselves and allow those who can the flexibility and freedom to make their own choices.

Turning for a moment to the Labour party, I said that the same could not be said of the official Opposition—that they had nailed their colours to the mast when it came to pension policy. The Labour party continues to keep its options open—or, alternatively, it is floundering in a sea of confusion.

At its party conference in 1993, the Labour party was looking forward to the end of means-testing for pensioners. But by 1995, apparently without changing step, we see the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) embracing the Commission for Social Justice's proposal for a scheme which effectively means-tests every pensioner in the country at retirement age. Not, of course, that we can be sure what retirement age would be under Labour, as the Labour party has committed itself to a flexible decade of retirement without explaining what the age range would be and the way in which it would be centred. If it means what we think it means, it amounts to reducing the retirement age for most people to the age of 60, at huge cost to the country—£12 billion.

It is right that we should hear from the Opposition spokesman about exactly what is Opposition policy. After all, an alternative option is that proposed by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who suggests that there should be an end to all means-testing, and compulsory private pensions for all. We would like to hear tonight exactly what is Labour party policy on pensions because people outside the Chamber might not have a clear idea. We certainly do not.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy attacked NHS health care. We have studied activity levels in hospitals in Wales. Is he seriously suggesting that trust hospitals are not more efficient than their predecessors? Is he seriously suggesting that general practitioners are not doing more for their patients and giving them extra health checks than they did in the past? Is he seriously denying all the improvements that have been made since 1979?

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that nothing has been done to meet the heating costs of pensioners, but a whole range of policies have been introduced. For example, only last year the home energy efficiency scheme more than doubled its expenditure from £35 million a year to £100 million a year, which has benefited 600,000 households. When the hon. Gentleman talks to pensioners in his constituency about insulation, surely he tells them about the Government scheme which would give them help.

Mr. Llwyd: They say it is rubbish.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman may say it is rubbish, but 600,000 householders have benefited from that scheme because the Government have provided help. The cold weather payment scheme has also been improved, which has helped pensioners, as does the package of help concerning VAT on fuel.

The hon. Member also raised the issue of law and order. He ignored the fact that the Government have increased the number of police officers by 16,000. He also ignored the measures that we introduced in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, for example, increased penalties and further measures on DNA testing, to make it more difficult for criminals to get away with it. They will help in the battle against law and order. [HON. MEMBERS: "Law and order?"] I meant the battle against crime. Those measures will also help to ensure better law and order.

It is no coincidence that in each of the past two years we have seen a 5 per cent. fall in crime levels—the first time for 40 years.

Mr. Llwyd: A fall in reported crime.

Mr. Heald: That is not true. There has been a reduction in vehicle crime. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that people do not report the theft of their motor cars? If they do not, they do not get their insurance money. Of course they report such crime.

There have been no changes to the methods of reporting crime in the past two years, yet criminal activity has fallen for the first time in 40 years, and at a faster rate than ever recorded. It is time the hon. Gentleman gave a little credit to the Government for that.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of other issues, but I do not want to trespass on the good will of the House by dealing with each of them. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales who will be winding-up will no doubt wish to deal with some of the outstanding issues.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy put forward a whole range of propositions as though they were fact, but the truth is that not one of them has stood up to close examination. The standard of living of pensioners is not falling; it is rising. The average earnings of individuals in society are being outpaced by increases in pensions. He should accept that the Government have a deep commitment to the well-being of pensioners. That commitment is a realistic one, unlike the Opposition's wish list.

When we took office in 1979, we inherited a society in which pensioner interests were marginalised. Under Labour, pensioner incomes went up by a little more than 5 per cent., but they have gone up by 51 per cent. under the Conservative Government. It was a society in which impoverishment and dependency was a reality for the pensioner. That was deplorable. That is not the case now. With the provision of personal and occupational pensions, the retirement pension has been protected as the foundation of retirement income. Inflation has been brought under control and it no longer robs pensioners of their savings. We have targeted income on the least well-off pensioners, and offered all pensioners more choice.

I believe that the Government's case is strong when they argue that pensioners have been protected by them and given new opportunities through freedom and choice.

8.34 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I congratulate the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) and his colleagues on giving us the opportunity to debate pensioners in Wales.

The Minister began his speech by complaining that the hon. Gentleman had certainly not let the facts get in the way of a good speech. I must say that the Minister has failed to let a good speech get in the way of the facts about what is happening to a significant percentage of pensioners in Wales.

The Minister treated us to an exegesis on the advantages of private pension schemes. I wholeheartedly agree that those advantages exist, and I even share his aspiration that in due course every pensioner should have a guaranteed and portable pension scheme with a private element included in it, but he cannot escape from the reality—the truth that we see, or at least Opposition Members see, every weekday and every weekend in Wales: that many Welsh pensioners, especially those in rural areas, live in real poverty. They do not have private pension schemes, and perhaps they are the historical remnant of people who will rely on the state pension.

I suggest to the Minister, however, that if they are an historical remnant, they will remain so for a long time to come, and the Government must pay proper attention to that. Many pensioners fall into the poverty trap that has been created by the income support limits in particular. For many old people, who have greater needs than younger people for heat, clothing and transport provided by others, the poverty trap can sometimes be a death trap.

Mr. Heald: The hon. and learned Gentleman sees before him a motion that calls for huge increases in public expenditure. Does he support it?

Mr. Carlile: I am sure that the Minister will have taken the trouble to study the Liberal Democrat policy document entitled "The Age of Opportunity". I do not propose to weary the House by reading from it now, and I will hand the Minister the copy that I have in my hand. It deals with what is now called the "third age". We do not agree with everything in the motion, but it is certainly our view that the Government are failing to address the needs of the group I have just mentioned.

It is worth recalling the words of Lloyd-George in his celebrated speech on the 1908 Budget. He said:

> "How we treat our old people is the crucial test of our national quality. A nation that lacks gratitude to those who have honestly worked for her in the past whilst they had the strength to do so, does not deserve a future, for she has lost her sense of justice and her instinct of mercy."

It behoves us to treat those words, albeit in the somewhat florid language of the turn of the century, as having some resonance in the public mind. They certainly have resonance in the minds of pensioners who complain to us constantly about their lot.

I invite the Government in particular to pay greater attention to the problems faced by pensioners who live alone. The percentage of elderly people living alone, many of whom are women because of the differing mortality rates of men and women, has risen from 35 per cent. in 1971 to 45 per cent. in 1991, when I believe it was last measured. I am sure that the whole House would commend the fact that that figure is evidence of more pensioners retaining their independence in their very old age and staying in their own homes. That is to be encouraged.

Indeed, I suggest to the Government that it is very good value for public money to keep pensioners in their own homes, because it is cheaper to provide domiciliary help for pensioners than to keep them in public or private sector care homes. More important, it enables pensioners such as my elderly mother, and no doubt the elderly mothers of a number of other hon. Members, to retain what they value most: their independence—sometimes their fierce independence.

State pension dependency, which is high in Wales, especially in rural Wales, is a threat to such independence. The Minister cited the figure of one third of pensioners in Wales being dependent on the state pension, but in rural areas such as my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy the figure is more like 40 per cent.

The Minister's eloquent and entirely justifiable paean of praise for the private sector and what it can provide to those who have bought private pensions from insurance companies will resonate among pensioners with a dull thud. Indeed, even where, for example, farmers or small business people in rural areas have participated in private pension schemes, the contribution made by the schemes has been very small and may have made the difference only between ensuring that the pensioner had some extra support from the state and had no extra support from the state. It can often be the very thing that draws them into the poverty trap.

The problem is worse in Wales, where the percentage of people of pensionable age is higher. About 20 per cent. of the Welsh population are of pensionable age—almost 2 per cent. more than in England. In some areas, such as the constituency of the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts)—I notice that he is present—the statistics suggest that 28 to 30 per cent. of the population are of pensionable age, so the problem is heightened in Wales.

Another group is often forgotten by the Government: those who care—very often unpaid—for the very elderly. Research suggests that there are 340,000 unpaid carers in this country, of whom 80,000 work for more than 20 hours without receiving a penny.

The Government have, to their credit, supported a private Member's Bill that provides for the recognition of carers. That is all very well, but we should like to hear

[Mr. Carlile]

when they will come up with the money to give carers true recognition, which in principle they have accepted. They should do more than pay lip service to carers. Carers give very good value for money because they often save the Government having to spend money on keeping elderly people in care homes.

The 1991 census showed that social conditions are often lower in Wales. Pensioners are more likely to have unsatisfactory housing in Wales than in England. That creates special problems. It is a shocking fact that, in 1995, almost 3 per cent. of pensioners in Wales have no inside lavatory. That is not acceptable. Almost a quarter of pensioners have no form of controllable heating that can be set to their needs.

I say to Ministers, especially the Under-Secretary—the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who will reply to the debate—that the way in which renovation schemes have operated in Wales, particularly in the past three or four years, has led to a great shortage of money to meet need where it is greatest. Are the Government satisfied with the way in which grants for home renovations have constantly run out? In my constituency, the waiting list is, I think, eight years. Will the Government do something to help pensioners who, for example, do not even have an inside lavatory?

Old age, after all, should surely be a time for freedom, enjoyment, relaxation and reflection, which those of us who are fortunate enough to meet elderly people during our work as Members of Parliament have passed to us—usually to our great profit. It saddens me that the stock in trade of many conversations with elderly people who have much wisdom to contribute to our discussions starts with complaints about having to survive—about living on the breadline. We owe our pensioners more than that.

One area in which pensioners have faced particular difficulty, despite many benign and hard-working local authorities in Wales, is community care. I spoke about that recently in a debate in the House on 2 March and I shall not repeat what I said. There is a £71 million shortfall in the funding of community care in Wales and it has been drawn to the attention of Ministers time and again. It would be nice if we were to hear a helpful reaction for a change.

The experience of, for example, Gwynedd county council—which was praised by the Audit Commission for its community care—is that to provide an acceptable standard, it must overspend. It has been faced with an overspend of more than £1.2 million. The lesson that one draws from that is that it seems that the Government quite rightly want excellent community care, but are not prepared to pay for it. It seems that they are speaking with a forked tongue on that issue.

The cost of care in care homes has already been raised. Some pensioners who leave hospital are being sold to the lowest bidder. They are either being sent to the cheapest care home that can be found, if they are well enough, or to the cheapest nursing home, if they are ill enough.

Although there are some excellent private sector care and nursing homes in Wales, there are also some awful examples. The system of inspection, scrutiny and accreditation is not good enough. People are suffering as a result, yet they are the people for whom we should have the most respect: the elderly.

There is the whole question of the way in which capital is removed from elderly people. Although the Minister gave us some slightly labyrinthine hints of a review—no doubt as part of the bread-and-circus politics which will start on 28 November and entertain us until we have a general election—the situation at the moment is unacceptable.

Is it really right that a pensioner should have to spend all their hard-earned, hard-saved capital down to £8,000? Would not it be fairer if the Government took a different view of that issue and recognised that those savings have played an important part in our national wealth and the sustaining of the economy? Should not the Government take the view that it would be better to raise the cap significantly than to abolish inheritance tax, just to grab a few middle-class votes at the general election? I can assure the Minister that the elderly people of this country, especially those honest, decent, respectable people who have modest capital, but not huge capital, would appreciate such a change of policy.

I ask the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, to explain why there is discrimination against local authority care homes in terms of the way in which residents are charged. It goes like this. If one goes into one of Powys county council's very good care homes, one is charged significantly more for care than if one goes into the average private sector home situated in the part of Powys that I represent. I realise that this is because the charges are made on a real-cost basis. However, many of the private care homes—not all of them—provide a lower standard of service, there are fewer staff, there are fewer experienced staff, there are fewer shifts—

Mr. Richards *indicated dissent.*

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Jonathan Evans) *indicated dissent.*

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Roger Evans) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Carlile: I see two, perhaps two and a half Ministers on the Treasury Bench. What a lot of Ministers there are on the Treasury Bench at the moment shaking their heads. I issue an invitation for them to come to Montgomeryshire and to have a look. They should come and make the comparison. I see the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), shaking his head. He may have criticisms of the county care homes in his constituency, but those criticisms would not apply in mine.

The fact is that people who go into county care homes are having to pay £30 or £40 a week more for being residents there and there can be only one reason for that. What could that reason be? The only reason can be that the Government want the county care homes to go into the private sector or into a trust arrangement that they can regard as the private sector, thus taking yet more of that important community function away from elected representatives. That view has been expressed to me by social workers and by councillors of no political persuasion—independent councillors, some of great experience. It has been expressed to me by councillors of political persuasion too and it is a widely held view. The Government should not run away from the reality of it.

The opportunity to debate policy on pensioners in Wales is welcome. I fear, however, that at the end of the debate, we shall not have made much progress in persuading the Government that pensioners deserve a better deal. I predict that pensioners will become a much more vocal force in this country than they are already. I predict that they will become a much more political force in this country than they are already. I predict that the Government will reap a sorry reward as a result.

8.52 pm

Sir Wyn Roberts (Conwy): I am probably one of the best qualified to speak in this debate as I am a Welsh pensioner and I have been so since July this year. I have not been refused treatment by anybody in the national health service as yet and I am still working, as so many pensioners do in Wales and elsewhere. Perhaps that is just as well, as we are growing in numbers, as various hon. Members have said in this debate. We are aware of the danger of becoming an excessive burden on the working people of this country—the demographic time bomb to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), referred.

I am glad that we have passed the Pensions Act 1995, which will equalise the state pension at age 65 for men and women, not in my time perhaps, but from 2010. That is a serious point. I am told that if the state pension ages were not changed, there would be just 2.2 working people per pensioner by 2030 compared with 3.3 now. The total number of pensioners will have risen from 10.5 million to 15.5 million. Those who have said that pensioners will become increasingly a political force are, I am sure, quite right, not just because I have just joined them.

Those figures are, of course, based on current projections; I am not sure that we have solved the problem completely. Projections can change, economic conditions can change and other factors, including the political situation, may change. All that may make it difficult for us to sustain our elderly people as we would wish. I was, however, delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister describe the situation that confronts this country in terms of the debt to gross domestic product ratio and to hear him say how much better the prospects are for the United Kingdom than for many other countries. I am also glad that we had last year's assurance from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security that the basic pension is there and rock solid, and that we have no intention of removing it now or in the foreseeable future.

Although more than eight in 10 pensioners now have income from other sources—an occupational pension, savings or investment—the state pension is still important for many people, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) stressed. The figures, of course, may be rather different in Wales. The answer is to target improvements in pensions and that too is very much part of Government policy, as is their commitment to protect the value of the pension against price rises.

During my 25 years in this House, I have known times when pensioners have really been up in arms and when the pensioners' voice was to be heard loud and clear. Those times were invariably the times of high inflation under the previous Labour Government, when pensioners saw the value of their savings being eroded. My only disappointment this evening is to have to record that Plaid Cymru supported that Government. Successive Conservative Administrations have kept inflation low, and pensioners have undoubtedly benefited from that. I do not hear howls of complaint from pensioners or receive the flood of letters that one used to receive from pensioners in the days when inflation ran high.

As hon. Members have said, I have a high proportion of pensioners in my electorate. That does not mean, of course, that there are no concerns; some of the concerns expressed this evening are very real. There is concern in Gwynedd about community care and about the fact that the council appears to have exceeded its budget by more than £1 million. That is causing great concern to pensioners in my constituency. The £8,000 limit, too, causes concern, and one hopes that the Government will be able to do something about it in due course.

Yes, obviously we would like improvements, but not more than the country can afford. The real revelation this evening—I am glad that it has come out—is that if we were to follow the line proposed by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy when he moved the motion, there would be a bill of about £22 billion, which would mean not a penny or two on income tax but as much as 12p extra.

Mr. Llwyd *rose—*

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am conscious of the time, and of the fact that others wish to speak.

The Plaid Cymru motion calls for a direct link with earnings. I have heard that populist demagogic cry from the Labour and Liberal Benches from time to time over the years, but not recently. The Labour party, certainly, has changed its tack.

At the Labour party conference the Leader of the Opposition said that Labour was

"looking at ways for people to put together income from public and private sources to guarantee a minimum standard of living for our pensioners."

So far, so good. He continued:

"The aim of the policy is to remove the stigma of means testing for ever."

How on earth can one do that? I find the statement confusing, and I am sure that the Minister does too. How can one find out whether people have made prudent provision for retirement without some kind of means test?

Whatever the outcome, does that not mean that those who have made provision for their retirement will be penalised for their thrift? That is a sore point with pensioners even now. Those who have saved certainly do not like to see those who have not saved being treated as well as, if not better than they are, at the taxpayers's expense.

We must be careful what promises we make to pensioners. They know that policies have to be paid for, and will want to know the cost—as we have found out tonight the cost of the proposals of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy—and whether it can be afforded. More than anything, pensioners want certainty.

As the Prime Minister's amendment says, pensioners' living standards have risen. Not only have their average incomes risen by 51 per cent. in real terms since 1979, but extra help has been given through improvements in income-related benefits. Pensioners now own more household goods than when Labour left office. For example, 78 per cent. of pensioner households now have

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

central heating, compared with 46 per cent. in 1979. In 1979, 57 per cent. of pensioner households had a telephone, that all-important instrument for the elderly; in 1991, the proportion had risen to 93 per cent. That kind of thing can make all the difference in the world to pensioner families.

In my view there has been steady progress, and I am sure that it will continue while the Government remain in office. The great danger is that there may be a change of economic circumstances or—God forbid—political circumstances, which could affect pensioners' prospects very adversely. Whether we sit on the Front Benches or the Back Benches, we must see to it that that political change does not happen. If we are honest with the pensioners they will help to ensure our victory.

9.2 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): What a pleasure it is to follow a genuine Welsh pensioner—the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts)—and how we look forward to his retirement. He may go into a nursing home eventually, although I am sure that if he does we shall all visit him as it will probably be the one just down the Corridor, which is so handily placed for us.

In congratulating the right hon. Gentleman on having achieved pensioner status, I should like to correct him on one point. The decline in the number of people of working age relative to the number of pensioners is not nearly so dramatic as he suggested. Over the next 30 years it will be very modest—almost within the margins of statistical error. In Wales the figure will fall from 3 to 2.8, and in England from 3.3 to 3.2. Even the Minister, in his opening speech, confirmed that the big differential will occur only after the year 2021, when the people born in the baby boom after the second world war reach retirement age. That is the only difference between the parties on matters of fact, although there are many differences on matters of policy.

I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on choosing the subject for the debate, which is a matter of great importance to all of us in Wales.

Mr. Sweeney *rose—*

Mr. Morgan: I am sorry, but I shall not give way, due to the shortage of time.

The founder of national insurance in this country, Lloyd George, was from Wales, as was the founder of the national health service, Nye Bevan. Matters of health and social care, pensions and provision for retirement were raised in the early years of this century by one of the great Welsh politicians, Lloyd George.

We are well aware that Wales will have two additional Members of Parliament following the next election, and the number of Members from Wales will be rising from 38 to 40. This is due not to a rise in the numbers of people of working age in Wales, but to an expansion in the pensioner population. The additional Members of Parliament are being provided in the counties of Dyfed and Clwyd, not in the industrial areas or in the capital city of Cardiff. The additional Members will be in those areas which are most attractive to people of retirement age who are moving to Wales in large numbers and surviving in Wales in greater numbers. As a result, Wales will get those two additional Members. That is pensioner power defined in a practical way for us as politicians.

I want to concentrate on a matter which is of huge importance to Wales and on which the Minister touched in his opening speech. Many pensioners in Wales are developing a fear of losing their homes in their old age because the British Government are acting as a state repossession agency and are seen as more evil than many of the worst banks and building societies which have been involved in the repossession scandal of the past few years. The moral persuasion with which the Government could lean on those banks and building societies to reduce the pressure to repossess would be much greater if they themselves were not engaged in mass repossession through the social security system.

Mr. Richards *rose—*

Mr. Morgan: The Minister will have an opportunity to speak in about half an hour.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morgan: Very briefly.

Mr. Richards: It is not clear at this point whether the hon. Gentleman is speaking for or against the motion.

Mr. Morgan: That is a singularly pointless intervention which is unworthy of any reply whatsoever and is a total waste of parliamentary time.

Is the Minister in favour of any amendment to the capital disregard rules, as has been speculated on? That is what most pensioners in Wales want to know, but the Minister did not answer that point. I understand the parliamentary convention that prevented him from doing so, but I want to tell him why that matter is such a burning issue with pensioners in Wales.

The Government have a totemic faith in the virtues of home ownership, but they did not need to tell us in Wales about that—we had that feeling about home ownership long before Lady Thatcher started talking about it. The present Prime Minister has talked about wealth cascading down through the generations, but it is people's fear and anxiety about the possible repossession of their homes when they become elderly and have to go into community care rather than wealth that is cascading down through the generations in Wales.

What do the Government intend to do to reduce the problem that they have created through the way in which they introduced the provisions relating to nursing and residential care homes, which have ballooned in number in this country over the past few years? The measures mean that £8,000 is the maximum capital that a resident of such a home is allowed to have.

I spoke this morning to Mrs. Marjorie Williams, whose mother is in an old people's home in Cardiff, having gone into full-time care in December 1992. As she had worked until she was 65 and her husband—who had been a miner in the valleys—had a miner's pension, she had some capital saved. Having run down that capital until it reached £3,000 in July this year, the Department of Social Security then told Mrs. Williams that it was time to put her mother's house on the market. That has now been done, and the house has been on the market for the past

three months because Mrs. Williams' mother's savings had dropped to the £3,000 that people are allowed to keep to cover their funeral expenses.

My constituent said that if the house was sold it might fetch between £22,000 and £25,000—the typical price for a miner's terraced house. Her mother would then have to pay back the income support that she has been receiving to cover nursing home costs between July this year and whenever the house is sold. I suppose that the money thus raised will cover the next two and a half years or so: with nursing home fees at £300 to £400 per week, £25,000 does not go very far.

What really brought the problem home to me was when my constituent told me that her mother still thought that she was in a national health service and free health care system. My constituent did not dare tell her mother that she was in a private nursing home for which she had to pay or that the house was on the market because the belief that one day she would go back to her own home had kept the old lady going while she was in nursing care. That is the tragedy of it.

We live in a society in which daughters have to protect their elderly mothers in nursing homes from the knowledge, first, that they are in private nursing homes and, secondly, that their house is having to be sold to pay for the care. Elderly people who have scrimped and saved to build up their savings and pay for their house with a mortgage over 20 to 25 years, having paid for their house through the building society, then find that the Government take it off them in a mere three or four years. Rather than wealth cascading through the generations, it is being taken away from people.

My constituent said that her mother would be very upset if she knew that her house was on the market. That made me think what an odd society we lived in. The Prime Minister is on record as saying that he wants to see wealth cascading through the generations. The Government are obsessed with trumpeting the virtues of home ownership with almost religious fervour. They have to resolve the problem. I appreciate that the Minister cannot give us too many details tonight as the issue may come up in the Budget, but it sounds as though an almighty battle is going on between the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health.

One scheme that is proposed is for nursing care costs—£100 out of the typical £400 fee—to be met by the state, but for residents to meet the accommodation costs. In that case, people would still have to sell their houses, but the money might last for five years in the nursing home rather than two and a half. Alternatively, the £8,000 capital disregard may be doubled to £16,000 or trebled to £24,000. Something must be done to solve the problem. Either the Government must stop pushing out propaganda about wealth cascading through the generations or they must solve the problem that anxiety and fear instead of wealth are cascading through the generations.

The pensioners of Wales find that the Government's propaganda is contradicted by their daily experience when they require permanent, long-term care in a nursing or residential home. Chronic care is in chronic crisis. The Government are acting as repossessors. That is destroying the belief in home ownership that people in Wales always had. It makes people feel that when they buy a house they are probably not buying something permanent. They can keep the house only if they are lucky enough not to require long-term community care. That puts the frail elderly into a state of acute anxiety which makes their illness even worse.

The Minister said that many of us felt that we owed a debt of gratitude to all the elderly people who sacrificed so much during the second world war to keep Europe, the world and certainly Britain free from fascism, Nazism, and so on. That touches a raw nerve with many pensioners in Wales, who look at the level of pension enjoyed by people in Germany now and wonder who really won the war and who won the peace. They do not think that they are getting a square deal.

9.13 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): May I first draw the attention of the House to the sparse attendance on the Opposition Benches today. To be fair, the Liberal attendance is 100 per cent., and the Plaid Cymru attendance is fairly substantial. Labour attendance is poor for such an important debate, on an issue about which the Labour party is fond of weeping crocodile tears.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) spoke with sincerity, but unfortunately he spoke as a member of a party that is never likely to gain power, and his wish list could therefore be extremely long. He wanted free or reduced rate travel, free television licences, and free eye testing and dental treatment for pensioners. Surely it is better to ensure that they have a decent pension and the freedom to decide how to spend their money, like the rest of us.

The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) rubbished the Government's claim that demographic changes will lead to a large increase in the number of pensioners next century. All the evidence points in that direction, and it is totally unrealistic for any Government to bury their head in the sand and fail to acknowledge that reality.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) referred to value added tax on fuel, and was supported by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, who referred to the warm home campaign. The Government have been to the fore on that issue, in making grants for insulation available to all pensioners. I did not hear Opposition Members giving the Government credit for that.

It was suggested that we should introduce zero rating for insulation materials—on the face of it, an appealing idea. The difficulty is that it would certainly be hard to define. Some items would be included, and others unfairly excluded. On the whole, I believe that we should, as far as possible, have a standard rate of VAT, when it is applied at all, and that the minimum number of items should be exempt.

The Government approach has been to increase state pensions in line with prices and to encourage private pensions. Opposition Members have not given the Government's successes due credit during the debate. It is fair to say that about 80 per cent. of pensioners will now have some form of income over and above the state pension. Surely that is a marvellous achievement. It has enabled the Government to give selective help to those pensioners who need it most. As my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, the average pensioner is 51 per cent. better off than when the Conservatives came to power.

I shall mention a few statistics on the ownership of goods to illustrate the way in which pensioners have become better off under the Conservatives. In 1979, only

[Mr. Walter Sweeney]

57 per cent. of pensioner households had a telephone. Now, the figure is 93 per cent. In 1979, only 46 per cent. had central heating; now, it is 78 per cent. In 1979, 88 per cent. of pensioner households had a refrigerator; now, it is 99 per cent. Those are impressive statistics.

The Conservatives believe in giving priority to those who need it most. We believe that means tests are appropriate where necessary. It was interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition standing on his head on this issue when he said at the Labour party conference, first, that he opposed means testing, but at the same time that he would ensure that everyone had a basic minimum pension.

The importance of private pensions lies not only in the fact that they encourage people to provide for themselves, which is surely a good thing, but also in the fact that they stimulate industry, in that pension funds are able to invest heavily, and have made a major contribution to growth in the economy.

The average occupational pension is well over £70 a week, and, for those who are retiring now, it is around £95 per week. That shows the success of the introduction of such pensions.

I shall deal briefly with one of my favourite subjects—Europe. A study commissioned by the Department of Social Security, published in March 1993, considered various countries in the European Union. It is interesting that, in seven out of nine cases, the United Kingdom came ahead of Germany when purchasing power parity is taken into account. Does that not show that the Opposition are whipping up false concerns by constantly arguing that pensioners in Europe are better off than our pensioners?

I firmly oppose the motion, and support the amendment.

9.15 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I believe that being a pensioner in Wales should not be viewed as a negative state. People's retirements should be filled with leisure and enjoyment and truly become their golden years. Those golden years should be filled with opportunities to enjoy more leisure time, and ways in which to enjoy more interesting and independent lives.

Unfortunately, pensioners in Wales face a bleak future. Their golden years have been transformed from a comfortable retirement to a basic struggle to make ends meet. More than half a million pensioners in Wales have had their dreams of comfortable retirement squashed. They are forced to regard living with their basic needs met as an unattainable dream. Talk of private pensions rings hollow to them. Some are prevented from receiving state benefits because they have small, inadequate works pensions.

Pensioners want to have their fundamental requirements met—basic items such as health care, decent living conditions, and enough money to afford heating and a decent diet. Under the Government, those needs are not being met. Pensioners find themselves freezing in fuel poverty, unable to afford to heat their homes. Their low incomes, coupled with poor housing and inefficient heating systems, make the elderly prime candidates for hypothermia.

As has been mentioned, mortality rates among the elderly sky-rocket each and every winter, as hypothermia claims more and more elderly pensioners. Over 8,000 deaths can be attributed to every degree by which the winter temperature drops below average. That situation is not helped by increases in VAT on fuel.

Under the Tory Government, pensioners are often forced into housing that is unfit for human habitation or in a state of serious disrepair. Elderly pensioners make up over two thirds of those eligible for grants for living in unfit houses—and the grants are not forthcoming. In Wales, more than 29,000 pensioners live in unfit homes, and almost 11,000 live in houses that either lack—or have shared—basic facilities such as showers, baths and toilets. The Conservative Government have failed to deal with those dire problems, which are punishing the elderly.

Old age is not a disease, but pensioners face health problems without much support. The Tories have designed a health care system that is unresponsive to the needs of pensioners, even though one in 10 will suffer from dementia and a shocking 25 per cent. will suffer fractures as a result of osteoporosis. The Tory Government have done little to ensure that care remains adequate.

The call for health care and a decent standard of living is not a call for frivolous luxuries, but a plaintive plea for the basic necessities of life. Under the Government, the dream of pensioners' golden years still exists, but it is not a dream of a fulfilling, productive, fruitful and happy life: it is of decent housing, health care and attempting to stay warm rather than the continuing nightmare of making ends meet.

The Government will ask what can be done. Labour's last manifesto included a modest but costed promise to increase pensions by £8 for a couple and £5 for a single pensioner. Not much, perhaps, but it was a promise. A Labour Government would help the plight of pensioners in other ways, not only with money. We would introduce measures to help restore the NHS, reduce the fear of crime and improve housing.

Finally, although I congratulate the Welsh National party on choosing this important subject, the pensioners of Wales should realise that that party cannot do anything for them; it cannot deliver. Only the Labour party can replace the Tory Government and start to put right the wrongs suffered by our pensioners in Wales.

9.23 pm

Mr. Don Touhig (Islwyn): The amendment in the name of the Prime Minister and others is an affront to pensioners everywhere. With the smug complacency that we have come to expect of the Tory party, it seeks to gloss over the real plight of pensioners in Wales—pensioners who, for the past dozen years, have watched the value of their pensions fall, their savings dwindle, and the cost of just staying alive increase all the time. People who have worked all their lives are struggling to live a reasonable life, confronted as they are by a Government who, when they find it difficult to make ends meet, simply say that these people should have provided better for themselves when they were working.

The Minister talked about disposable income, a matter on which the Government can speak with some authority. They put VAT on fuel and helped to dispose of a lot more income belonging to pensioners and others than they would otherwise have spent.

The Prime Minister's amendment invites the House to applaud the Government for providing

"a solid basis for income in retirement".

At best, I conclude that those who drafted that are out of touch; at worst it is a cynical display of contempt for the elderly. The amendment is insensitive to the plight of 500,000 people in Wales who are of pensionable age. I regularly see elderly people at my surgery. They are discovering that, far from old age being a time when they should be able to enjoy the fruits of their lives' labours, they face a desperate plight.

One pensioner who came to my surgery had a problem paying for his wife's funeral. The benefits system was unable and unwilling to help. He was a former service man; I pay tribute to the organisations for former service men who came to his rescue and paid the undertaker's bill—while the country he served in the war abandoned him to his plight.

A group of pensioner constituents of mine live in bungalows on a mountain at Markham, in the north of my constituency. They are desperately trying to persuade their landlord, Islwyn borough council, to change their central heating system from electricity to gas, because they cannot afford to keep warm. According to the Swalec report, the average tenant in those bungalows pays £500 a year, or £10 a week, for heating. To achieve that average, some tenants must be paying £244 and others £753. I have seen tenants' bills of £250 a quarter, or £20 a week.

Much of the housing stock in Wales is pre-war and lacking in basic amenities. Councils such as mine have done well to pay for housing improvements, but such funding in no way matches the need, and it will take a great many years to improve the housing stock.

Many houses in my area were built by the National Coal Board on the exposed sides of valleys. They catch the worst of the weather, and many of them are occupied by an aging population. That fact should be recognised, as should the needs of the elderly people who live in some of the poorest accommodation in Wales.

Life under the Tories is difficult for many pensioners, and it is very far from the description in the amendment. The problem of providing for old age will not go away or diminish. In my constituency, 15 per cent. of the population are over 65. Figures published in the Islwyn health plan last year forecast that that number will increase to half the population by the year 2026. By the year 2006, just over 10 years away, the proportion of people in my constituency over the age of 75 will be the highest in Gwent.

The Government should be preparing schemes and services to cater for this growing population of elderly people. The health plan, however, revealed a terrible lack of provision. We have no hospital in Islwyn. In 1993-94, 33,000 visits were made by my constituents, many of them pensioners, to the nearest general hospital, 15 miles away at Newport. We desperately need a neighbourhood health unit.

What about care in the community, as many of my constituents ask? To be frank, the resources available in no way match the expectations raised by the Government when they introduced it. Many old people who looked to care in the community to provide some insurance so that they could continue to live independently in their own homes have been sadly disillusioned.

Without the support of local authority services such as meals on wheels, and the various voluntary organisations, many old people would have no lifeline to the outside world whatever. I paint a grim picture, because it is grim for so many people living in Wales at the present time. Many elderly people live on the edge of poverty, in a society that appears to think that old age is a crime. The old folk of Wales, as the Government will learn, are made of sterner stuff. They will fight back. They will not be denied their chance to enjoy their autumn years in dignity and contentment.

The message to the Government is clear: "Ignore the pensioners at your peril." Let us have no more of the "Alice in Wonderland" approach that we see in the Government's amendment. If the Conservative party is not prepared to do something about the plight of the pensioners, they should move over for a Government who will.

9.30 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): This has been a very interesting debate and I would like to thank hon. Members, from both sides of the House, who have made such a valuable contribution to it. I thank all those who have made cogent points in the debate, and hope that the Minister and his colleagues will take a number of them on board.

I have to say, however, that the Minister and, perhaps, the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) are the only people tonight who have given the Government a clean bill of health. Even the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), in his usual way, gave some credit to the Government, but he said that there was a little bit more that they could do. He acknowledged two quite serious issues that affect pensioners in Wales: the concerns on community care, which I hope the Government will address, and the capital threshold for contributions towards residential care. We heard from the Minister that that is being considered elsewhere in the Government, and I hope that, when an announcement is eventually made, pensioners will benefit from it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) made a thoughtful and passionate speech, and he will certainly go down tonight as being on the side of the pensioners, as the pensioners' friend.

The Minister's response was extremely complacent. He seemed to give the impression that all pensioners in Wales were happy with the Government's policies. It is strange, then, that 75 per cent. of the people of Wales do not vote for the Conservatives. It seems to me that they know where their political priorities lie. I believe that the support for the Conservative party in Wales will fall dramatically at the next election, partly as a result of its policies towards pensioners.

I found it most surprising that the Minister chided my hon. Friend for pandering to the wishes of people who had a long wish list. He said that the Government were not in the business of making promises that they could not keep. What has happened during the past three years? Promise after promise, not only to the pensioners but the people of Wales, has been broken. Why are the Government now 30 percentage points behind in the opinion polls? Is it because they have kept their promises, or is it because they have broken them? The result will be quite clear at the next election. The promises made have simply not been kept.

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

The Minister also chided my hon. Friend for failing to understand the niceties of one or two of the points made by Conservative Members. He fell into the same trap, because a very good point was put to him by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) about the differential between those on state pensions and those on private pensions. The gap between the two has risen. The Minister made the point that people on state pensions are worse off than people with private pensions and occupational pensions, but our point is that the gap between the two has also risen. The inequality has also risen. Those at the bottom of the pile are much worse off in relation to others than they have been at any time since the second world war.

The Minister said that the Government have responded to the concerns of those who have high fuel bills, particularly the elderly and the disabled, and that much help has been given to meet their needs, but he failed to point out that assistance towards heating costs was made on the basis of average bills. We must accept that the elderly and the disabled have higher than average bills and they have to pay more in order to keep warm during the winter months. The high mortality rate among people over 60 and, in particular, those over 80, is highlighted by the fact that many feel that they cannot afford the heating necessary to sustain them.

Apart from one or two points acknowledged by the Minister, particularly concerning the capital disregard, his response was extremely complacent. The Government have sought to create an image of the elderly as a group of people who have grown in wealth and independence under the Conservatives and who exercise an element of choice which they never had before. That is not the case in Wales.

There are three categories of pensioners. The top 20 per cent. is the category about which the Minister spoke. They are the people who can exercise choice, who had the wealth during their working lives to provide for their pensions. But 80 per cent. of pensioners in Wales have degrees of difficulty, some so extreme that they fall into the poverty trap.

In Wales, 40 per cent. of pensioners have capital assets in their home and some form of occupational pension. For the vast majority, that occupational pension is not particularly large, but it is too large for them to have any state benefits in addition to their pension. Therefore, they lose the benefits that others may have and they are in danger of losing their homes if they want to go into residential or nursing homes.

The right hon. Member for Conwy said that he was not receiving the same number of letters from pensioners as he was 20 years ago. I have not been in the House as long as he has, but I know that there are genuine and deep-seated concerns among the pensioners of Wales about the loss of their homes to pay for residential care. Their homes have been taken away from them and many pensioners in Wales believe that that is wrong. It is morally wrong. People should not be in danger of losing their homes if they have to look after themselves in residential and nursing homes. That is a moral issue which the Government must address. If that requires more resources, the Government must meet the challenge head on.

The other group of pensioners, the bottom 40 per cent., comprises those who live on state benefits. I fully support the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. Pensioners in that group are found particularly in rural areas, where they have special concerns in addition to those of pensioners living in urban areas. The value of their pensions has dropped dramatically in recent years. The inequalities that are built into the system for those who have not been able, through force of circumstance, to have private pensions places them in a particularly bad position.

The Government must not say simply say that all those with private pensions are better off. Of course they are better off. But what about the bottom 40 per cent? What help will the Government give them? Shall we allow them to fall into greater inequality, or will the Government acknowledge that they have a moral responsibility to those people? Does one say that because an elderly pensioner on state benefit has not had the opportunity to obtain a private pension he should fall further behind? The value of the state pension is constantly eroded. The Government have failed to address people's concerns in tonight's debate.

We must also accept a few salient points about the position of pensioners in society in Wales. First, elderly people are over-represented among low-income groups. Secondly, dependence on state benefits in that category has increased in recent years. Income falls with increasing age; women—an issue that the Government have not addressed—and especially the large number of single elderly women, are more likely to be living on lower and dwindling incomes. The value of occupational pensions often dwindles over the years, although in the first few years it may constitute an important addition to recipients' incomes.

There are growing inequalities among the Welsh pensioner population owing to a real terms shortfall in the value of their pensions. There are growing inequalities in incomes, and—as others have pointed out—in the provision of housing. Because pensioners often live in houses that are not properly insulated, their running costs are substantially higher than those of others, and because they tend to live in large properties, often alone, their heating bills are high.

There is also inequality in the provision of care. One of the reasons why pensioners in Wales are now in difficulties is the blurring of the distinction between social and health care. The Government know full well that the more pensioners and disabled people can be transferred to the social sector, the more the NHS will be excused from paying the bill. The Minister said that more people were being treated in hospitals, and that is true; but, as every hon. Member knows, many elderly pensioners are being sent home far too early. Pensioners are having to return to hospital because the care is not available at home.

Health care that was provided in elderly people's homes by district nurses free of charge, on the NHS, must now be provided by home carers. Who is paying the bill? Pensioners, who cannot afford it. The Government are transferring responsibility from the state to pensioners who cannot afford it in the first place. Is that the priority that the Government are giving to dealing with the elderly population in Wales? Those are certainly not the principles of Lloyd George or Aneurin Bevan; they are the principles of the Conservative right, which believes that tax cuts are more important than the health of pensioners in Wales.

When community care was introduced, we were told that it created real choices for people: it meant that they could live in their own homes for much longer. The problem was that the Government underestimated, considerably, the number of people who would decide to go for that costly option. A clear choice is now unavoidable: the Government must either recognise the under-provision and provide more from their own resources or make pensioners pay more. What will happen? Pensioners will pay more. Local authority budgets cannot sustain the demand, and unless the Government are prepared to recognise that, the elderly population will pay more and more for social care.

If the Government have any credibility left in this regard, they must accept the real concerns of pensioners. They must accept that the people of Wales, including pensioners, believe that they have failed the test. At least all Opposition parties have had an opportunity to present their point of view tonight; we await the Minister's response with interest.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Roderick Richards): It is my privilege to respond to a debate on such an important issue.

Conservative Members subscribe to the maxim "Age commands respect", and we respect the elderly people of this country—not least because, some 50 years ago, their generation secured freedom for us and the rest of the western world. They bequeathed to us what we have today. We respect them also for their independence. They were brought up to believe in the work ethic, to stand on their own two feet and to help their fellow man. They are a generation who are entitled to be told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I am afraid that all they have heard from the Opposition parties today are lies, damned lies and statistics—politicians on the Opposition Benches promising the earth without ever acknowledging that such promises would cost the earth and so cannot be fulfilled. It is a cruel deceit on a grand scale to make claims and promises that not only cannot be delivered but politicians know they will never be in a position to attempt to deliver. Opposition Members have today shown their total disrespect for the pensioners of Wales.

Do Opposition Members seriously believe that our parents' generation will be fooled by a list of empty promises? They forget that this is the generation that was tricked by the Attlee Government in 1945 into believing that socialism would deliver prosperity. It did not and it never will, so they will not be tricked today by Plaid Cymru or by new Labour: Conservative Members will see to that.

The motion that we are debating, and I notice that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) is already shaking his head—I am fascinated—*[Interruption.]* He failed to say, when speaking in a debate on a specific motion, whether he was for or against the motion. Now is he for or against it?

Mr. Morgan: Given a choice between the motion and the Government's rebuttal of it, the motion is far superior to that rebuttal. What worries me about the Government's rebuttal is that the Minister's Department does not appear to have contributed to it. The Plaid Cymru motion contains not only references to pension issues, properly the province of the Department of Social Security, but matters related to long-term nursing care and social care, which are his responsibility. In the rebuttal, however, there is no mention of those aspects. I do not even know why he is winding up for the Government.

Mr. Richards: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for signifying on behalf of his party that he is for the motion and, therefore, that he is for the spending implications that go with it, which amount to some tens of billions of pounds. Conservative Members will return to that issue time and again.

The motion suggests that pensioners' interests are marginalised—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene again?

Mr. Morgan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Richards: Those interests would be marginalised as an independent Wales—which the nationalists advocate—would be marginalised under the policies of Opposition Members, but not under this Government. We instead have shown our commitment to pensioners through real measures of real benefit, but it is not only about pensioners' income, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Social Security made clear.

We want older people to continue to live full lives and to play as full a part as possible in society and we have created a climate in which they can do so, with a high-quality national health service and with the emphasis we have placed on community care and meeting housing needs. Over the years, my predecessors and I have met representatives of pensioners in Wales many times. We respect their perspective and views. We have sought actively to find out about their concerns and worries and our policies reflect that.

I was intrigued that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) was interested in pensioners. I carried out some research into the extent of that interest and I discovered that, in the past 12 months, the hon. Gentleman's interest in pensioners extended to one entire parliamentary question.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy referred to my constituent, Mr. Alan Roberts, without having told me that he would do so, so I should like to take up one or two of the points that he raised. As the hon. Gentleman already knows, I correspond and speak with Mr. Roberts frequently and regularly.

The national health service and local authorities have played different but complementary roles since the inception of the welfare state. To address the specific point that the hon. Gentleman raised, the guidance that we issued in February reiterates the responsibilities of the NHS to provide continuing health care for those who need it, whether in hospital, in nursing homes, in residential care homes or in their own homes. The guidance does not signify a change in policy; it offers a practical national framework which clarifies the long-standing responsibilities of the NHS. I must say to the hon. Gentleman, who is not paying attention, that the guidance has been welcomed by a range of key interests in the health service, in local authorities and in the voluntary sector.

The hon. Gentleman raised the issue of concessionary fares. I am trying to address issues that he has raised and he does not seem to be paying attention; I wish that he

[Mr. Richards]

would. All local authorities in Wales have schemes for pensioners, ranging from fare reductions of one third or half to free travel. Some authorities also have schemes for cheap travel on the railway as an alternative to concessionary bus fares. Local authorities are in the best position to decide what schemes are appropriate for their area.

In addition to all the other super high spending proposals that the hon. Gentleman made in his speech, he referred to free television licences for pensioners. That particular scheme would cost £700 million a year across the United Kingdom. That is in addition to the £22 billion linking state pensions with average earnings to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), referred earlier. If we aggregate that as we go along, the sum approaches £23 billion. The Labour party is in favour of that and the hon. Member for Cardiff, West says that he now supports the motion.

There is one issue which the hon. Gentleman raised that I wish he had not raised, but I cannot allow it to pass. He spoke about pensioners having given everything to defeat fascism. I need hardly remind him that, when Britain was preparing for war, the founding fathers of his party attacked and burnt a RAF station on the Lleyn peninsula, so the hon. Gentleman need not pretend that the history of his party, which he and his supporters revere, is as clean, clear or supportive of British policies in the second world war as he would wish it to be.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister give way, or is he frightened to give way?

Mr. Richards: No. The hon. and learned Gentleman has had all the time I intend to give him and he has had his say.

I now wish to refer the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy to his party's so-called white paper on health, which was published in December. I understand that there was a public meeting on 10 January that health service professionals were invited to attend. I would love to know from the hon. Gentleman how many health service professionals, if any, attended.

The white paper referred to an awful lot of high-spending proposals, which, naturally, the hon. Gentleman, or the person who wrote it, did not cost. Fortunately, I was in a position to assess those costs, so I should like to run through one or two of the proposals that the hon. Gentleman has published.

The hon. Gentleman's white paper argued that there should be "wholly free" nursing home care. My estimate is that that would cost about £140 million a year. That white paper proposed that GP fundholding should be abolished and that all GPs and dentists should be salaried—the hon. Gentleman repeated that pledge in his speech. Apart from driving GPs and dentists out of the NHS, and probably out of the country, the cost of acquiring those practices would be about £100 million. That white paper also advocated the abolition of prescription charges, even though about 90 per cent. of people in many parts of Wales are exempt from them. That proposal would cost another £17 million, so that is another quarter of a billion pounds to add to the aggregate.

That white paper also contained some other multi-million pound proposals which were totally uncosted, and which were even beyond my capability to cost. It proposed that there should be a new tier of health authorities to come beneath an elected Welsh Parliament, a health Ministry, principal health and social care authorities, health and social care authorities and, finally, hospital boards. Those five tiers of bureaucracy would lean down on our NHS and cost the earth—I cannot possibly assess how much.

The hon. Gentleman's white paper also suggested that junior doctors should work eight hours a day, 48 hours a week, which is an expensive item. It also called for the provision of extended community hospitals. I should love to cost that one, but, unfortunately, that white paper does not say how many extended community hospitals there should be.

The hon. Gentleman's white paper also suggested that community health specialists should receive new priority and increased funding—again, that was uncosted. The increase in the provision of services as a result of overlaps between health and social policy and health and housing policy also has serious cost implications to which the nationalists did not refer at all.

The joke of it all is that the proposals would be funded from 9 per cent. of the gross domestic product of Wales. The hon. Gentleman and his party have suggested that all those extra funding demands would be met by that 9 per cent. of GDP—they cannot even do their arithmetic. We already spend 9 per cent. of Welsh GDP on the health services and an extra 1 per cent. on social services. None of the wacky schemes in the white paper could possibly be funded out of that 9 per cent. of GDP. The required percentage of GDP would be even higher than that, so to the £23 billion I guess we could probably add between another £500 million and £700 million. It does not matter any longer because it is all the same as cricket scores, is it not?

Opposition Members continually call for an independent Wales. Today, for a change, they called for a better deal for Welsh pensioners. But today has given us an insight into what life in Wales, with its own Parliament, would be like if Plaid Cymru had its way. It would be a case of spending as though there were no tomorrow—the taxes to pay for that would guarantee no tomorrow. There would be bureaucrats from Benllech to Bridgend. There would be interference in people's lives: restriction of choice and curtailment of individual freedoms.

We would have an economy so burdened with taxation, regulation and government that business men would be queuing up to cross the Severn bridge—and, going that way, it would be free. Wales would witness a brain drain on an unprecedented scale. All this mayhem through the medium of Welsh—llongyfarchiadau. But for the pensioners of Wales, there would be no escape. For them, Plaid Cymru's solution would be final.

What of new Labour? That one-man band, without the—

Mr. Llwyd *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 25, Noes 129.

Division No. 223] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Cunningham, Roseanna
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Harvey, Nick
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, The Reverend William
Maddock, Diana
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Rendel, David
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgld)*
Tyler, Paul

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dafydd Wigley and
Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'tw'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Richard Ottaway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the rise in pensioners' living standards throughout Wales and the rest of the UK since this Government took office; applauds the fact that pensioners' average incomes have increased by 51 per cent. in real terms since 1979, compared with only 5 per cent. between 1974 and 1979; welcomes the extra help, amounting to £1.2 billion per year above the rate of inflation since 1988, awarded through improvements to income-related benefits for pensioners; believes it is far better to target benefit resources on those in the most need; applauds the fact that this Government has provided a solid basis for income in retirement by maintaining its pledge to increase basic retirement pension at least in line with prices; and welcomes wholeheartedly the wider and substantial benefits delivered to pensioners by this Government's policies, particularly the control of inflation.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Regulations 1995, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

Question agreed to.

Classic FM

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

10.11 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate the debate, and especially grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of National Heritage for being in his place at this late hour. I seek to draw to the attention of the House the sword of Damocles, indeed the death threat, hanging over one of the success stories of the century.

A recent survey showed that Classic FM is the radio station most listened to by Members of Parliament. Perhaps far more importantly, it is the most listened to classical radio station in Europe. The Broadcasting Act 1990 allowed the birth of Classic FM, our first national commercial radio station. Such a station would not be viable, said the critics, if it did not succumb to the normal diet of pop music and prattle. The more optimistic gave the planned classical music station two years at most.

That was based on a belief that, as a nation of philistines, we would not be able to recognise excellence either in musical or in broadcasting terms. Instead, we have gained the success story of independent national radio. In three short years Classic FM has built up more than twice as many listeners as its nearest rival, Radio 3. Nearly 5 million listeners a week, 25 per cent. of whom are under 35, tune in to enjoy "the world's most beautiful music", in addition to news bulletins, travel, cookery, sport and financial programmes. Even Radio 4 was shaken to its core when its "Gardeners' Question Time" team crossed the Floor of the ether and joined Classic FM's "Gardening Forum".

Before I entered the House I co-founded a company offering a design, installation, manufacturing and investment service to radio stations in the far east, eastern and southern Africa, the Americas, the Soviet Union and the European Union. I therefore have a little practical experience of the broadcast sector, and an interest in seeing broadcasting—an industry in which British technology and expertise are the envy of the world—succeed.

Classic FM has occasionally been dismissed as lightweight or frivolous—a constant diet of "The Four Seasons" and the "1812 Overture", pundits have said. Nothing could be further from the truth. While I level no criticism at either Vivaldi or Tchaikovsky—

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I am sure they will be relieved.

Mr. Fabricant: I am glad to know that I have support on the Government Benches. Every listener can now find something in the 23,000 tracks on the play list.

The Lucerne music festival—long considered to be one of the greatest of modern times—was brought to listeners in the United Kingdom for the first time this year by Classic. This success has been recognised, with Classic winning many awards since 1992, including the Sony national radio station of the year award. However, a good radio station should not be concerned merely with the music on the airwaves.

Committed to music education, Classic endeavours to encourage young musicians by providing a platform to reflect their lives, music and future careers. This commitment is backed by a charitable trust which raises funds for music education and child-related charities aimed at stimulating an appreciation of classical music.

All the nation's orchestras have links with Classic FM, with the Royal Philharmonic receiving substantial direct and indirect support. Broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Classic FM has proved through its success that we are not quite the nation of philistines which some would have us believe and, more importantly, that classical music has much to offer any listener, regardless of his knowledge of the subject—something, I am afraid, that Radio 3 has been unable to achieve to date.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who is not in his place, has said that he fears that Radio 3 is now trying to imitate Classic FM. Imagine for a moment if it were to be the other way round. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that Classic FM would be the success it is if it were organised by the BBC? I think not. Imitation being the sincerest form of flattery, I hope that Radio 3's shift in policy will mean that our public sector classical station now starts to provide a service that attracts listeners, as well as attracting public funds. I commend Radio 3's shift in programming. Paul Gambaccini has a knowledge of classical music to be revered, and not reviled, and the controller of Radio 3 showed insight in recruiting him. He has my congratulations.

Building on its success, Classic FM has started to expand. A glossy magazine based on the Classic format now sells more than 40,000 copies a month. The Government—rightly in my view—have encouraged broadcasters to go out and export what they produce, proving once again that we have the best broadcasting industry in the world.

Classic FM has responded to the Government's campaign with a pan-European network. There is already a sister station in the Netherlands and a licence for Stockholm, and the first ever national independent station in Finland has finally been agreed. Classic is now taking the first steps towards the American market by providing a consultancy and technology for a Classic FM franchise in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry and the British embassy in the United States.

Those Members who believe that quality and commercialism are often mutually exclusive might also be interested to learn that, while Classic FM is reliant on advertising revenue, it has a policy which allows no more than three advertisement breaks an hour. Those who may believe that my opening remarks until now have sounded like an advertisement for Classic FM may appreciate benefits such as that policy.

I gave credit to the Broadcasting Act 1990, which allowed Classic FM to develop in the first place. However, as I am sure the House is aware, the Act has been accused of creating more problems than it solved. My right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—the former Secretary of State for National Heritage—stated:

"In developing the Bill, a small group of Ministers pursued, in private, a range of proposals. They should have known that, the moment that the proposals saw the light of day, they would have to beat a retreat from many of the points that had seemed so clear cut in a small room but would not appear so in the clear light of day before wider consultation."

One of the flaws in the Bill was the arrangement that national independent radio licences should be awarded on an eight-year basis. No provision is made within the Act for renewal, and there is also no requirement that a bidder would have to offer a similar programme to the existing station. There is no emphasis on quality in the bidding criteria. That could result in Classic FM being replaced by another higher bidder, offering an entirely different style of music. Could Blur be the replacement for Beethoven? Is that what we want?

The position for radio is in stark contrast to the provision made for independent television licences. The Act reads:

"A Channel Three licence shall continue in force for a period of ten years, and may be renewed on one or more occasions for a period of ten years, beginning with the date of renewal."

Despite the uncertainty, Classic FM is still thinking and planning ahead. The future of broadcasting is already cast to be an exciting time, with the introduction of digital broadcasting, which will enhance choice and technical quality for listeners and viewers and maintain Britain's reputation as a creative innovator and a technical leader.

The development of digital audio broadcasting will require co-operation between broadcasters, manufacturers and the Government, a process in which Classic is seeking to play a full role. Classic FM has welcomed the Government's proposals on digital terrestrial broadcasting and proposed, alongside NTL, an experimental DAB service for London, keeping Britain's technical standards at the high level which is envied by the rest of the world.

Establishing a digital network will, however, require substantial investment. Supporters of Classic have already invested more than £18 million, but attracting investment is made more difficult by the fact that Classic does not have a secure future at present. Seen from the perspective that Classic has only five years more air time guaranteed, investment in a digital service would result in a huge loss for the company. Classic must have a lifespan longer than this.

I do not seek privilege for Classic FM or any other station in its market in the future. I do, however, believe that the station should enjoy the same benefits of licence security as those operating Channel 3 television stations. There is no guarantee at present that a Classic-type licence will be advertised next time, and even if Classic is able to make a bid for a new licence, it will be up against new competition keen to build on the market that Classic has developed without any requirement to guarantee that quality in broadcasting will remain.

I am sure that many of my colleagues in the House were lobbied when Radio 4 long wave was threatened, and that was only one frequency of that popular station. Listeners become passionate about the stations that they listen to on a regular basis. The station, and the personalities that go with it, become a valuable part of people's day-to-day lives. I remind the House that Classic has built up more than 5 million listeners. Are we to tell them that their choice may disappear, to be replaced by yet another station devoted to the teen pop culture?

There can be no guarantees for Classic's future. However, if the changes that I have asked for tonight are implemented, the Radio Authority, and not the arbitrary wording of an Act, will be the judge of whether Classic FM continues broadcasting into the 21st century. The Radio Authority should be the arbiter of quality and public service. This makes sense and it will be yet another incentive for Classic to maintain its quality threshold and be an innovator in the market that it serves.

The chief executive of Classic, John Spearman, has said:

"I am sure that it was not the intention of Parliament to threaten the long term existence of Classic's success".

I agree. I therefore look to my colleague, the Minister of State, for action—action that will ensure that Classic is able to compete in the world broadcasting industry on a secure platform equal to that which our television companies enjoy; action that will enable Classic FM to invest in the technology necessary for the 21st century, and action that will ensure that Classic FM will be able to continue to add to the enjoyment of millions of listeners in the United Kingdom and abroad.

10.23 pm

The Minister of State, Department of National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) on securing this debate. He is always extremely sharp in finding opportunities to express his views and effective in the way in which he does it. I congratulate him on the sincerity and passion with which he put a strong case. I join my hon. Friend in recognising and applauding the great success not merely of Classic FM but of the independent radio sector, which is one of this country's success stories. As a sector, independent radio is growing both in popularity and financial strength.

My hon. Friend mentioned the BBC. He may be interested to know that the audience research figures just published for the third quarter of 1995 show that the share of listening achieved by commercial radio was 2.3 per cent. ahead of that for the BBC. The Radio Authority's annual report agrees that commercial radio has now overtaken the BBC. Since the BBC had a head start of some 50 years, the independent radio sector has good reason indeed to be pleased with that performance in meeting the needs of listeners.

Listeners now have a greater range of choice available to them than ever and stations continue to proliferate. In this situation, and since listeners are not normally concerned about who owns a station as long as it provides what they want to hear, the Government have been able to simplify and liberalise the ownership regulations and we are committed to further liberalisation at the earliest legislative opportunity.

It should be remembered that there were no independent radio services in this country until 1973. At that point, the Government proposed introducing independent radio at both national and local level. It coincided, however, with a difficult period for the newspaper industry and the Government were persuaded that, as it would have been a direct competitor for advertising revenue, the introduction of independent national radio could have had unacceptable implications for the national press. It was, therefore, principally for that reason that independent radio came into being as a local service only.

Parliament debated the issue during the passage of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, which, in the event, permitted the establishment of a transmitter network for a national service, but did not yet allow such a service to

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

broadcast. Plans were, however, drawn up by the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the service to be speech-based, to compete with BBC Radio 4.

The Government's proposals for introducing independent national radio then featured in a 1987 consultative document, which suggested that it need not be limited to a single service, but ought to be capable of providing competition to the BBC in the areas of music, entertainment and sports coverage, as well as news and speech. On that basis, three networks were envisaged, and the ensuing Broadcasting Act 1990 provided for those to be introduced.

The 1990 Act requires the Radio Authority to secure a diversity of independent national radio services, of which

"one is a service the greater part of which consists in the broadcasting of spoken material"

and

"another is a service which consists, wholly or mainly, in the broadcasting of music which, in the opinion of the Authority, is not pop".

The third service is undefined.

The sector is of considerable economic and cultural importance. It quickly adjusted to the changes brought about by the 1990 Act and has also carved out a new and more secure environment for itself through internal changes. Independent radio is the United Kingdom's fastest-growing advertising medium. I understand, for example, that the sector is aiming for a 6 per cent. share of total UK advertising by the turn of the century, which represents a challenging target and demonstrates the confidence of the industry in the future.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, digital technology will play an important part in that future. The Government welcome the potential that such technology offers. It will improve the quality, ease and reliability of reception, and could also increase the range of choice for listeners and, in the longer term, might release valuable spectrum.

The BBC introduced digital audio broadcasting services in September. I am sure that the independent sector will be pleased to see the publicly funded broadcaster leading the way, taking the initial risks and bearing the inaugural costs of that major venture. The BBC estimates expenditure of about £11 million for the first phase of development alone. That should bring digital audio broadcasting to 60 per cent. of the population within four years. I am sure, however, that independent radio will not want to lag too far behind in taking up that new opportunity, and I know that Classic FM is keen to play its part.

Within the independent sector, the national radio stations—Talk Radio UK, Virgin and, of course, the first one, Classic FM—continue to go from strength to strength. Classic FM came on air in September 1992 and proved very successful from the outset. It is now the UK's fifth most popular station, with some 4.8 million listeners. As my hon. Friend mentioned, it has had considerable success overseas and has, I understand, further international ambitions.

I am well aware of the requests that we should take the opportunity of any legislation that might be proposed to alter the licensing procedures in the Broadcasting Act 1990. My hon. Friend has correctly pointed out that there is a difference between the radio and television licensing provisions and asked that incumbent operators should be given similar scope for licence renewal.

I understand the desire for parity between independent national radio services and the Channel 3 television companies, but the requirement for fresh competitive tender for the independent national radio licences was designed to keep services fresh and offer regular opportunities for new operators. It also recognised that national radio frequencies were at a premium. While the advent of digital audio broadcasting will allow for the provision of six independent national radio services as compared with the existing three, they will still be at a greater premium than their digital television counterparts.

The distinction between the arrangements for independent national radio and television licensing in the 1990 Act was drawn in recognition of the differences between the two media. Television stations, for instance, face considerably higher start-up costs to meet their more stringent licence conditions. Parliament considered that eight-year licences for radio stations offered sufficient scope for them to recoup their costs and to make a reasonable return on their investment. There was also the view that these arrangements would be more disruptive to viewers, if applied to television licensing arrangements, than to radio listeners.

Government policy is to provide regular opportunities for newcomers, to secure a proper return to the taxpayer for the use of a limited national resource and to encourage competition. At the same time, however, the Government recognise the need for those criteria to be balanced against acceptable levels of potential disruption for listeners. I can only assure the House and my hon. Friend that we are looking closely at these issues right now, but I cannot at this moment give any indication as to the outcome.

It is the nature of radio that safeguards its future. It has a unique appeal to the imagination. It has the ability to go anywhere with the consumer without intruding on their other activities, whether driving a car or relaxing at home. Research shows that listeners treat it as a friend. The loyalty with which listeners continue to respond to radio in the face of competing demands on everyone's time and attention demonstrates that radio has a solid future. The growth of commercial radio's audiences and revenue and the advantages which digital audio broadcasting offers signify that radio is not only secure but that radio is on the move.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 25 October 1995

The House met at Ten o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

General Practitioners (West Country)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

10.5 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): This is my first opportunity to initiate one of the new morning Adjournment debates, and it is quite a relief to be here in the morning rather than late at night, as has been my more common experience of Adjournment debates. The fact that we are here in the morning is relevant to the issue that I want to raise, because it has always been my view that we raise and debate issues more effectively when we are wide awake than when we are exhausted by overlong proceedings in this House.

That is all the more true for doctors, who must struggle with overly long hours and are often called out to deal with patients in the middle of the night. The Liberal Democrats in the south-west have sought this debate because we believe that all is not well down at the surgery, or—to put it another way—general practitioners in Devon and Cornwall are at breaking point.

In response to concerns raised with us by both health service professionals and patients, we recently sought the views of 1,000 GPs across the south-west, of whom 320 responded, many on behalf of their practice. That is a huge rate of return for a postal survey, where a response of 10 per cent. is regarded as very high. That in itself shows the serious concerns that many GPs have.

The survey showed that more than half of doctors work an average week of 64 hours or more, with seven in 10 often working more than 80 hours a week. Most frightening of all, however, was that some GPs reported that they were working as many as 120 hours a week. Not surprisingly, morale among GPs is falling rapidly, and that is reflected in recruitment levels. Massive work loads, increasing bureaucracy and continuing underfunding have all contributed to the present level of strain on GPs in the west country. It is a crisis that Conservative Ministers cannot afford to ignore, and which impacts directly on patient care.

GPs—any more than Members of Parliament—are not super-human, and they cannot continue to work longer and longer hours. Yet more and more work has been added relentlessly to their working day.

For instance, in recent years GPs have been required to add annual reports, medical audits, health promotion forms and early discharge schemes to their already busy patient schedules. Doctors have found themselves working more hours, but that time has been spent in the main not with patients, but at their desks completing forms. Indeed, 100 per cent. of GPs responding to the Liberal Democrats' survey said that health promotion and increased practice administration had caused an escalation in their work load.

That has not just evolved.

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): The hon. Gentleman will recognise that, as a former member of the health education authority board, I have been interested in health promotion for many years. He will also appreciate that health care, education and promotion are now recognised as important parts of fundholding practices. General practitioners working within the fundholding structure are recompensed for that work, and they are recognised as providing an important service.

The hon. Gentleman paints a misleading picture of practices in my constituency. I conduct a parliamentary medical forum and I regularly meet general practitioners. The hon. Gentleman's portrayal of GP morale and the resources available to GPs is not the picture I get.

Mr. Taylor: It is the picture painted by GPs and their representatives, and I shall refer to their comments later. In view of the scale of response from general practitioners—including many in his constituency—I think that the hon. Gentleman should be aware of the pressures.

I am not opposed to health promotion: it is an important part of the health service, and should play an increasingly significant role. However, we cannot ask doctors to do more without recognising that, unless they receive additional help, they will be under pressure from increasing work loads.

As to the hon. Gentleman's comments about fundholding practices, those practices are funded on a different basis from those of other GPs. They get extra funding, and if all doctors received such funding, fewer would be under pressure. In our policy document presented at our party conference, we argue that all doctors—irrespective of whether they are fundholding, work in a co-operative group or work directly with funds managed by local health authorities—should be funded on the same basis in order to try to meet the funding shortfall.

The pressures to which I refer have not just evolved: they have resulted directly from Government policy. In my view—I appreciate that Conservative Members are unlikely to agree with it—the pressures have been caused by the Government's refusal to provide real funding for all general practices and their insistence on more bureaucracy and paperwork, much of which I believe is not required. The patients charter is one example.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): As the hon. Gentleman has mentioned general practitioners' work loads, I foreshadow that I intend to make a very important point in my speech that I am sure that he would like to address. Before the general practitioners' contract was introduced in 1989-90, my Department and the British Medical Association conducted a survey of GP work loads. Another survey was submitted to the independent pay review body last year. They showed that GPs' work loads had increased by 2 per cent. over that period, while their remuneration had increased by 6 per cent.

I understand that general practitioners are under pressure, but I do not believe that it is correct to suggest that it is as intense, or is increasing as fast, as the hon.

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

Gentleman claims. With respect, I suggest that there are slightly wider surveys than the one that the hon. Gentleman has carried out.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend and I shall pursue those points in due course. I suspect that the problem is reflected in the comments of doctors from Devon and Cornwall because of the particular pressures they face operating in rural practices, where it is much harder to obtain the support that is available in the cities. For example, very few doctors in my area have cover for their out-of-hours work. That is the reason for highlighting the problems of Devon and Cornwall. I do not suggest that those problems are unique to that region, but I suspect that they are not reflected evenly across the whole country.

I have referred to the patients charter. Ministers boast of the benefits that the charter brings to the patient, and of the expectations that each patient is now entitled to have of his or her GP. However, while Ministers have set standards nationally, I do not believe that they have provided the necessary resources locally. In other words, the promise and the increased patient expectation that accompanies it are not matched by the necessary additional funds.

I stress that these are the views of a large number of GPs across the two counties. Some 98 per cent. of the GPs surveyed said that Government initiatives, such as the patients charter, have led to unrealistic expectations of GPs, especially given the lack of funds. GPs' frustration at the policies and their increased work load was highlighted in the recent furore over the out-of-hours settlement.

The Minister may argue that the issue has been put to bed, but that is not the case according to GPs in the south-west. Dr. Green, chair of the local medical committee in Devon, said:

"The current solution for out of hours is only accepted by Doctors in the South West as a first step in addressing the work load problem."

While the threat of industrial action may have abated—I am glad that that is so—the deep-seated problem of doctors' hours remain.

In saying that the Government's settlement has not solved the problem, I am particularly conscious of the additional difficulties facing practices in the south-west. Rural GPs in much of Devon and Cornwall struggle with their night work, often unable to load-share. Many parts of the west country are so remote that it is difficult to see how any deputising arrangements or co-operatives could offer respite to GP night visits. In that context, our survey showed that only 38 per cent. of the GP respondents used any kind of deputising service.

I have highlighted the anger felt by many GPs in the south-west about the increased work load, imposed bureaucracy and the lack of funding from central Government. However, what is most serious are the dangers that low morale brings to patients, doctors and to the health service. I turn first to the danger to patients.

Conservative policies with regard to the health service and the hours that doctors are forced to work as a result are putting lives at risk. Some 70 per cent. of the GPs who responded to our survey said that the hours that they are expected to work could put their patients at risk. The *West Briton and Royal Cornwall Gazette*, a local paper in my constituency, said:

"Anyone driving into Cornwall on the A30 cannot fail to have noticed a roadside sign "Tiredness can kill." That it could be your worn out GP who threatens your life is chilling."

Such dangers are best highlighted by local doctors. One Cornish doctor said that the strain of working long hours is leading to potentially fatal mistakes. He continued:

"I am sure mistakes have been made and will continue to be made by people dead on their feet; tiredness can kill. I have been on the end of a needle at 3 am and finding myself having to concentrate very hard on giving the substance intended and putting it in the right place."

Similarly, a BMA spokesperson said that on one occasion when he worked "literally around the clock", he felt that he should not have been driving, let alone seeing patients. Earlier this month, a Plymouth GP said:

"the increasing administration and the increasing burden, especially night calls, certainly makes people less efficient, capable of mistakes and more dangerous."

I do not think that we can dispute that claim when we consider the hours that doctors say that they are working.

I do not argue that the problems—particularly the issue of out-of-hours care in rural areas—are easy to solve. However, we must find solutions, because patients are being put at risk and doctors are under undue pressure.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Having spent 24 hours on an aeroplane returning from a Foreign Affairs Committee trip to Australia, I particularly appreciate the hon. Gentleman's remarks about tiredness, and I accept wholeheartedly his point that tiredness can affect performance. However, can he produce any evidence that patients in Devon and Cornwall have suffered as a result of doctors being overtired? Perhaps he could provide actual evidence rather than opinions gleaned from a survey. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that some survey results can be pretty vague.

Mr. Taylor: Many doctors responded to the survey, and a huge proportion of them conveyed their concerns. Clearly, the hon. Gentleman will be sceptical about a survey that we have conducted; I understand that. However, there is no margin of error in the figures. Some 97 per cent. of doctors have stated their concerns, and we have statistics about the hours they work. While the hon. Gentleman may not agree with my points about Government policy, I do not believe that he would argue that doctors face no pressures or difficulties. There is confidentiality about patient files and although doctors referred to cases that they had experienced, they obviously did not give names and addresses, and one would not expect them to do that. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman asks the impossible.

I shall give some facts that are available and which illustrate the danger to doctors in terms of their health and well being. The *Western Morning News* puts it well when it states:

"In the West Country GPs are too tired, stressed out and too overworked to see to their own health."

For example, the chair of the Cornish medical committee says that he knows of 20 local GPs who are receiving psychiatric care because of stress caused by long hours and other work-related problems. Dr. Green, the chairman of the local medical committee in Devon, gave the

example of Paignton, where there have been resignations from two practices in the past year, and a further early retirement because of stress-induced ill health.

The survey also illustrates the effects of the Government's neglect of GPs on recruitment and on the future of the family doctor service. General practice training schemes have been reporting a sharp fall in the number of applicants for places over the past four or five years, and that is now working through to general practice. GPs who are retiring, many of them early, are leaving places which cannot be filled because new doctors who are at the start of their careers are quite rightly not prepared to work under the stress and in the conditions to which older GPs have become accustomed.

Young doctors are taking part-time work, shift work or locum work in preference to making a long-term commitment to general practice. That can only be seen as a reflection of the pressures they are under. General practice is clearly not attracting doctors in the way it did in the past, and in the long run that is a serious problem because we could end up with the situation that already pertains in dental practices, where patients find it hard to get cover.

A shortage puts remaining GPs under further pressure with their patient lists. The concern was highlighted by the survey, which showed that more than half the GPs said that they would not choose to be GPs if they were starting their careers today, and 96 per cent.—virtually all of them—said that there had been a noticeable decline in the recruitment of new GPs.

Those are disturbing trends, and this concern was supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners, which responded yesterday to the survey. It said:

"The concern about recruitment and retention shown in your survey would be endorsed by the RCGP and is borne out by experience across the UK."

The facts speak for themselves. GPs in Cornwall and Devon are suffering, patients are being put at risk, and general practices are under pressure.

It is time that the Secretary of State for Health took real action to tackle those problems by looking to cut the bureaucracy that has been added to doctors' burdens, and by addressing the problems of rural practices in particular. That needs increased funding. As we approach the Budget, I hope that the Minister will fight for NHS patients rather than agree to the tax cut election bribes that the Chancellor has said he wants.

At our party conference, and in our health policy proposal that was debated there, Liberal Democrats set out plans to cut bureaucracy and paperwork and put more money into the NHS. That money would be raised especially through increased tobacco taxation. We ought to reduce demand through wide-ranging health promotion plans, and we must provide the resources to ensure that that can be effective.

There are genuine problems in rural areas such as Devon and Cornwall. The sparsity of the population, and the fact that many GPs work more or less on their own, inevitably mean that the pressures on the health service as a whole are especially reflected in such areas. That is why we sought to debate these issues and find out more about what doctors had to say.

When we wrote to doctors we expected neither the scale of the response nor the strength of feeling. Doctors, and particularly GPs, are not traditionally regarded as campaigning left wingers, nor do I think that they are such even now. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to their concerns.

10.24 am

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on securing the debate and on his excellent speech, which described the worrying findings of the survey. He raised many interesting and some quite alarming points.

In particular, I was struck by the finding that 70 per cent. of GPs thought that the hours that they are expected to work could put their patients at risk. That is not a rhetorical device used by my hon. Friend, nor is it polemical: it is the opinion that was expressed by the GPs themselves. It is the considered opinion of 70 per cent. of them that the hours they are working could put their patients at risk. We should all be concerned about that, and about the long-term implications of the survey.

Mr. Harris: Percentages have been bandied about. The hon. Gentleman mentioned 70 per cent., but what does that mean in terms of numbers? How many doctors responded to the Liberal Democrat pamphlet by saying that the hours they worked could put patients at risk?

Mr. Harvey: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Truro outlined the scale of the survey. There were 320 responses, some of which were on behalf of several GPs working together in a practice. If my mental arithmetic works quickly enough this morning, I would say that that means that more than 200 expressed the opinion that I have just described.

The survey findings seem to strike very much the same note as that struck by the findings of the study conducted by the general medical services committee of the BMA. That study was concerned, in the same way as we were concerned, about recruitment and morale in the profession. The task group dealing with that looked at the evidence from some practices that were finding difficulty in recruiting GPs.

Dr. Ian Banks, the chairman of the task group that produced the report, said:

"The problem of GP recruitment has now reached crisis proportions and this is bound to affect the quality of care to patients, . . . GPs want to see less bureaucracy in general practice. They want to ensure equity of access to the NHS for all patients and adequate resources to fund the care of patients discharged back into the community."

Dr. Banks also made the point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Truro referred—that, although GPs have accepted the out-of-hours settlement, they hope that it is just a first step towards a more general recognition of the problems they are suffering and towards a more acceptable, comprehensive and long-term solution to those problems.

Not only is the health of patients being put at risk directly by tired, stressed and overworked doctors, but the recruitment crisis means that things could get considerably worse. Patient health could be jeopardised by a lack of qualified doctors who are willing to take on the GP role, and low morale in the profession is surely the decisive factor in that.

The problem is exacerbated by early retirement. Some of those who are heading towards retirement age are finding that it is all just too much for them, and there has

[Mr. Harvey]

been an increase in the trend of early retirement in the past few years. That leaves doctors, and especially those in rural practices who are struggling, with even more of a work load.

Morale is so low that some advertised jobs are attracting only two or three applicants, compared with 40 or 50 just a few years ago. Will that lead to a drop in quality? In one region, EC doctors are taking advantage of that situation by joining UK vocational training schemes. More than half the GP registrars in the East Anglian region are EC doctors. If they return to their own countries, their training will have been a costly subsidy by Britain. Although the employment of such doctors has the short-term benefit of filling training posts, it will not solve the long-term manpower problem in general practice, unless they stay on and become GPs in the national health service.

There is also the problem of part-time GPs. It is entirely good that there are more women GPs, but many of those want to work part time, and many male GPs are also seeking to switch to part-time work. As morale among general practitioners drops, fewer people want to be a GP, those who are reaching retirement age choose to retire, and others choose to work part-time, who on earth will take up the work and fill the gap that is being left behind?

Why has morale dropped? My hon. Friend the Member for Truro referred to out-of-hours work, which is a serious issue. Patients' expectations of the service that their GPs provide has increased a great deal in recent years. In some respects, that has been stoked by the Government's initiatives. It does not follow that those initiatives are wrong—far from it. It remains the case, however, that, if people expect more, more resources are needed to fulfil the expectations.

That is especially clear in relation to the out-of-hours issue. Some patients seem to expect an almost routine service to be available—not an emergency service—24 hours a day. That is something that doctors, as caring people, clearly have to struggle with, but it is extremely annoying and tiresome for them to struggle out in the early hours of the morning to answer a patient call and to find that it is a straightforward, routine matter that could have been dealt with the following morning in the surgery. Everyone recognises that that is happening on a widespread basis.

Another problem is the interaction between general practitioners and their local hospitals. Again, the position in rural areas differs from that in urban areas. Recently, I have been talking to doctors at a very rural practice in my constituency who are suffering badly in terms of their financial shortfall. They made the point that some GPs in urban areas can get around some financial deficits by going into hospitals and undertaking various programmes of work. That is not possible for doctors who operate in surgeries that are 20, 30 or more miles from the local hospitals.

In any event, the interface between the GP and the hospital causes problems. Because of underfunding in the secondary sector, GPs are spending more time trying to make the system work, liaising with patients and hospitals for appointments and treatments, and dealing with the trend to pass the prescribing costs for drugs from the secondary sector to the primary sector. GPs are often called to prescribe drug treatments for which they are not clinically responsible.

In addition, there is the problem that my hon. Friend touched on briefly, of early discharge from hospital. We all know that there is a trend towards patients being discharged earlier. That would be, and is welcome where adequate community care services exist, but sometimes that support is not there, so doctors find it difficult to care for recently discharged patients who develop post-operative complications.

My hon. Friend referred to administration. Increased paperwork shifts the emphasis of the job away from patient care. He referred to health promotion, and the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) said that some recognition of that has been made in terms of fundholding GPs' financial settlement. That is true, but the fact remains that there are only 24 hours in a day, and the more hours are taken up in that sort of paperwork, the fewer are left for dealing with patient care.

Patient complaints are increasing again, partly due to some of the initiatives that have been taken. They lead to additional stress and additional paperwork, as does the patients charter. The document states that patients have various rights, but does not really give any indication that they have reciprocal responsibilities, so that has fuelled the dramatic rise in patient expectations.

When referring to the costs of the national health service, the point is often made that science advances swiftly, and medical knowledge moves fast. We need to guarantee that general practitioners, including those working however remotely out in the sticks, have time to go away and study developments in the profession; otherwise, the medical advances that are being made will be meaningless. Opportunities for study must be there, and they are impinged on by out-of-hours work.

Because of reorganisations, there has been turmoil in the NHS for five years or so. Frequent structural changes mean that doctors do not know whom they will be meeting from month to month, and the instability makes planning difficult for them. The continual denial that there is a two-tier system does not help—there is such a system. If that could be recognised and dealt with, it would assist all the planning and organisation that doctors are expected to undertake. It is obvious that, in some instances, non-clinical considerations are determining where and when patients are treated.

Why are general practitioners leaving the profession early? A survey in the west country of 515 GPs showed that not one wanted to work beyond the age of 60. The reasons cited were the increased work load and bureaucracy, increasingly unrealistic patient expectations, fear of violence, and patient complaints. Doctors have had enough, and can see no option but to get out. Basically, there is a feeling of loss of control and powerlessness in the face of seemingly open-ended demands and a belief that changes are being imposed without regard to GPs' views. Low morale is driving doctors away from the profession, and frankly, who can blame them?

What could be done? There are just a few remedies that I should like to propose. The Government must start to co-operate more fully with the profession to improve morale. They must resolve the out-of-hours issue; ensure that general practitioners have protected study time; curtail the bureaucratic burden on GPs, which is spiralling out of control; ensure equity of access to the national health service for all patients; ensure that there are adequate resources to fund the care of patients discharged back into the community; improve communication

between the primary and secondary sectors; include within the patients charter a clear and realistic statement of what the NHS can be expected to deliver; and prevent prescribing costs from being improperly transferred to general practice, by ensuring that the secondary sector provides the required treatment.

The Government should also end the uncertainty caused by frequent changes to the NHS structure, give medical students more exposure to general practice during their training, and consider making general practice an element of general or higher postgraduate training in medicine.

Those are just a few suggestions that might provide some long-term solution to the problem that we can identify from this survey and from the survey conducted by the British Medical Association. None of those things can be done overnight—no one pretends that they should be—but the debate's purpose is to highlight the situation that exists, to consider what lessons can be learned from it and what remedies there might be in the longer term. I hope that we will hear positive comments from the Minister on a number of those points.

10.36 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Perhaps my interventions during the speeches of the hon. Members for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) showed a certain scepticism on my part about surveys in general, and about those by the Liberal Democrats in particular. I remember a survey they did just before the last local elections on the position of teachers in Cornwall and education funding, which seemed to give the impression that, by the end of the year, Cornwall was going to be denuded of teachers. Of course, nothing happened.

Having said that, the points raised by the hon. Members are serious ones. Not for one minute am I suggesting that our general practitioners in Cornwall, Devon and way beyond the south-west do not face tremendous pressures of the sort described in the so-called survey and by the two hon. Gentlemen: yes, of course they do.

It is a feature of modern life today that all the professions are under pressure and strain. We recognise that across the professional sector and beyond. Dare I suggest that Members of Parliament themselves are under pressure, and, in the time that I have been in the House, those pressures have mounted relentlessly and remorselessly. That is a fact of life today, and to a degree, one must accept it.

The hon. Member for North Devon was on a good point when he said that general practitioners face complaints from their patients. They probably did not face such complaints 30, 40 or 50 years ago. The whole climate has changed. People, perhaps rightly, do not think that, because a person is a doctor, an architect or a dentist, or in some other profession, he or she is beyond questioning or complaint. That is the nature of the society in which we live.

My view is that the complaint apparatus has gone a bit too far, and I hope that we will see a sensible correction of it. The inevitable result of patients' complaints is, as has already been described, additional pressure on those who, in most cases, are trying their utmost to help.

There are other pressures on doctors, and Liberal Democrat Members are right to talk about the added bureaucracy in the NHS over the years. I was delighted to note that, after his appointment, one of the first visits made by the Minister for Health was to Cornwall and the west country. I believe that he visited the constituency of the hon. Member for Truro. I am sure that my hon. Friend will say today that the checklist outlined by the hon. Member for North Devon has been addressed to varying degrees by the Government recently.

I have no complaint about the Liberal Democrats featuring the pressures under which general practitioners operate. The hon. Member for Truro made an important point about the particular pressure to maintain a night service in remote and rural areas, and that pressure undoubtedly exists.

If I have a complaint, it is that the debate might give the wrong impression to people outside. The speeches by the two hon. Members who have participated in this debate—and perhaps in others—and their concentration on the problem areas, might give the overall impression that everything is wrong with the general practitioner service. That is not the case in Cornwall.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *indicated assent.*

Mr. Harris: I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Truro acknowledges that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne talked about the impression he gains from his regular contact with GPs through the medical forum in his constituency. I am in regular contact with the GPs in my constituency, as, I am sure, are all hon. Members. When I meet GPs, I hear some grumbles, but I do not believe that it is of the scale that might be conveyed by the comments in this debate, or by the Liberal Democrat survey.

Hon. Members should visit the health centres in their own constituencies. There is a health centre run by general practitioners in Mullion in my constituency, and there is an excellent health centre in the old Stennack school in St. Ives. It is a marvellous building in the centre of town, which has been transformed and caters well for those GPs. I do not think that anybody can reasonably say that the service is in absolute crisis. I fully accept that GPs are under pressure, but overall they are providing a marvellous service to communities right across the country.

There are problems, but I believe that the Government have addressed many of them. I am delighted that a settlement has been reached with the profession over the out-of-hours difficulty, which had undoubtedly become a focus for discontent. While acknowledging all the problems and pressures faced by GPs, it would be wrong to give the impression that the service is crumbling or that it is not delivering—

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that much of what happens within the GP service is very good, particularly in Cornwall. As with many things, the nature of communities there is that people are aware of each other's needs. That helps to generate a high level of service, but perhaps it also increases the pressures in some respects. Surely the recruitment problems illustrate the degree of urgency about this. It is becoming difficult to get doctors to do the job.

Mr. Harris: I believe that that is so, although I have yet to see the detailed figures for Cornwall. I shall want to look at that. Cornwall has always been lucky in that it has been able to attract GPs because it is an attractive part

[Mr. Harris]

of the country. If there are difficulties in attracting GPs to such an area, it would be extremely serious. Nobody has come to me and said, "Mr. Harris, are you aware that Cornwall is facing a crisis in the recruitment of MPs?" [*Laughter.*] I mean GPs—there is no problem in attracting MPs.

It was interesting and revealing that the hon. Member for Truro did not provide any figures. Perhaps the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) might do that. If there are problems in filling vacancies, that needs to be addressed.

The hon. Member for North Devon mentioned the difficulties of early retirement. That is not a problem that is special to medicine. Changes in our way of life, particularly in the professions, mean that many people want to retire at 60. It may be because of the pressures, or it may be for other reasons. I do not think that the medical profession can be insulated from that.

I pay tribute to general practitioners throughout the country, but particularly in Cornwall. They perform an invaluable service. Hon. Members know the GPs in their constituencies. We are aware of their dedication, and we appreciate that the pressures on them have increased, for the reasons that I have given. If there are any ways in which we can reduce those pressures, we should do so.

I believe that the Government have been tackling the bureaucratic demands being placed upon them, and we should continue to pursue that. I have no quarrel with the Liberal Democrats for raising this important subject, but I hope that no one gains the impression that we are facing a fundamental crisis in the GP service. If there are problems, they must be tackled.

10.46 am

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I apologise for my delay in attending the debate. One of the things I had to do this morning was speak to a GP in my constituency. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to GPs and to the GP service across south Devon. General practitioners are in the forefront of health care in this country, and in my judgment, they provide a first-rate service, particularly in south Devon.

General practitioners are sophisticated individuals and they are aware of political pressures. We can look back in the lifetime of this Administration to issues such as generic medicines, where general practitioners were articulate in presenting their case. At the time of that row, one had many patients ringing up asking why the Government intended to deprive them of the medicines they had always used, and complaining that they had been told by their doctors that the Government could no longer afford them. I do not remember receiving a call of that type in the past six years. I believe that that crisis never materialised.

There was some anxiety about the initial reforms. I remember going to see a leading GP in my constituency to hear that he was wholly opposed to fundholding practices. I sat down with him for one and a quarter hours discussing why he believed that fundholding was entirely wrong. Three weeks before the last general election, I was amused to receive a call from him saying that he had applied for fundholding status, and asking me if I could speed up his application, on the basis that it would be an asset in the general election campaign. That same doctor is now a highly articulate advocate of the benefits of fundholding practices.

I move on to the issue that has prompted the debate. The survey is interesting for several reasons. The Liberal Democrats in Cornwall and Devon produced a questionnaire that was distributed to 1,000 doctors. It seems that 680 decided not to participate.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): No.

Mr. Allason: The hon. Gentleman says no. I understand that there were 320 replies.

Mr. Tyler: The hon. Gentleman may not have been in his place to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) when he introduced the debate, when he made it clear that a number of the respondents replied on behalf of their practices. Therefore, the number of doctors represented in the responses to the survey is far increased over the figure to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Allason: I would be interested to know precisely how many doctors are supposed to be represented. Based on the information in the survey results, I say again that only 320 doctors replied. There is nothing wrong with that—that is a significant figure. I merely point out the difference between the two figures.

The survey is, in my judgment, in the judgment of doctors to whom I have spoken and in the judgment of the health authority in the area which I represent, deeply flawed. A survey dealing with out-of-hours working and stress on general practitioners was conducted a short while ago by Dr. Millard. It was a scientific survey, conducted with the full support of health authorities. It was designed specifically to be helpful in identifying GPs' specific problems.

The Liberal Democrat survey has a misleading title—"Down at the Surgery, all is not well". I do not believe that to be the position. If we were setting out to undertake a scientific survey of doctors' opinions, we would first take care about the questions posed. Having studied the Liberal Democrat survey, I must tell the House that it is barely literate. For example, the use of apostrophes is somewhat eccentric.

I would imagine that the objective of such a survey would be to try to identify particular problems within the GP service. That is what Dr. Millard did. As a direct consequence of the studies that have been undertaken by the health authority concerned, several initiatives have been taken.

First, to deal with the problem of out-of-hours work, an initiative has been taken to introduce co-operatives, so as to reduce the burden on individual doctors. Secondly, a stress counselling service has been introduced to help individual doctors who feel that they are in some difficulty. That is significant. Thirdly, a retired GP in Exeter has been recruited to provide a confidential service to individual GPs who feel in some way at risk.

I have no objections to a survey of the sort that we are discussing being conducted. If it were to be distributed to Members and health authorities, that would be extremely helpful. The reality is that the survey is full of the most bogus bar graphs, with which we are all familiar.

Mr. Harris: Surely my hon. Friend is not suggesting that the survey was politically motivated. He would surely

acknowledge that it would be entirely out of character with all the surveys that the Liberal Democrats have conducted in the past.

Mr. Allason: Perish the thought that it should be politically motivated. But I suppose that I should give the Liberal Democrats some credit. In the middle of an industrial dispute over the specific issue of out-of-hours working, why not conduct a survey on the specific issue?

Of all the topics that are important to GPs, what is the one issue on which the questionnaire concentrates? The answer is out-of-hours working. It must not be forgotten that it was a voluntary exercise. Equally, we must not forget that we are talking about £6,000 to £8,000 a year for the individual GPs who undertake out-of-hours working. There is no obligation upon them, but there is a considerable financial incentive.

It is interesting that the document was compiled in the middle of an industrial dispute. Nowhere in the literature that I have read is it stated that the dispute has been settled. It was compiled at a time when all GPs were particularly concerned about the specific issue to which the survey relates. They are articulate and sophisticated, and they were given the opportunity to over-egg their case. In fact, they did not. Only a proportion of them were critical in their responses to the survey.

Mr. Harvey: The hon. Gentleman has said that the survey was conducted in the middle of the dispute. It was not. The survey took place after the dispute was ended. One of the questions was:

"Do you feel the new deal does anything to ease increasing patient expectations, your workload or the particular problems faced by rural GP's?"

The survey was conducted after the deal had been struck.

Mr. Allason: No. The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The survey was conducted before the British Medical Association conference took place and before any announcement was made. We now have an example of how badly drafted the survey was. It should have referred to the deal on offer. The deal had not been accepted when the survey was conducted.

I move on to the publicity that was generated by the document. As I have said, it was not sent to health authorities or to individual Members. What was the priority for the document? In fact, it went to the media. The media were presented with press releases that described doctors working sometimes 120 hours a week.

I was concerned about that, and I telephoned the health authority in the area I represent and asked, "Do I really have GPs working 120 hours a week in my health authority area?" The response was, "Absolutely not. If there is one doctor in Torbay who is working 120 hours a week, we would like to hear urgently from that doctor. It is not the case." There are doctors, however—I spoke to one yesterday—who occasionally clock up 100 hours a week. That is not, however, 100 hours of continuous working, but 100 hours on call. I suggest that there is a considerable difference.

I do not object to the fact that the survey was conducted, although the questions are clearly politically weighted. I am surprised that so few doctors participated, given the opportunity that they were offered and the political climate as negotiations took place. I am disappointed with the way in which the issue has been exploited and presented to the media.

Individual patients are obviously concerned when they are told that their doctors are so stressed, so overworked and so under pressure that they are unable to give a good service, and individual lives may be put at risk. That is not the case. In my judgment, in the judgment of certainly one health authority, and in the judgment of the doctors to whom I have spoken, the survey has no scientific value.

It would seem that the only doctor directly quoted is one who is well known for opposing every type of national health service reform. He has had publicity going way back in opposing particular reforms.

The average GP sees between 35 and 40 patients a day. In a built-up urban area with perhaps a factor of deprivation, he may be seeing between 70 and 80 a day. That is not entirely satisfactory, and health authorities recognise that. Initiatives have been taken to try to improve doctors' work loads.

Those work loads are in part a consequence of the higher expectations that patients—quite rightly—have of their doctors. Patients pay a considerable amount into the national health service and are entitled to a high standard of care from their GP, but there is, of course, the problem of inappropriate calls made to doctors, and every GP will have a funny, or perhaps tragic, story of someone who needs nothing more than a couple of Anadin but nevertheless calls his doctor in the middle of the night. That is very frustrating for doctors.

The emphasis of the report was on out-of-hours terms and conditions, and doctors took the opportunity to air many of their grievances. One can well understand that, but the situation as portrayed in the media and by the Liberal Democrats is not wholly accurate.

In south Devon, the situation has improved considerably, thanks to initiatives to reduce pressure on GPs and improve out-patient care. In March 1982, when out-patient waiting lists were examined, 53 per cent. of people on those lists were seen within 13 weeks, 32 per cent. had to wait between 13 and 26 weeks, and the rest waited even longer. That situation had changed dramatically by March 1995, when 91 per cent. of the waiting list was seen within 13 weeks and just 7 per cent. were waiting between 13 and 26 weeks. Those figures reveal the efforts made to relieve the pressure on individual doctors and waiting lists at the health care trust there.

I recognise that doctors have a difficult job—no one would want to minimise the pressures on them—but to suggest that people's lives are at risk on a daily basis, or that there is a crisis at GPs' surgeries, is a betrayal of the trust of the individual doctors who work extremely hard to make the health service work.

I accordingly urge my hon. Friend the Minister to assure the House that he is aware of the way in which the survey was conducted, and that the questions were weighted. I also ask him to assure the House that he has been in touch with health authorities and GP representatives to hear their side of the distorted arguments that have been presented.

11.2 am

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): It is a pleasure to address the House on matters of substance, even though the debate is based on a survey which—here I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason)—has less substance than the issues themselves.

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

Had I not been aware of the contents of the survey and their lack of credibility, my hon. Friend would have done the House and me a service by analysing them. I shall deal with that matter in due course.

In general terms, our family doctor service is second to none. That is true of the country as a whole and I believe it to be true of Devon and Cornwall too. I can reassure general practitioners that the Government place a high value on them, to the extent that we are building a primary-care-led national health service based on general practice, which is a fundamental change. We are committed to removing obstacles that may inhibit delivery of the services that GPs work so hard to provide.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay asked me to make sure that I was aware of what was happening in Cornwall and Devon and was personally familiar with the views of GPs and health authorities there. I am aware of them, not only from what I hear at the Department but at first hand, because one of the first visits I undertook on being appointed to my post was to GP practices in Exeter and Truro, where I was impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of all those whom I met.

Those doctors proceed with enthusiasm and dedication despite the stresses and strains of their working life, which, I readily acknowledge, are not unusual in a time of change such as that which we have asked GPs to accept. What I found in Devon and Cornwall was not very different from what I found elsewhere. There are stresses and strains, but they are being dealt with.

Much of the debate today has centred on out-of-hours work, and it may be helpful if I say a few words about that. Much work has already been done to deal with the concerns that GPs have raised and which the Liberal Democrats have mentioned today, some of which were highlighted in the Devon and Cornwall survey. The new arrangements for GP out-of-hours care, recently accepted in full by the British Medical Association, will ease the burden on GPs—one of the points made forcefully by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

The proposals are designed to encourage GPs to co-operate more in providing out-of-hours care. I know, for example, that the South and West Devon health commission is negotiating with the local medical committee and local GPs to facilitate GP co-operatives. Similar work is under way in Cornwall with the aim of securing a countywide arrangement.

The proposals will also offer special help to rural isolated GPs. Much has rightly been made of the problems faced by such GPs. It is important to put in context the funding for special arrangements, which I want to be delivered flexibly so that the particular interests of GPs in rural areas are duly noted.

I have seen from some press reports in Cornwall and Devon that there is a suggestion that the fund is merely to be divvied up among all doctors, at some £1,500 a head. That is reportedly a comment from a chairman of one local medical committee, but it is not our intention. No decision has yet been taken. Indeed, discussions will be taking place tomorrow between representatives of the general medical services committee and my departmental officials. I hope that we can come to a solution that will adequately recognise the special burdens imposed on doctors in rural areas.

The new settlement will also encourage patients to make more appropriate use of GP services, which I acknowledge is important. I cannot quite understand the idea that the patients charter has suddenly led to a new tranche of demand that did not exist previously. I do not imagine that, in the isolated rural cottages of Cornwall and Devon, the first thing that someone does at 3 am when he is feeling ill is pick up a copy of the patients charter and decide how to proceed.

Frankly, many of the arguments to the effect that the patients charter is provoking the difficulties now facing GPs in relation to out-of-hours calls are fanciful. It is right that patients should understand what they can expect from their GP services, but the charter acknowledges that patients have to exercise their rights responsibly when approaching their GPs.

Local initiatives are already under way. In June 1995, before we reached the settlement, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority produced a leaflet entitled "Changes to Emergency GP Services", which was directed at patients. It was distributed to every GP practice in the county. I am extremely anxious to secure a campaign conducted in conjunction with the medical profession to ensure that the public is well aware of how they should properly use GP services to reduce the personal out-of-hours work load of GPs.

I deal now with some of the points about increased bureaucracy and paperwork. I assure the House that we are making strenuous efforts to reduce the weight of bureaucracy on GPs. The Liberal Democrats are, I am sure, well aware of the recent efficiency scrutiny entitled "Patients not Paper", which was carried out by a team that included four GPs—so there was a practical input into the study—and two primary care managers. The result was a number of recommendations, most of which will be fully implemented as soon as possible and, likely as not, by the end of next year.

I should like to highlight three points. There will be a reduction in claim forms by 1,700 per average practice, which is a tremendous clear-out. The bureaucracy associated with GP health promotion schemes will be cut, reducing data requirements from 122 to eight items. The flow of mail into practices will also be reduced, and the quality of communications will be improved.

I well understand that, as we seek to make the health service more accountable, there can be a natural accretion of bureaucracy, which Ministers occasionally have to curb. We intend that there will be less mail demanding statistics from GPs when he or she opens their surgery door in the morning and looks through the mail.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware of the information technology initiative in south Devon, which will mean that, by 1997, 80 per cent. of GPs will be on line in a health network? That too is intended to reduce bureaucracy, because it will be possible to gather statistics centrally—information relating to individual health care will be transmitted on that network. Does he not agree that to reach the target of 80 per cent. by 1997 will be quite an achievement?

Mr. Malone: I am pleased to hear that. That scheme is part of a national initiative. Introducing technology to reduce paperwork is extremely important. Indeed, it will do more than reduce the paperwork—it will free more practice staff to provide additional support.

I am delighted to hear what my hon. Friend says and to tell him that, as part of a national initiative, that scheme is playing its part. More than £242 million was spent in 1989-90, and more than £542 million last year—more than double—on staff, nurses and other support, including technology, which illustrates our commitment to primary care. So my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay is quite right: IT is one area in which there is substantially increasing support.

In Cornwall in particular, considerable financial support has been given by the family health services authority for the improvement of GP premises by means of grants totalling £300,000 in 1994-95 and by the commitment of £250,000 for 1995-96.

Recruitment is extremely important. I acknowledge that the Government must keep it under observation, and, where there are concerns, must address them. There are some valid concerns about GP recruitment. I readily acknowledge that there has been a decline in the number of trainees in recent years. There are a number of reasons for that.

One is that, with the reduction in junior doctors' hours in hospitals, there are more places available in the hospital sector than there are ultimately in general practice. However, there were 1,400 trainees throughout England in April 1995, which is still a significantly higher number than is needed to sustain the number of GPs overall. Of those, 243 were in the south and west region—the highest number of trainees in any region in England.

I notice that the hon. Member for Truro said that, on average—I think that he used this figure—there are four or five applicants for every post. If that is so, and they are well qualified, that is a good thing. It is better than the old days, when sometimes there were 120 applicants for every post—most of them not able to get jobs.

I agree that a balance must be struck. We must be concerned to ensure that the GP environment will attract top-flight people and be flexible, to reflect the point rightly made by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) that, considering the percentage of women entering the profession—51 per cent. of students are female—it is important that we have a practical understanding of how that percentage will operate in the work force, and what flexible arrangements we will have to put in hand. There is a real work force issue that needs to be addressed, and work needs to be done.

As for specific recruitment difficulties in the south and west and in Devon, I can tell the House that a young GP self-help support group has been set up, through which newly qualified partners can offer help and support to each other. In Cornwall, funding has been made available for an advisory service for new GPs, whereby all new doctors are contacted by a doctor in another part of Cornwall who can act as their mentor and confidant. So at that important moment when doctors are embarking on general practice, support is available. I welcome such initiatives, especially in Devon and Cornwall.

Throughout the country, we want closer working between new health authorities and GPs, and there is an opportunity for that as we move towards 1 April and the integrated health authorities come on stream. I know that Devon FHSA is encouraging GP practices to show innovation and initiative for the improvement of patient care. Good ideas are circulated to all practices to raise standards throughout the country. Cornwall FHSA meets quarterly with consortia of GPs—fundholding and non-fundholding—to discuss purchasing issues and address local problems, and I very much welcome that.

The Government have a policy of introducing fundholding, and it has been successful in Cornwall and Devon, but we do not take the view, and I am glad that the authorities in Cornwall and Devon do not either, that it should be done in isolation. I very much welcome what is in hand there to share best practice among fundholders and non-fundholders.

The hon. Members for Truro and for North Devon mentioned the patients charter. I very much support what the patients charter has done; it has brought substantial improvements to the quality of services provided for patients throughout the NHS, and in the areas represented by the hon. Gentlemen, because it has given a focal point and a target to which everybody needs to aspire. Three quarters of GPs now have their own practice charters—beyond what we publish on a national basis—or are in the course of developing them.

The patients charter is about doing things differently, thinking about patients as individuals, listening to what patients want, and providing a more patient-focused service. I should have thought that the whole House would welcome that. It need not necessarily cost money—in fact, doing things more efficiently and effectively can often save it. For example, looking back at the figures for 1994-95, GP fundholders in Devon achieved savings of almost £2 million in their budgets, which will be spent on other forms of patient care.

In April 1995, there were 11 GP fundholding practices in Cornwall FHSA, covering 24 per cent. of the population. Although take-up was slow—I understand the reasons: small practices and rural areas—it is moving ahead, and 36 per cent. of the population are likely to be served by fundholding practices from 1 April next year. In Devon, the equivalent figure is 44 per cent. of the population; an increase on the previous uptake of 14 per cent.

So I welcome the fact that, although some general practitioners may fill in surveys in a slightly different way, they are rather optimistically taking hold in Cornwall and Devon of the advantages offered by the Government's policy, and ensuring that they exercise their new freedoms and responsibilities for the benefit of their patients.

But the situation goes further: total fundholding projects are being considered in south and west Devon. A consortium of five practices is in its shadow year as total fundholders, and will go live from 1 April 1996. I very much welcome that as a way forward.

Much was made earlier in the debate about a survey. My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay told us a little about it. I would like to tell the House yet more about it, because clearly my hon. Friend, and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) understood perfectly well that the survey was not politically motivated. None the less, they might be interested in knowing its genesis. In fact, it was a style survey which came from something called the "Health Campaign Pack" published by the Liberal Democrats. It explains how to conduct surveys. It is a jolly interesting style.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose—*

Mr. Malone: I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to tell us how well he followed the template when I have at least gone some way into the rather interesting territory that it explores.

[Mr. Malone]

The pack explains how to carry out surveys. It says:

"In particular, the survey should publicise results which show opposition to the Government's policies and support for our alternatives."

Well, that is rather interesting—hardly the detached exercise that Liberal Democrat Members were trying to suggest.

I have read the survey, and I have also read the style guide. It is interesting that the survey compares exactly with the style suggested. It says:

"*Nora Batty* and the Liberal Democrat team wrote to local doctors and dentists—the people in the front-line caring for patients".

It is some sort of "Last of the Summer Wine" style—or, perhaps, in the Devon and Cornwall area, it is "Last of the Summer Cider". The key responses all assume a result. They include:

"Eighty per cent. of local doctors think the Government's record on the NHS is either bad or very bad."

Stamped across the key responses is the phrase:

"Insert your own figures."

Mr. Harris: Does the interesting document from which my hon. Friend is quoting advise local Liberal Democrats that the survey slips and questionnaires should be accompanied by a health warning?

Mr. Malone: I think the document comes with its own health warning. I was interested to read the style questionnaire. It mirrors precisely the questionnaire that was sent out in Devon and Cornwall. The Liberal Democrats take some pride in that. Although the report was supposed to be detached, the House will understand its purpose and genesis.

I know that the hon. Member for North Cornwall wishes to make a few remarks, so I will conclude by reiterating the Government's commitment to a primary-care-led NHS. It is all about decision-making. That is what our policies have facilitated. The ability of doctors to decide what should be done for their patients is as relevant in Cornwall and Devon as in the rest of the country. Doctors are taking up that initiative with vigour.

I take this opportunity to thank GPs in Devon and Cornwall from the Dispatch Box. I understand that they face challenging and difficult times as more responsibility is given to them. To judge from what they tell me—they are seldom slow to express their views—although there are challenges and issues that we still need to resolve, and I hope shall resolve, they understand that the Government have put them in a leading position in the NHS and given them responsibilities that reflect their professional skills as never before. That is the basis on which we move towards a primary-care-led NHS.

There is one point in the survey with which I agree. The report says that actions speak louder than words. I suggest to the House that the actions of the Government in putting right the difficulties that general practice faces speak far more loudly than the words in the survey.

11.21 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): My colleagues and I are grateful to the Minister for 94 per cent.—a rough figure—of his speech, in which he referred to the substance of the issue. We endorse the points he made about the dedicated service that GPs give in Devon and Cornwall, as they do in other parts of the country.

The Minister is obviously better briefed by his Department than by Conservative central office. The report to which he referred was published after our survey. It was therefore entitled to take our survey as an example of what could be done in other parts of the country. The Minister got it the wrong way round.

Let us get back to the substance. Several hon. Members have attacked the survey this morning. That is not our purpose. We wish to examine the feelings and anxieties among a key part of the health service of this nation. GPs are the gatekeepers for the whole health service, perhaps especially so in more remote rural areas.

That was recognised in the White Paper published last week by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It said:

"Most health care is provided through primary care, especially by GPs. We recognise that rural doctors can have smaller practices based in more than one location and may therefore need additional financial support. A number of allowances are payable to support GPs in rural areas. The rural practice payment scheme, for example, reflects the costs and pressures of practices in more sparsely populated areas."

Precisely. I accept that the Government have endorsed our view that rural practices have special needs. That is at the centre of the debate today, and at the centre of our survey.

The points that the Minister made about fundholding practices are similarly well recognised. It is more difficult to qualify for fundholding in rural areas. That is one of the problems that lie behind the resources problem. I noticed that one hon. Member, in a Freudian slip, referred to fund-raising practices. There is a feeling among many GPs in smaller practices that they now have to devote so much time to finding ways to fund their activities that they cannot give so much attention as they would like to their patients.

Mr. Allason: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: No. I have very little time, thanks to the hon. Gentleman's late intervention.

The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred to recruitment. I was glad to hear the Minister respond positively on the issue. We all recognise that there is a difficulty with recruitment. The hon. Member for St. Ives may not have been in Cornwall when our survey was published.

One of the most fascinating things was that, contrary to our expectations, a number of authorities and GPs said that, in several respects, we underrated the severity of the crisis. The family health services authority in Cornwall, for the first time ever, is having to recruit in other EU member states for GPs. That has never happened in Cornwall before, although I understand that it has happened in other parts of the country. That is a simple litmus test of the severity of the recruitment problem.

In the few minutes that I have left, I wish to underline the views that GPs have expressed to us, to the public and to other GPs. The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) may not know that Dr. Green, the local medical committee chairman for Devon, is one of the principal spokesmen for the profession. I understand that he comes from the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

In response to our survey—not as part of it—he said:

"In my own town, Paignton, there have been resignations from two practices in the last year and a further early retirement for stress induced health. Eleven and 12-hour days are commonplace, followed by a night on call and another 11-hour day. The level of alertness required by this special profession cannot be sustained over time."

Mr. Allason: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Tyler: No. The hon. Gentleman intervenes late in the debate, having arrived late. I have only three minutes left.

Mr. Allason: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it appropriate for an hon. Member to identify a particular constituent and not allow his Member of Parliament to respond, when—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. It is perfectly proper.

Mr. Tyler: Dr. Green also said:

"GPs work within a contract which allows new work to be added relentlessly to the working day. In recent years, we have seen Health Promotion, Early Discharge Schemes, annual reports and returns, and medical audit. No money has followed the patient into this work to allow extra staff to be employed, and where fees have been increased, the money is insidiously clawed back through the pool payment scheme. Furthermore, GPs have no ownership of this work, as the value to patients has yet to be shown."

Mr. Allason: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is more genuine than the previous one.

Mr. Allason: It certainly is. I spoke to Dr. Philip Green yesterday evening, and I want to protest at the misrepresentation of his views.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was no more a point of order than the previous one. The hon. Gentleman knows that there are means of making such protestations which are in order. I hope that he will not trouble the Chair any further with bogus points of order.

Mr. Tyler: The chairman of the LMC in Cornwall, Dr. Andy Stewart, whom I know well, a young and dedicated doctor, has written as follows, since seeing the situation develop:

"To expect one doctor to work all day, all night and then all the next day, is totally unreasonable and just plain irresponsible. Exhausted and tired doctors should not be allowed within a mile of a sick patient. Tired doctors can make mistakes and mistakes in our trade may just turn out to be fatal. An airline pilot or bus driver would not be allowed to work for longer than 24 hours without a break because of the risk of endangering life through tiredness. So why are we so superhuman that we don't need sleep and a break from incessant stress?"

Another doctor from Devonport in Plymouth—not a rural area, but he suffers the particular stresses and strains of the inner city—says:

"In the past few years expectations have risen, fuelled by the Government's 'charter mentality'. This expectation has come from both the public and from management, which sometimes engage themselves in doing things of dubious value . . . At the end of the day, the day's work isn't finished, and the return to a normal life is impossible. You can imagine what it's like telling a disappointed son/daughter that you can't take them to scouts, guides or whatever. It is like letting down the other half of you."

This is not just a survey. It clearly contains the outspoken, but perfectly proper, views of a dedicated profession in a part of the country where one might think that the problems are more easily resolved than in the major cities.

We are grateful to the Minister for his positive reply to our debate today, and I know that the general practitioners in Devon and Cornwall will be as well. But the most important function of the House is to ensure that we can articulate in a public place at a national level the concerns of those who serve us so well. I hope that this morning's debate has done that, and I hope too that we will see real progress in the directions to which the Minister referred, because it cannot come too soon.

Community Service

11.29 am

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I begin this morning by saying how delighted I am to find that the Minister due to respond to today's debate is my hon. and most excellent Friend, the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). He and I spent a happy and, I hope, useful year in harness at the Department of National Heritage, and I am delighted that we are yoked together again today. I congratulate him on his latest promotion. His previous post was Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, but I have no doubt that the Sovereign's real loss will be the nation's real gain.

I also take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), for all the care and attention that he gave to every issue that came his way, and to salute him, my noble Friend the Minister of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for their wholehearted and active commitment to the cause of community service, and their ready recognition of the importance of volunteering to the well-being of every community in the land.

The scale of volunteering in Britain is impressive. Four years ago, the Volunteer Centre UK, the national development agency for volunteering, commissioned a survey aimed at providing an up-to-date picture of the extent and nature of volunteering within the United Kingdom, and a comparison with the 1981 national survey of volunteering.

The latest survey showed that some 51 per cent. of respondents had taken part in at least one organised voluntary activity during the previous 12 months, showing that up to 23 million adults may be involved in formal volunteering each year. It also showed that 31 per cent. had volunteered at least once a month and 22 per cent. had volunteered in the previous week, suggesting that in any one week as many as 10 million adults may be involved in organised voluntary activity of one sort or another; an exciting thought—more people volunteering than watching "Pride and Prejudice" on television.

Encouragingly, the survey showed that the proportion of the population involved had risen from 44 per cent. at the beginning of the 1980s to 51 per cent. at the beginning of the 1990s. Fund raising was the most common type of activity, and sports and exercise, children's education and health and social welfare were the most common areas for volunteering.

Most volunteers became involved because they were asked to help or because the organisation concerned was connected with their needs or interests. That said, a significant number of people simply volunteered for altruistic reasons. Three quarters of the respondents felt that volunteers offered something to society that could never be provided by the state. In addition to organised activities, more than three quarters were involved in informal voluntary activities. We need to salute every one of those people and recognise their impact on the quality of life of their fellow citizens.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I very much welcome my hon. Friend's initiative in bringing the issue of volunteering before the House and I regret that a constituency engagement means that I will not be able to stay for the whole debate. My hon. Friend may know that, as long ago as 1989, I proposed a motion in the House to promote the concept of active citizenship, linked to what I described as community self-help. Does my hon. Friend agree that momentum on the issue has been slightly lost in the meantime and that it is a concept wholly in tune with Conservative philosophy and the needs of today?

Mr. Brandreth: I agree totally with my hon. Friend. It is a philosophy consistent with a Conservative approach which suggests the responsibility of the individual, working from the bottom up, harnessing a community for the better good of all. I hope that today's debate will add extra impetus and momentum to the movement that my hon. Friend was attempting to initiate back in the late 1980s, and in which I believe Members on both sides of the House took a serious interest this summer when we had the all-party parliamentary hearings on citizens service back in June. I hope that today's debate will also galvanise the Government into a renewed commitment to exploring every aspect of ensuring that we become a nation full of active citizens. I salute my hon. Friend for his contribution.

The contribution of volunteers in general is literally priceless. The qualities that they bring to their work cannot be paid for with any sum of money and any attempt to replace it with paid work would change its nature, replacing a relationship based on responsibility and mutual aid with one based on financial gain.

But the fact that voluntary work is priceless should not blind us to the significant contribution that it makes to the British economy. The Volunteer Centre recently had a go at assessing the economic worth of volunteering in the United Kingdom. It reckons, taking the hours worked and the rate for the job, that formal volunteering is worth in the region of £25 billion a year, and informal volunteering an additional £16 billion—£41 billion all told.

Highlighting the significant contribution that volunteering makes to the economic life of the country can help raise the profile of volunteering. That approach can also open the door to the recognition of community groups that may be viewed as less significant because they have a low cash turnover. If the amount of voluntary effort involved is recognised in terms of a monetary equivalent, the significance to the local economy becomes more apparent. The practical application of such a shift in awareness could be a widening use of volunteer time as a form of matching funds for Government, the European Union and private grants.

I think that I am right in saying that, at present, grant schemes such as Rural Action and the European Union's Leader 2 programme, which include such a provision, are the exception rather than the rule, possibly penalising groups which are volunteer rich but cash poor.

Assessing the economic value of volunteering is also part of wider moves to encourage Governments to include in national statistics indicators of factors which affect a nation's quality of life, but which are not usually recorded. Agenda 21, the action plan agreed by the 1992 Earth summit in Rio, called for unpaid productive work to be included in national accounts and economic statistics, alongside measures of environmental value.

The scale of volunteering in the United Kingdom is impressive, the scope is quite mind-blowing, and I sometimes think that the epicentre of all this activity must

be the City of Chester. Anyone who witnessed the range and quality of community activities that are part and parcel of everyday life in my constituency would not think it hyperbolic of me to describe Chester as the volunteering capital of the kingdom.

Whether it is the Rotarians organising car runs to take visually impaired people to hospital; the great Round Table toddle that took place on our racecourse this weekend when young men, with their wives and children, took part in a sponsored toddle to raise literally thousands of pounds for children in need; the Blacon project, taking youngsters on challenging, character-building adventure expeditions, or one of our several magnificent operatic societies, providing first-class entertainment at an old people's home, the quantity and quality of community commitment in Chester is incredible.

I attended the United Charities fair at the town hall on Saturday and they were all there—from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to the Chester Childbirth Trust. And there on the stage was Mrs. Banks, sorting it and all of us out, as ever—certainly as she has been doing for the past 27 years. As a nation, we need to cherish Mrs. Banks and her kind and to let them know how much we value them and how greatly we are in their debt. We also need to ensure that there is a well-stocked bank of Bankses on which to draw in the years ahead.

The changing nature of our society means that that will not be easy. A generation or two ago, a successful person such as a solicitor, like my father or grandfather, could get to work at 9 am, leave at 5 pm, run a tight ship and run it well. Today, to be a success in business, commerce or the professions, one will regularly be at work at 8 am and not leave until 7 pm. Then, quite rightly, one will be expected and will want to give a commitment of quality time to one's family in the evening. That means that it is not easy to find time to be a school governor or a special constable, a voluntary sports leader or to organise an outing for a housebound neighbour.

The problem is not unique to Britain. Recently, several hundred Round Tablers and others from around the world came to Chester for the World Council of Men's Service Clubs—Chester was obviously the natural location for such a gathering. The message was the same. An increasingly competitive commercial world places real strains on the amount of time available for community commitment.

We have to remember that a higher standard of living does not always, or necessarily, go hand in hand with a better quality of life. Hon. Members will have read with concern the recent news from the Girl Guides Association. Guide and Brownie groups are being forced to close because changing social patterns have led to a shortage of Guide leaders and Brown Owls. Women who juggle careers with bringing up a family cannot spare several hours a week to prepare for meetings and organise pack outings and activities, which is one of the reasons why national membership has fallen by about 64,000 in the past 12 years. I do not want to be alarmist. We still have 750,000 Guides and Brownies in Britain and to me they represent all that is best in our society.

In a more challenging world, we need more volunteers, which is just one of the reasons why we need to broaden the appeal of volunteering. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others shows that the typical volunteer is a middle-aged, middle-class, middle-income, middle Briton—looking in the mirror, I can hardly envisage anything more attractive—but we are missing out on the potential of bringing more unemployed, disabled and older people and more people from a range of ethnic groups into the world of volunteering.

Because the Government are rightly apprised of the challenges and the potential of life in the world of volunteering, they have established their "Make a Difference" initiative. When I asked the Minister's predecessor about that on 9 March, he promised the House some exciting things. Indeed, on 6 June, the Home Secretary gave some ambitious undertakings, which coincided with the publication of "Make a Difference: an outline for volunteering strategy for the UK". He promised us "Youth Challenge", so that by the end of 1997 a voluntary opportunity would be in place for all 15 to 25-year-olds who wished to volunteer—an ambitious target and there are only 25 months to run. He promised the creation of new, local volunteering development agencies to cover those parts of the country where no such agencies exist and to ensure the match between those ready to volunteer and those organisations that are looking for voluntary help.

As I am sure the Minister recognises, because he has a keen sense of history as well as being incredibly up to date—he is one of those people who could be described as being as modern as tomorrow, with a lot of time for yesterday—that this is the anniversary of the battle of Agincourt. I know that he is a man for the Churchillian flourish and so I am hoping that "Action this day" can be his motto. I trust that he will be able to give us a positive progress report on the Government's initiative. Making a noise is easy, but making a difference is what counts.

Obstacles still stand in the way of people who want to volunteer. Those include simple ignorance—people do not know what is going on—through to bad practice by volunteer-involving organisations and poorly framed or applied regulations. I am glad that we were able to make progress to ensure that the job seekers allowance is not a barrier to volunteering. A number of the "Make a Difference" team's recommendations deal with that area and I must draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister recommendation 32, which urges on Government Departments the need to consider the impact of legislation and regulations on volunteering, and recommendations 53 and 56, which deal with the need for support for the infrastructure that promotes volunteering and good practice.

There is much that Government can do—perhaps the best thing is to get out of the way. The best in volunteering happens from the bottom up, not the top down. Obviously, the Government cannot do everything and nor should they. They must not obstruct; they can encourage, enable and facilitate. But the real work and the best work is done by real people—the best people, on the ground, quite literally in some cases.

The Community Service Volunteers tell the story of Winton primary school in London's Kings Cross area where, before the gates open to admit the first child in the morning, the playground must be scoured for condoms and syringes discarded from the night before. CSV has a model volunteers scheme, which has brought 50 office workers and local residents into the school on a regular basis to listen to children read, help with art projects and, in a sense, truly to live out the old African proverb that "it takes a whole village to raise a child".

[Mr. Brandreth]

I hope that other hon. Members this morning will talk of what we learnt during the all-party parliamentary hearings on citizen's service, as well as marvelling at the amount of work that is being undertaken and relishing the potential. What became clear to me from the hearings upstairs in June was that there can be no single model for a national or local citizen's service scheme. Diversity, choice and flexibility will all be essential, as will leadership.

On both sides of the House, hon. Members recognise that volunteering is invaluable. It may also be the key to reawakening that sense of community that so many people feel that we have lost. It is easy to bemoan the collapse of community values, mourn the demise of the extended family and anatomise the frailty of the nuclear family, but what does that do except to make us feel sad? If the extended family has all but disappeared and the nuclear family is not what it used to be, perhaps the time has come to attempt to reinvent community.

I want to suggest one simple way of going about it, starting at street level. I want a new initiative to encourage residents, on their streets, in their estates and in their blocks of flats, to get together and exchange details of how they can volunteer for their neighbours and of what help they need—from baby sitting to help with gardening and from shopping to household repairs. There are neighbours on every street who could offer to help and neighbours who need their assistance. In many communities, however, there is no opportunity for neighbours to get together to talk and match their needs with volunteer residents. It is a scheme for mutual aid on one's doorstep.

The "meet your street" initiative will aim to stimulate and support the informal neighbourhood volunteering that is the cornerstone of any thriving community. With the Volunteer Centre UK, my plan is to develop a series of pilot meet your street projects with the aim of taking the scheme nationwide during volunteer's week at the beginning of next June.

Given that Britain's newest television soap opera, "Hollyoaks" on Channel 4 on Monday evenings, is set in Chester—they just cannot keep away—I am not surprised to see that it has already been described in one newspaper as "Neighbours meets the Street". I hope that it will not be trivialised because my own informal pilot study in Chester suggests that it could work.

I took a terraced street in my constituency and found living in it an interesting mix: several elderly people living alone, a single parent, some young couples and several students. They were all on nodding acquaintance but none had met. Through the good offices of the local vicar, who lived at the end of the street, we got together and the people on the street found out what they could do for one another.

One of the young men admitted that all he could do was change light bulbs and washers—something that the elderly lady who lived right next door to him and to whom he had never spoken before could not do. She said that she could make a good apple pie and now she does just that for the young man in return for his skills as an amateur electrician and plumber. That may seem modest but the vicar rightly reminded me of the wonderful line of William Blake

"He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars".

Those neighbours, in their own way, are doing something for their mutual advantage and for the betterment of the street as a whole. On a larger scale, the statutory services are never going to be able to provide more than one or two visits from a midwife or health visitor when a newborn baby arrives in the community but halfway down that street there was a grandmother whose own grandchildren live abroad. She and the lone parent and her child have met and invented a new sort of extended family for themselves. I am literally making a speech about motherhood and apple pie but I am also making a practical suggestion designed to deal with a real problem, a solution to which there is a genuine longing.

Today's newspapers are full of concern about communities in crisis. They are also full of material taken from a draft of the Audit Commission's report into policing. As part of the report, the Audit Commission asked the public in a survey what changes they believed would make their neighbourhoods safer. The four main changes sought by the public were more responsible parents, better-lit streets, more closed circuit television and more contact with neighbours. That is what people want; let us trust the people.

A decade or so ago the home watch scheme was launched in my part of Cheshire and from one small pilot project, that scheme has swept the country. There are now thousands of home watch schemes making neighbourhoods safer all across the land. Perhaps the "meet your street" initiative will take off in the same way; I hope so. Here at Westminster, we are the people who make a noise. I am glad that today we have the opportunity to salute the millions of our fellow citizens who are volunteers committed to community service. They are the ones who make a difference.

11.53 am

Mr. David Chidgey (Eastleigh): I am delighted to be called to speak so early as it gives me the first opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on his entertaining and thoughtful speech. His talents could be well used in the new soap opera set in Chester if he is not careful.

I want to stress the importance of community service set against the background of the changes that we are experiencing in our working patterns. I suspect that there is a widely held belief that if we could only modernise our industry and commerce and bridge the skills gap, we could somehow return, as if by magic, to a world of full employment. However, one of the products of the global marketplace has been the emergence of new technologies that generate new wealth but do not necessarily give rise to new employment.

The productivity revolution that is happening in the United Kingdom means that more and more processes are being undertaken by fewer and fewer people. While fast-growing sectors of industry and commerce are predicted to create nearly 2 million more jobs for highly skilled people, they will not be able to absorb all those available for work. Naturally, those with the least skills will have the least chance of employment. The Dahrendorf report on wealth creation states:

"comparative growth is no longer a sufficient condition for a satisfactory level of employment."

One of the threats to social cohesion in our society is the way in which the unemployed are becoming excluded from that society. In the new climate of job insecurity,

there is greater risk that the exclusion of sectors of society will rise. With jobs for life disappearing and part-time, temporary or varying jobs becoming the rule for many, uncertainty is spreading.

Improvements in education and training are vital to sustain the high degree of flexibility that we now require. Individuals will increasingly be self-employed and will have to cope with periods of unemployment. Many will lose their hold, first on the labour market, and then on participation in our societies and communities.

A growing underclass is emerging, consisting of people who live lives of destitution and dependence on welfare payments and who become detached from society, fragmenting the social cohesion so essential to a democratically governed community such as ours. It is against that backdrop that we should measure the importance of citizen involvement in public service. The threat to social cohesion is real, but can citizens service turn it into an opportunity?

The hon. Member for City of Chester mentioned the parliamentary hearings on citizens service last June. I was glad to have had the opportunity to chair one of those hearings. We tried to investigate the concepts behind citizens service, a scheme to enable young people in particular to give a period of their lives to community service.

I and my colleagues heard evidence from a wide variety of agencies and I would like to mention in particular the Community Service Volunteers, who told us that nearly two thirds of young people surveyed nationally supported the voluntary national scheme. That is an interesting counterpoint to the comment of the hon. Member for City of Chester that 51 per cent. of young people are already involved. Clearly, more can be done if two thirds are willing to be involved.

Let us not underestimate the importance of the scheme. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the economic worth of a volunteer service but a scheme such as was promoted by the Community Service Volunteers could provide respite for some 8.6 million single-handed carers. It could provide a scheme which could help the 2 million or so primary school pupils who suffer from poor reading skills.

Over the decades in my constituency we have established the Eastleigh Council for Community Service, which has set the standard throughout our region for what can be done to help the elderly and the infirm, give respite support for carers and provide a wide range of voluntary services across the community. It not only provides services, but co-ordinates and organises the volunteer reservoir of talent just waiting to be tapped in the community. The example in my constituency is a fine one which can and is being followed in the rest of Hampshire and throughout the country.

We also heard from a number of organisations during the parliamentary hearings. We heard from the Prince's Trust about how it organised local projects which developed core life skills and confidence in their participants. Most importantly, since many of the volunteers on the Prince's Trust scheme were unemployed—about 75 per cent. of them—the programmes that they organised led to the development not only of life and social skills but of job skills.

We also heard from the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, which is engaged in a very different kind of volunteering. Although it provides some 4 million hours of first aid work per year, it selects its volunteers very carefully because of the responsibility that they must undertake. Such volunteers are given well-planned training that contributes to national vocational qualifications. That integration of training with volunteering is important.

As I listened to evidence from a wide variety of volunteers, it became clear to me—and, I am sure, to other hon. Members—that we should explore a range of options. We need leadership—not a large bureaucracy; we do not want a countrywide super-quango—to set national standards and guidelines, and to draw on the work of existing schemes. Existing best practice should be used and promulgated.

Volunteering should involve challenging and responsible activities, and volunteers should play their role in identifying the tasks on offer. As I have said, national standards should be set, especially in regard to time commitment and project objectives. There should be a two-way debate between volunteers and those using their services. We need to set ground rules to deal with the problems of job substitution and exploitation; and we need to overcome fears that volunteers are taking work from paid people. That need not be so. We must set such ground rules if the scheme is to succeed, gather pace and tackle the hundreds of thousands of opportunities for volunteers described so eloquently by the hon. Member for City of Chester.

Much of the evidence presented at the parliamentary hearings supported my views and those of my party. We Liberal Democrats proposed the establishment of a community volunteer scheme in 1993, in a paper entitled "Facing Up to the Future". Our aim is to break down social barriers, to encourage more citizen involvement in public service, to promote the development of social skills and a sense of responsibility and—most important—to help unemployed people to learn skills and boost their self-esteem. Our scheme is targeted particularly at young people, so many of whom find themselves in a low-skill unemployment cycle.

Our proposed service would offer any individual, but especially young people, the opportunity to give one or two years of community service in environmental projects such as housing renovation, or in crime prevention and social services—supplementing, but not replacing, existing jobs. It would be promoted and funded by central Government, in partnership with the private sector. Local authorities and voluntary organisations would organise the scheme.

Training is an essential complement, promoting employability and flexibility. In due course, we would expect the scheme to be widely adopted, and the experience gained from it to be valued by employers and employees alike. We want recognition of the value of community service to stretch beyond its immediate beneficiaries.

A recent CSV report estimated the net costs of such a national scheme—taking into account the savings from increased employment, a resulting reduction in crime and other social factors—at some £300 million a year. That, however, is a small sum—as the hon. Member for City of Chester pointed out—in comparison with the billions of pounds of economic worth that we can gain from volunteer service.

Echoing the hon. Gentleman, I too call on the Minister to take action this day: to make not just a gesture, but a real commitment. If we are to translate what is, after all,

[Mr. David Chidgey]

a sound policy that is generally supported in the House and the country into firm, positive action, surely such an investment is both worth while and necessary.

12.4 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I declare an interest: I am a trustee of Community Service Volunteers, which has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House in this welcome debate.

I do not propose to describe, yet again, the campaign for a national community service with which I have been associated for some 25 years—partly because the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) has already made a powerful case for it, and partly because when I served on the Speaker's commission on citizenship under Lord Weatherill, we made a firm case for the value of involving young people in the community in which they live, giving them an opportunity to accept and exercise responsibility at an early age and thus to become part of a mature and responsible citizenry. I wish merely to bolster the excellent speech of my hon. Friend—my good friend—the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). I shall have no difficulty in remembering his constituency in future—not that we are given much of a chance to forget it at any time.

Volunteering is about a very unfashionable word: it is about love. Love is the one commodity that professional statutory services have great difficulty in delivering; indeed, they must be extremely wary about delivering it. For numerous perfectly sound reasons, professional social workers—and, increasingly, teachers and other professionals—are being taught to distance themselves from the individual, subjective commitment to another person that is best defined as love. Families are being so damaged by all kinds of stress and instability—divorce, separation and every variety of exploitation of one individual by another—that a huge gap is developing between those who have been fortunate enough to experience love and those who have not.

Hon. Members must ask themselves what it profits a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Some 750,000 children in the United Kingdom have no contact with their fathers. That bare statistic, which could be multiplied in many other contexts, demonstrates just how bereft many people are growing up to be. Single mothers are being categorised as an anti-social group, but we should remember that the majority acquire that status as what middle-class families would call children: they are 16, 17 or 18. Most middle-class parents who look forward to their children entering the labour market, fully qualified, at the age of 25 still regard them as children, whatever they may say to them privately.

As my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester pointed out, many of those "children" who are struggling to bring up their own children alone need, more than anything else, an individual who will take an interest in them, care for them with experience and love and sustain them through all the vicissitudes. Volunteers can do that; no statutory service can conceivably do it.

Before I am accused of being sentimental, let me say that the organisation of such a net—the tapping of a generation who have more time, often more disposable income, more knowledge, greater experience and more education than any previous generation and a great reservoir of capacity—is not cost free. The Government, in their splendid "Make a Difference" initiative, must remember that matching volunteers with those who could make use of them is expensive.

Vetting volunteers to ensure that they do not abuse their position is expensive. Information exchanges to bring the two sides together are expensive. If we are to move away from the disproportionately middle-class volunteer, we must consider more generously funding travel costs.

If we are to make sense of the changing pattern of employment over a lifetime, we must reconsider the social security rules that limit the amount of voluntary work that people can do—people who are killing themselves in their spare time trying to find jobs, sending out applications and so on, but who continue to be limited in the number of hours of voluntary work that they are allowed to do and the amount of notice that they must give—by what is increasingly in some parts of the country a myth: that looking for work means trudging the streets. It is actually a matter of computerised job applications and so on, which can be done at any time and should not be allowed to diminish the opportunity for voluntary work.

The Government—no other organisation in the country has the same capacity—have an enormous responsibility for ensuring that the biggest users of volunteers, the statutory services, make opportunities available. The tremendous variation in the use of volunteers between one health trust and another, one social services department and another and one Prison Service area and another, is inexplicable and inexcusable. How ridiculous.

If one director of social services, such as in Kent, finds that he can use every volunteer who offers, and enthusiastically endorses their use, why on earth do other directors of social services drag their feet? The Government can and should do more about that. I am delighted to gather—I hope that we shall hear more about it from the Minister—that Ministers have started to ask the services for which they are responsible to include in their annual reports the use that they make of volunteers. Paid volunteer organisers will make a difference out of all proportion to the cost of their salary.

The Meadowdale disaster, which commanded today's headlines, would have been less likely if volunteers had visited the home regularly. The director of social services for Kent says that when he sets up a Kent county council home somewhere and puts the notice outside saying "KCC home", it is as though he had thrown a moat round the home. Local residents say, "That is Kent county council; it is nothing to do with us" and they go nowhere near it. What a mistake.

We should ensure that residential homes set up by the Government to look after the most damaged people in our society welcome regular visits from volunteers to befriend not only residents but staff, who become isolated and prone to bad practice as a result.

Let me once again link commercial advantage with that outpouring of "voluntary love". During the recess, I accompanied a Department of Trade and Industry and Department for Education and Employment mission to South America, selling British education and training overseas. We got the message there that we get from Malaysia and other places: foreign students—who are enormously important to the commercial advantage of this country now and in the future, when they rise to important

positions—are discouraged from coming to the United Kingdom because the British are so tremendously unwelcoming to them.

One of the things that we could and should do, and which the Government should seriously encourage higher education to do, is to set up a network of befrienders of foreign students. That would mean that, instead of sitting in some desolate bed-sitter in Earls Court, prey to every fundamentalist Muslim missionary who comes along, our Malaysian student friends would be able to get inside and see a home in Britain, not just once in their time here but regularly. The mutual advantage, which is the glory of volunteering, would spin off in straight commercial value to this country. That is yet another area in which opportunities for volunteering could and should be developed.

12.16 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The quality of the debate is a good example to the House. It is interesting to hear arguments made on both sides of the House about serious issues that affect our communities and families and individuals throughout the country.

I congratulate the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on initiating the debate. In his introduction, he described with impressive clarity the impressive extent of volunteering. He referred to the altruism of volunteers and saluted their work; I join him in that. I am sorry that he did not mention the way in which anger, frustration and a determination to attack the ills of society lead many people into voluntary service. However, he acknowledged the need to galvanise the Government into action, and I shall say a little more about that in a moment.

The hon. Member for City of Chester was right to value the voluntary work of people who help with youth clubs or environmental improvements or help to raise money in other ways and, indeed, the work of magistrates and foster parents—many different groups in society which may not be thought of when we use the word "volunteer". However, that reality and the potential that lie beyond it should be recognised by the Government—for instance, through the benefit system. As the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said, it is crazy and illogical to place obstacles in the way of unemployed people giving their time as volunteers. The objectives set out by the hon. Member for City of Chester will be achieved only if the Government help on that score.

Hon. Members may be aware of the recent report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which said that

"action needs to be taken to remove the barriers which prevent people on low incomes from getting involved in their local communities. This might include more payment of expenses and ensuring that regulations do not prevent people on unemployment or other state benefits from volunteering".

That argument was made with some strength to the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People by the National Association of Volunteer Bureaux. I hope that the Minister will show some understanding of the problem when he replies to the debate and that Ministers will take notice of the evidence that the NAVB has produced, especially in a letter from the vice-chairman, Mrs. Eileen Wimbury, to the Minister, which describes, with the help of several case studies, some of the difficulties encountered by unemployed people. In her comments she makes a telling point when she says:

"However many such people are so afraid of losing their benefit that when they hear what they must do before volunteering they understandably decide not to take any further action. This is very much at odds with the Government's intention according to the Make a Difference strategy. Indeed a section of the Make a Difference Team's Report deals with the difficulties experienced by benefit recipients generally."

She goes on to point out that those problems have increased since incapacity benefit was introduced in April this year. Her letter continues:

"One of the difficulties apparent to us is that many Benefit Office staff have no conception of the difference between paid work and voluntary activity. However what concerns us even more is their lack of knowledge of the current regulations covering Incapacity Benefit."

That is an example of where the Government can make a difference by enabling people to volunteer. By a reorientation of the Government machine and the attitudes within it, they can demonstrate that volunteering is valued by the Government. I hope that we will hear something to the point and positive from the Minister.

The Rowntree report states that there is "no room for complacency", although it is recognised that many people wish to volunteer and could be encouraged to do so. Some changes, the report suggests

"might work against volunteering, such as the ageing population and the changing structures of the labour market and the family."

I hope that the Minister will respond to the challenge we are offered in the report, which states:

"The challenge for public policy makers and volunteer involving organisations is to anticipate the trends and take action to harness the positive effects on volunteering and reverse (or at least limit) the negative effects."

The Government's response to the "Make a Difference" initiative, which made 81 recommendations, has been, I regret, half-hearted. The response of the Home Secretary in a letter to hon. Members on 7 June was half-baked and feeble, and did not measure up to the quality of the report that stimulated the launch of the initiative a year before. We need more from the Government if we are to believe that—as the Home Secretary put it at the time—they are serious about releasing

"the huge untapped reservoir of Britons willing to volunteer their time to help in their communities."

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent was right to puncture the myth that a few words can solve the problems facing those who are willing to volunteer in their communities. He was right to ask the Minister to respond to the real challenges, and he was also right to pinpoint the responsibility of the Government, in view of the inexplicable and inexcusable problems caused by the practical obstacles within the health service and Government institutions to using the strengths of volunteers. We require not paragraphs in the annual reports of the organisations concerned, but a change in attitude through the Government machine and among Ministers, civil servants and those who now run a myriad of organisations at an arm's length—or further away—from Government responsibility. I refer not only to activities within the Prison Service, but to other agencies as well.

The youth challenge referred to by the Prime Minister has the date on it of 1997—a commitment carefully dated well beyond the next general election. In calling for action and not words, the hon. Member for City of Chester issued an embarrassing challenge to the Minister—a challenge that the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have failed to meet.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

I welcome the Minister to his first debate at the Dispatch Box, and I congratulate him on gaining his new responsibilities. I hope that he will show himself to be as able to respond to the debate as his hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester believed he would be. It would be a pleasure for us all if he were able to give us what senior Ministers have, so far, been unable to give us.

The hon. Member for City of Chester reflected Labour's thinking when he referred to the African proverb that it takes a whole village to bring up a child. But it does not help if the Government fail to provide enough huts, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) was quick to point out. Incidentally, I congratulate my hon. Friend on her appointment to the Whips Office, and on her sterling work on the review of the relationship between the Government and the voluntary sector which was initiated by the Leader of the Opposition last year. I am sure that the strengths that she has shown in that work will be well to the fore in her work as a more silent member of the Opposition team.

Voluntary action can take a wide variety of forms and is nothing less than the expression of being a citizen and playing a part in one's community. That has been at the heart of the Leader of the Opposition's vision, and was so clearly a part of John Smith's vision before him. But I warn Ministers against the simplistic view common among Conservative Members—although I was glad not to have heard it voiced by Conservative Members today—that volunteering offers a cheap shortcut to saving money or evading the responsibilities of Government.

That approach was illustrated recently when a Minister said:

> "Government values the voluntary sector—we want you to help us to achieve our objectives".

Another Minister turned the traditional relationship on its head, when he told a voluntary sector conference:

> "We value your work—that is why we put seed money into the voluntary sector to help start up projects which the voluntary sector can then run on a permanent basis."

The traditional view was that through concerned citizens exposing need and taking positive action, the voluntary sector would pioneer work which would then be made universal by the state. That route gave us schools, hospitals, social care, youth clubs and so much more.

In a mature society, we need new approaches and the responsibility for the Government now is to explore the ways in which a genuine partnership can be created between the Government and the voluntary sector. In exploring the nature of that relationship, we have been conducting a series of meetings with the voluntary sector up and down the country. The meetings have exhibited a range of issues that concern the voluntary sector and in which the Government have a hand. The issues include the question of funding. The voluntary sector is concerned not just with the amounts of money, but with the bureaucracy that ties the time of those who need to apply for money. The bureaucracy means that those involved are unable to get on with their jobs or to harness the work of volunteers.

There is also the question of independence and accountability—a subject on which there have been some uncomfortable debates of late. It has been suggested that organisations that receive public money should not be free to criticise the Government. The voluntary sector needs to have the right to voice the concerns that it encounters in its work, even if that voice is sometimes uncomfortable for the Government. There is a need for consultation by central and local government to be more real and more participative. We need the subject of volunteering and volunteers to be better understood by the Government.

There is a need for the whole contract culture to be re-examined, because there is evidence that it is constraining the capacity of the voluntary sector and creating the wrong relationships, rather than the right ones. There is the question of the capacity for innovation by the voluntary sector, and of how the Government help self-help groups and structures, including the relationship of social companies with overview bodies. The burdens of trusteeship are, in many cases, discouraging people from taking part in the work of major voluntary organisations.

All those matters are important and each could demand a debate. But it is against that background that we need to create a new partnership between the Government and the voluntary sector. That partnership must recognise not only the essential independence of charities and voluntary organisations and their capacity to innovate but the long-term continuity that many offer in the areas of service to which they bring a passionate commitment.

I see no evidence that the Government have yet realised the damage that they have done or the need for Ministers to change their attitudes. I pay tribute to those in the voluntary sector who responded to the Prime Minister's call and joined the working party for the "Make a Difference" initiative. It is a pity that there has not been a real response from the Government. The working party was able to make some 81 proposals, but a detailed strategy for the development of the relationship between the Government and the voluntary sector has not been produced. Perhaps the Minister will give some specific and positive commitments today on those 81 recommendations, and those would not come a moment too soon.

Rather than a fresh initiative, what is needed is a root-and-branch change in the attitude of the Government. We need not just a gesture from the Prime Minister, but an understanding of the voluntary sector that runs through every Department and organ of Government, local agencies and local government. Extra money from the lottery charities board is welcome, but there must be real recognition that voluntary organisations are partners in society—partners whose views are sometimes different, whose independence must be respected, and whose roots in citizenship and in campaigning for improvements in society give them an authority that is the source of their strength. Volunteering as an activity is more than offering time to help with the work of voluntary organisations: it is based on individual commitment. That must be recognised by society and by Government, not just through the occasional OBE but through proper training, support and respect.

I can testify from personal experience to the way in which voluntary service has improved the quality of life of those who receive help. But it has also transformed the lives of those who give voluntary service by encouraging personal development, widening their horizons and often enabling them to play a more positive part in some of the most difficult and deprived communities in the land. The effect of such activity, and the personal development that follows it, is immense in terms of community

development too. That is true for the young people at the bottom of the heap, including those who have been involved in criminal activity, and for adults.

That fact is illustrated best not in statistics but in the impact of the ex-convict who, as an influential youth leader, became a positive influence on a generation on his estate. It is illustrated by the case of the offender who completed his community service with disabled people and who went on to give a voluntary commitment in a way that changed his life and the lives of those with whom he worked. It is illustrated by the young mother who, in what seemed to be a hopeless setting, started helping in a playgroup. After a period of serial volunteering, she so extended her abilities that she graduated from university a few years later. It is illustrated by the single parents' group in the St. Mellons area of my constituency that set up an advice service to help its members and others. It demonstrated such positive qualities as to lead to a break-through in work and independence for single parents.

Those individuals, in their volunteering, do not illustrate a cheap path to training. They did not set out to benefit themselves; they illustrate the truth in the adage that in giving, one receives. Their experience illustrates the truth for Government that enabling people to volunteer and providing the support, training and opportunity that supports voluntary activity is a first-rate investment in community at a local level, and at a national level in that society whose fabric the Government have damaged in recent years and whose very existence was denied by Lady Thatcher when she was Prime Minister.

At present, the experience of organisations, such as the Prince's Trust Youth Volunteers, and a variety of smaller groups, such as Action for Youth and the Weston Spirit, illustrates the potential of our young people. It illustrates daily that those who appear to be beyond hope can be redeemed—or they can redeem themselves—given the encouragement of tough but caring adults in an environment in which they can develop the confidence to respond to real personal challenges.

That evidence is real, palpable and contemporary, but the tragedy is that it merely confirms the beliefs upon which so many youth organisations were based in the late 19th century and the findings of reports ranging from those of the first world war to the Wolfenden report, the Albermarle report and the report entitled "Youth and Community Work in the Seventies". It took last year's report by a firm of accountants to tell us what our grandmothers always knew: prevention is better than cure and the devil makes work for idle hands.

I refer to the report prepared last year by Coopers and Lybrand for the Prince's Trust, which told us that the youth service is cost-effective in terms of crime prevention. The main purpose of the youth service is to provide benefits for young people growing up. However, the report demonstrated that even in the narrow financial terms of cost-effectiveness—which is supposed to drive the Conservative party—the Government have been foolish and neglectful in ignoring and undermining both the statutory and voluntary youth services in this country.

Anger about that neglect was one of the driving forces that prompted me to stand for Parliament, and the situation has worsened since I came to this place in 1987. I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), whose proposed legislation introduced earlier this year would have given the youth service a proper statutory basis.

Against that background, many hon. Members want to see the development of a scheme of community service, or citizens' service as it has been called and as the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) referred to it in his excellent contribution. The name is not important; what is important is that the experience of youth organisations in motivating young people and the new experience of organisations such as the Prince's Trust must drive any move towards citizens' service. Above all, we must recognise that it must nurture growth rather than demand instant results. The mistakes of the 1980s must be learnt.

Such a scheme must not imitate the bureaucratic nightmare that the Manpower Services Commission became under the dead hand of dogmatic ministerial control. We must not repeat the mistakes of America, whose experience rarely travels comfortably in any event. We must have a development that is carefully thought through, that is voluntary rather than compulsory and that builds on experience, rather than statistical imperatives, in motivating young people.

The textbook for our times—indeed, the parable for Tory Britain—is William Golding's book, "Lord of the Flies". Of course, our young people are not wrecked on a desert island, bereft of positive adult influence; but they are too often deserted on the streets of our housing estates and inner cities, bereft of positive adult influence in an environment that encourages the worst of their potential.

A scheme of citizens service, which nurtures self-worth and positive values through giving service to others, will make a positive contribution to turning that situation around. But it can succeed only if it is part of a much bigger change. We must recognise that we will achieve more together than we can alone; that the Government have a responsibility to encourage a sense of community and of belonging at a local level; and that the values for which the Leader of the Opposition has argued, and which are now set out in the constitution of the Labour party, must become the values of new Britain.

In other words, volunteering and community service are an essential part of the whole. They do not constitute a piece of sticking plaster that the Prime Minister can suddenly discover and stick over the broken bones of communities up and down the country in order to pluck an election victory from scenes of ruin and neglect.

12.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Timothy Kirkhope): As I rise to reply to this most interesting and important debate, I feel the burden of historical personalities and events on my shoulders. In opening the debate, at least my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) did not refer to Lord Palmerston. I am not sure what Lord Palmerston's views on the subject would have been—nor am I briefed to answer them.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply to the debate introduced by my hon. Friend. He is too modest, because his involvement in the community, both in Chester and nationally, is well known. He has been involved with the National Playing Fields Association, the Voluntary Arts Network and the local sea cadets and scouts, and he has worked within his constituency, particularly in the area of Newton. As he said, I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with him on various schemes and ideas about volunteering that have been

[Mr. Timothy Kirkhope]

suggested to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others. I commend my hon. Friend for his efforts and I am very grateful to him for his kind opening remarks.

I think that this has been a debate of the highest quality. I shall comment on one or two points. I was delighted by the helpful contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes). I found the contribution from the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) most interesting and I shall refer to it again in a moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester said that Chester regards itself as the volunteering capital of the nation. That may or may not be the case; my Department does not have information to prove or disprove that claim. However, I hope that the debate will arouse sufficient interest in the country to prompt other locations to try to meet that challenge. Perhaps they will also wish to claim proudly to be the volunteering capital of the nation. My hon. Friend has undoubtedly set the cat among the pigeons in that sense.

This morning's debate is a particularly timely one: it is taking place as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is hosting an event to recognise the 70 winners of new grants worth more than £3 million as part of the Government's "Make a Difference" initiative, to which a number of hon. Members referred and to which I shall return later.

I fully understand some of concerns of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), and hope to discuss them in a moment; but, given such an excellent opportunity to extol the virtues of volunteering, I am a little sorry that the Opposition seem once more to be producing a list of nothing but problems and had lots of cold water to pour on the subject. The debate is an excellent occasion for all of us to unite in being positive and encouraging people to take part. As I have said, some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman raised are worth not only noting but considering and reacting to. I am sorry that he spent so much of his speech criticising, rather than giving examples or extolling the virtues of volunteering.

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman may have misheard some of my comments, but I am glad that he intends to respond to some of my points. Any cold water was poured not on volunteering but on the responsibility of Ministers who failed to respond to matters such as the "Make a Difference" report. I assure the Minister that the water was carefully directed.

Mr. Kirkhope: Perhaps we could agree for the moment to regard it as tepid.

Millions of people voluntarily give of their time to help others, and that has been confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester and other hon. Members—for example, there is the young person who helps an old lady with her shopping. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent referred to the word "love". Of course there is not just the love of the young person carrying out the act of generosity for an old person but the reaction of that old person to the act and the relationship that grows between those two people. That can quite legitimately be regarded as a loving relationship and it is important and should be encouraged.

There is also the governor who helps his local school and the retired architect who helps to formulate ideas for a local charity in his spare time, giving of his professional skills without any call for recompense or return but because of the pleasure and happiness of being able to help. Every hour of the time of such people makes a real difference to the lives of others. Research clearly shows that the number of people who volunteer has increased. As my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester said, it is estimated that as many as 23 million people regularly volunteer in one way or another and that is an enormous proportion of the population.

To say that we have a failure on our hands that we need to remedy is quite untrue. In rolling back the frontiers of the state we have massively increased the scope for voluntary action at local level. Initiatives such as self-governing schools, which I note that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen do not particularly like, and enhanced powers for governors have made it easier for those who want to give up their time to help others to do so. We have also expanded the role of housing associations and, where possible, we have given council tenants the right to set up co-operatives so that they can look after their own affairs in their own locations.

The whole issue of volunteering does not necessarily relate only to helping old people and the like; it also has to do with helping oneself and one's community. We think that that is also good. The Government have been keen to ensure that we do all that we can to promote and support volunteering. That is why last year the Home Secretary launched the "Make a Difference" volunteering initiative, which we discussed earlier. If we want steady growth of voluntary action in communities all over the country, we need to make sure that people have the information and encouragement that they need.

Young people in particular can find volunteering fulfilling and rewarding, and it is also a practical way of improving their skills and enhancing their career prospects. I have employed young people in the past; seeing on a young person's CV the fact that he has been helpful in his community and has been a good volunteer or hearing about that in the course of the interview is an enormous plus when considering that person for the job. Young volunteers gain in confidence and competence and are exposed to new groups of people and new experiences. Participation at an early age in such work is habit forming and that is to the long-term benefit of young people and the community.

I emphasise that we must be wary about viewing all young people as a problem. It is easy to generalise and all too easy to patronise them. Too often, the media depict the young in a categorised way as either cynical or idle or up to no good. Small numbers of young people and, indeed, small numbers of people in all sectors of society fit such descriptions, but for the vast majority that is manifestly not the case. Many young people are very positive and altruistic and contribute energetically to their communities. In the haste to focus on the problems that are posed by individuals, there is always a terrible danger of neglecting to praise and support the vast majority of our young people. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester praised a number of organisations and young people in particular.

We also have evidence to support the positive impact of young people on volunteering generally. The Volunteer Centre's 1991 survey suggested that about 55 per cent. of

young people between the ages of 18 and 24 had done some voluntary work in the previous 12 months. Other surveys put the figure rather lower, depending perhaps on definition and terminology, but I think that all agree that there is a solid and substantial core of young people who volunteer and contribute to the community in a huge range of ways.

In that context, it is worth pausing to consider the range and diversity of volunteering opportunities that are available to young people. For example, most schools have some community service programmes which bring young people into contact with the elderly or with people with disabilities. Youth action agencies can build on that outside the school less formally. There are also more formal schemes such as the Prince's Trust volunteers, Raleigh International and Community Service Volunteers which take full-time volunteers. I am pleased that hon. Members referred to those bodies. I recently met members of the Prince's Trust in an inner-city part of my constituency and I was deeply impressed by the programmes that they were pursuing and the trust's work generally in all its forms. The hon. Member for Eastleigh spoke about that important matter.

Any strategy for volunteering must recognise the existing range of provision and build on the tremendous expertise and experience that are available. We must not build bureaucratic and top-heavy mechanisms and structures which would prove both costly and ineffective and ultimately could provide less choice and opportunity for all our volunteers. Sometimes I think that our critics are rather too keen on building bureaucracy and top-heavy structures and I hope that we will resist that in whatever we do or assist with.

I have focused on the contribution and impact of younger volunteers and on the youthful energy and enthusiasm that they bring to voluntary activity but, of course, we already have active groups of volunteers who are in their 20s, 30s and 40s—I am afraid that that just rules me out. Despite the demands of families and careers, such volunteers often find considerable time for volunteering. But let us not forget those who are in their middle and later years and those who have retired from full-time work because they also have a full and active contribution to make to communities by sharing the wealth of vast experience with others through volunteering.

As hon. Members have said, there is no question but that the demographic pattern of our country is changing. People are retiring younger, there are more changes in the labour market, people are healthier and are living longer and they have more active lives. Therefore we must not neglect the valuable contribution that those older volunteers can make. Aside from their everyday skills, many older people also have an enormous raft of career expertise and experience which can be successfully deployed for the benefit of the community and the volunteer. Many thousands of older people have already taken up that challenge and are encouraging young people and building a bridge between generations or providing helpful and practical advice.

It is important that all the organisations seeking volunteers do not neglect to involve people of all ages and I hope that they will renew their efforts to ensure that that is achieved. I welcome the work of the Retired Executive Action Clearing House—known as REACH—and the Community Service Volunteers retired senior volunteer programme because that is doing a lot to help bring older people into contact with their communities. It is important that positive thought is given by employers and employees to volunteering as an option following their retirement.

I am aware of the matters concerned with unemployed people and ethnic groups and I accept that it is important that they should also be fully involved in volunteering in the community.

Through the "Make a Difference" initiative, we in Government have launched a raft of measures that will help more people to volunteer and to take an active part in their communities. As I have said, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who was engaged on the awards this morning, launched that initiative in March 1994. Since that time, we have made significant progress. Our underlying policy is to build on what there is and to provide the support and development to enable more people to become involved.

For example, at the start of my speech, I mentioned the event that is taking place in recognition of winners of more than £3 million of new grants. Significantly, 53 of the grants we are making are for new projects throughout the United Kingdom, which will involve more young or older people in voluntary activity.

Each of those 53 projects will produce real benefits on the ground in local communities. They will also benefit the volunteers and in some cases help to bridge the generations through volunteering. For example, a project that we are funding in the Tynedale region of Northumberland, where I lived for many years, will make available volunteering opportunities in rural areas for both young and older volunteers in providing a playbus and toy library scheme. That is an important service. It is good that the project has been able to provide that, and it has been rewarded as a result. It will also bring practical benefits to families with young children in a rural area that does not currently have access to such facilities.

The other grants that we are awarding today are for 17 new local volunteer development agencies to be established in regions of England where no local infrastructure to support volunteering exists. We shall be spending around £1.8 million over two years on these projects, and I am delighted to be able to take this opportunity to congratulate the winners of both those grant schemes.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced his intention to make those grants at the launch of the "Make a Difference" team's report on 6 June this year. The team, which was established last October as part of the "Make a Difference" initiative, took just eight months to produce a wide-ranging strategy on how to take forward volunteering into the next millennium.

That team's report, entitled "An Outline Volunteering Strategy for the UK", has been widely welcomed. It made 81 recommendations and at the launch my right hon. and learned Friend announced a range of practical and positive measures that would build on their work.

We also established the Volunteering Partnership with members from the public, private and voluntary sectors to advise Ministers on the development and promotion of volunteering. That small and highly focused group is already up and running and will be producing advice on how volunteers might be involved to relieve carers, and on ways of taking forward the commitment of my right hon. and learned Friend that, by the end of 1997, there

[Mr. Kirkhope]

should be a volunteering opportunity for every young person who wants one. In the longer term, that group will also provide advice on how to involve more older people in volunteering.

In June, we announced plans for a new volunteering award scheme, which has been launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who, as I said earlier, has always been a strong supporter and advocate of our policies in this sector. The aim of those awards is to recognise and reward organisations throughout the UK that have shown excellence and innovation in involving volunteers.

Aside from making awards in 10 areas of the UK, we shall also be announcing an overall UK winner, as well as making a special award this year in recognition of an organisation that has involved volunteering support of carers. The closing date for nominations for the awards is 31 October and the winners will be announced on 5 December—International Volunteers Day. I am excited by the meet your street initiative, to which my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester referred. Perhaps that will be a contender or applicant for that award.

We plan to run pilot media campaigns in the new year in advance of a nationwide campaign. That will fulfil another element in the plans that my right hon. Friend announced in June.

All elements of the package that we announced in June built on the work that we had already put in place: establishing the "Make a Difference" team, providing £470,000 in grants to support 27 new partnership projects to bring more people into volunteering, and establishing the national volunteering helpline, which, for the cost of a local call, can provide information to anyone seeking to become involved in volunteering.

That is all on top of the direct support that we give to national organisations that develop and support volunteering, such as the Volunteer Centre.

The Government's support for volunteering, however, does not end with my Department. This morning, I am able to announce—as one of my hon. Friends hinted—the publication of the departmental action plans, which will take forward volunteering in the sectors of responsibility in all Departments. Copies have today been placed in the Library of the House. I am sure that colleagues represented on the ministerial group for volunteering and the voluntary sector would agree that those plans represent an important step forward and provide new impetus across Departments for the development and support for volunteering. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester that I shall be making absolutely sure that all Departments fall in line with those plans, otherwise we will both want to know why.

All in all, "Make a Difference" is synonymous with practical, positive and partnership measures that we have taken and will take to ensure that volunteering remains a hallmark of this nation's history. It is our role in Government to act as persuader and enabler.

Enabling should not be regarded as a dirty word. Too often, Opposition Members assume that, because the Government believe in enabling, whether it be in this context, in relation to local authorities or wherever else, we are not fulfilling obligations. Our job is to ensure that we encourage people to volunteer, but, as I said earlier, if we were to overdo the bureaucracy, the object would not be achieved.

Mr. Michael: Before the Minister concludes his remarks, perhaps I can assist him so that he does not have to speak too slowly. Would he like to refer, as he was invited to do by Opposition and Conservative Members, to the aspects of enabling that relate to reducing the problems and constraints that are placed in the path of unemployed people who wish to volunteer, and to the discouragement that exists, as illustrated by the evidence provided to his hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester?

Mr. Kirkhope: It is only fair to say that we are concerned about and interested in ensuring that people who are unemployed or who receive benefit are encouraged as far as possible to take part in volunteering without penalty. We would encourage them as much as we can.

Mr. Michael: Any announcement?

Mr. Kirkhope: No announcement, I am afraid, but we are considering such matters.

If we want voluntary collective action in communities all over the country to grow steadily, we need to ensure that people have the information and encouragement that they need. In that way, Government action can be the catalyst that unleashes volunteer power.

Our "Make a Difference" initiative aims to build on what has been and continues to be achieved. We know that there is more to do and that there is scope for even more people to become involved. The UK has a proud tradition of voluntary service and most, if not all, of the hon. Members who have spoken, including my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester, have referred to that proud tradition.

As I said, I am not sure what Palmerston would make of this, but we intend to sustain our fine reputation and tradition in this way. With the help of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is very keen, and because of the encouragement that we always received from my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher when she was Prime Minister, we intend to take the matter further and we will ensure that volunteering plays an important part in the future life of our community.

Greece

12.58 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): The wider purpose of this debate is to make some small positive contribution to Anglo-Greek relations, but there is a more immediate motivation and purpose: to make amends for an insult that was felt by the Greek people in the publication by the *Daily Mail* on VE day 1995 of a poster which commemorated the sacrifices of our allies in the second world war, but which omitted Greece. The timing of the debate is deliberate. It is as close as possible to 28 October, which is a national holiday in Greece. It is called Ochi day. "Ochi" is the Greek word for "No". It is the day on which, in the small hours, Greece said no to Mussolini's ultimatum.

There followed a super-human demonstration of individual and national courage by the Greeks—a concept of courage which was interestingly analysed in a deeply philosophical article by the Greek ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Elias Gounaris, this Sunday in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Against all military odds, in the campaign the Greeks repulsed the Axis forces in the Pindhos mountains, then made the first territorial gains which demonstrated to the world that the Axis forces were not invincible. The six-month campaign ended only when Hitler was forced to commit from the north tanks which were diverted from the eastern front. That had important consequences for the progress of the second world war. Greece eventually fell on 23 April 1941.

During those six months, Greece, alone of the countries of Europe, was in armed combat, together with Great Britain, against the Axis forces. Sadly, I find that nowadays not too many people seem to know that.

By the end of the war, after three and a half years of occupation, suffering and depredation of the people, the economy and the resources of the country, some 558,000 Greeks had died—a staggering 8 per cent. of the population of 7 million in that small country. Hence, early-day motion 1507 is published on the Order Paper today. It deplores the action of the *Daily Mail* in June 1995, remembers the sacrifice made by Greece, and invites the editor of the *Daily Mail* to make appropriate amends to the people of Greece on 28 October 1995.

The end of the war was not the end of Greece's suffering. As the rest of western Europe set about the process of reconstruction, Greece endured civil war until 1949. That war was to prevent the communists from extending their sway to the warm-water port of Salonica—that is, over the soil of Macedonia. Greeks who fought in both those wars are still alive. The political, social and economic consequences for the country were awful, and are perhaps still not yet entirely exorcised.

The British of the second world war generation had no doubt about our debt to Greece. Winston Churchill remarked at the time that one should not say so much that the Greeks fight like heroes as that heroes fight like Greeks.

That generation had no doubt about the fitness of Greece in 1980 to be enrolled as the 10th member of the European Community. That Community is predicated on the premise that never again should Europe be torn asunder by war. They had no doubts about the importance of Greece to the western alliance—situated in the southern Balkans at the interface between Europe and the Lavent—as a worthy and important member of the western democracies and the progenitor of the western democratic tradition, although that is another story, which perhaps should not detain us today.

Sadly, the second world war generation is passing on, and, certainly in the British press, one detects a meaner attitude to Greece, based partly perhaps on misunderstanding and partly, I fear, on prejudice, and even xenophobia. That meaner attitude sees things in cost-benefit terms, which is expressed in calculations of how much we pay into the Community budget and which members are net recipients of Community aid.

Greece is often cast as the bete noire, with accusations of fraud in the application of the common agricultural policy. It is particularly disappointing for a major newspaper such as *The Independent* in an editorial on 5 January 1994 to refer to Greece as

> "widely regarded in Brussels as more of a liability than an asset to the Union. Its economy is the worst performer of the Twelve . . . it relies on billions of pounds in subsidies from Brussels . . . a substantial proportion of these subsidies is believed to drift into private pockets . . . so corrupt is the political culture of Greece."

On 27 March 1994, in the most insulting article, *The Sunday Telegraph* referred to the modern Greek with his dark glasses, car phone and, of course, phantom olive groves attracting EU subsidies. The truth is that, when proper statistical analyses are produced, two things are clear: first, no EU member is in a position to cast the first stone in respect of CAP fraud; and, secondly, that the farmers of Greece compare favourably with their Mediterranean neighbours such as Italy, as well as with those respected northern European neighbours such as Germany. In his response, I invite the Minister to offer a more reasoned and balanced view of the place of Greece in the European Union.

One senses less objection to subventions from the European Union to the ravaged former communist economies of eastern Europe than to the economy of a country which was torn apart by not only Nazi occupation but a civil war which raged precisely to stem the tide of communism in the southern Balkans.

That brings me to the issue of Macedonia.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his excellent speech, and on highlighting the forgetfulness of the British press of the role that Greece has played in defending democracy. As a British citizen, I am proud that Greece stood alone with Britain at the beginning of the second world war.

Does the hon. Gentleman share with me a concern that the same anti-Greek attitude has spilled over into the debate about the former republic of Macedonia? Does he agree that there seems to be a sad lack of understanding of 20th-century history, and how Greece has suffered in the Balkans, how it has faced communism alone, how it is only in this century that it has regained all its national territory, and of how much the province of Macedonia means to the Greek people?

For another Slavic country to claim the name of Macedonia strikes to the heart of the Greek people, the Greek culture and the Greek nation. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in this country we should be far more understanding about why the Greeks have stood out

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

in a spirit of friendliness to reach an accommodation with that country without giving away something which means so much to them—the national name?

Mr. O'Hara: In some ways, it is regrettable that the debate about Macedonia was centred on ancient history—Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great—justified though the arguments were. There is certainly more resonance to the modern ear in arguments about 20th-century history. I shall be illustrating precisely the point made by the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) about the deep significance of the issues at stake between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The hon. Member made a helpful intervention, for which I thank him.

To those who fought in the Greek civil war, the three-pointed issue with the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia cannot be categorised—it would be an insult to do so—as a silly quarrel over a name. To them, the name represents a deep sense of national identity and a political statement by Tito over which they fought. Those attitudes are reinforced by the other two points at issue between the two countries—the choice of national emblem on the flag of the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, and certain wording in the constitution of that country.

When referring to British attitudes on these matters, it is not only newspapers that can be cited. When Greece imposed a limited blockade on the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia to induce it to negotiate meaningfully on the issues in dispute, the attitude of the British Government was clearly one of criticism. *The Times* independently took the opportunity to comment:

"This latest episode again illustrates the dangers of attempting to integrate a semi-Levantine society into the western family of nations."

Interestingly, the European Court of Justice took a different view, and supported the right of Greece to impose the embargo. Thankfully, the embargo has now been lifted, as two of the points of issue have been resolved—the emblem and the wording of the constitution. Discussions are to be held about the name.

I take this opportunity to deplore the attempted assassination of President Kiro Gligorov, which followed the signing of the accord. I join the Greek Government in their condemnation of that act, and in their good wishes to the president for a full and speedy recovery.

Instead of hailing the accord as an act of statesmanship by Karolos Papoulias, the Greek Foreign Minister, *The Guardian* carped and commented on the reluctance of Greece to negotiate it. Cyrus Vance and his colleagues, to whom much credit must be given for helping to broker the accord, had to undertake last-minute negotiations to prevent the Foreign Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from sabotaging it.

As I have said, I shall not cite only newspapers. Within days of the signing of the accord, one of our Government's Foreign Affairs Ministers was in Skopje congratulating the Government of the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and promising British support. I have no objection to that, and neither does Greece. It was objectionable, however, that the Minister referred constantly to the "Republic of Macedonia". It is precisely the name that is still the subject of further discussions between the two countries.

As far as I know, a British Minister did not go to Athens. But there did go to Athens, at the same time, three Conservative party representatives who were members of the Western European Union. They, in the Greek parliament building, offended their hosts with a series of studied insults, including the remark, "We cannot understand why there is such a fuss over a name."

I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to repudiate such insensitivity by a ministerial colleague and by official representatives of the Conservative party. The newspaper that reported on these events referred to the remarks in question being made in a typical British mixture of sarcasm and arrogance. If they were not intended to be received in that way, that was certainly the result. The Minister has an opportunity to repudiate them, and to make amends.

On a more positive note, I invite the Minister to congratulate Karolos Papoulias on his statesmanship in entering into an accord with the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia. It follows his previous achievements of an accord with Albania, his intervention in Serbia together with the Greek Defence Minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, which contributed importantly to the release of the United Nations prisoners in June 1995, and joint exercises of Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian and Rumanian troops.

Add to that the Greek initiative in inaugurating in Athens this very month what is intended to be a regular series of meetings of the major cities of south-east Europe to discuss the problems of the region, and there is ample evidence of the important role that Greece can and does play as a catalyst for the resolution of internal tensions in the southern Balkans, and for the establishment of peace, stability, co-operation and prosperity in a troubled region.

The Greek economy is not as strong as that of its more fortunate European partners. There are good reasons for that, including 450 years of Ottoman occupation, the second world war and subsequently the civil war. The politics of Greece is indeed lively, but it is certainly open. There are no more lively critics than Greek politicians.

The perception of Greece from the distant vantage point of northern Europe may be of weakness and instability. Relative, however, to its geopolitical position, Greece is the most stable entity in the southern Balkans. It is also rare in the region in having no designs on the territory of any of its neighbours. It is western in its political orientation. At the same time, it understands and plays its full role in the politics of the Levant and the Mediterranean basin.

For these reasons, Greece is the best equipped of all the Balkan countries to take a lead in the development of the region. I invite the Minister to demonstrate in his response his commitment to a set of policies for Anglo-Greek relations that fully recognises the special qualities of Greece.

1.17 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) for securing this chance to debate Britain's relationship with Greece. I congratulate him on doing so.

I have only limited time in which to do justice to the centuries of history which join Britain and Greece, but in this year of world war two anniversaries, I should recall,

as the hon. Gentleman has done, that the last week in October carries a special resonance in the history of Anglo-Greek friendship. This Saturday, it will be exactly 55 years since Greece defied Mussolini's ultimatum: the so-called day of saying no, or "ochi".

As the British historian C. M. Woodhouse wrote:

"History cannot forget that in 1940, Greece was the only country to enter the war voluntarily on the allied side when Britain stood alone."

It is right that we should not forget that—I agree with him wholeheartedly. The hon. Gentleman referred to the eloquent and philosophical reminder of those events by Elias Gounaris, Greece's excellent ambassador in London, as penned in *The Sunday Telegraph* last weekend.

The questions we need to address now are those of the present, not of the past. Why is Greece important for Britain? Why is it important for Europe? In previous debates, hon. Members have drawn eloquent attention to Greece's unique and important position in a difficult and turbulent part of our continent.

I begin by spending a few moments on the nature of Britain's partnership with Greece. Britain and Greece are nations of traders and travellers. Two and a quarter million British people visited Greece in 1994. The numbers coming from Greece are, of course, proportionally lower, but they are growing fast. It is by no means just a story of package holidays and sightseeing. There is a long and distinguished tradition of cultural and educational links between Greece and Britain.

Greeks have studied and taught in Britain since the 17th century. Today, Britain is host to some 7,000 Greek students, enough to fill a whole university. There are more Greeks studying at postgraduate level in Britain than there are students from any other country. About 600 British students study at Greek universities under the ERASMUS programme. Greece itself is the fastest growing market for British education overseas, with ever-increasing numbers of Greeks learning English and taking British examinations. It all adds up to a substantial sharing of experience and culture, from which both countries will continue to benefit.

For two weeks in September and October this year, Greece was treated to one of the biggest celebrations of British culture and achievement ever seen in that country. This was the "Britain in Greece" festival, a fortnight organised by the British embassy and the British Council in Athens. Its aim was to present the best of British achievement in the performing arts, design, science and technology, sport and much more besides. It was just one symbol of the importance that we attach to our relationship with Greece, but it was also an opportunity for thousands of Greeks all over the country to sit up and take notice of Britain, to revive their interest in what Britain is and does, and, above all, to enjoy it.

I should like to pay tribute to the work of our ambassador in Greece and his wife—Oliver and Julia Miles—and of the director of the British Council in Athens, John Mundy, and all their staffs, who put such energy into masterminding the hugely successful project of raising Britain's profile in Greece. I am sure that the hon. Member for Knowsley, South will join me in congratulating all those involved.

The project not only gained the attention of the Greek public but won substantial backing from British and Greek business. The rich menu of events and spectacle was cultural diplomacy at its best, but it was also more than that. One of the centrepiece events was a trade fair called "The Best of Britain". Its aim was to show that Britain is not only a traditional friend of Greece, a point to which I shall return, but an innovative and progressive business partner for the future.

Britain and Greece are linked by a common commercial spirit. We share business interests, from shopkeeping to shipping. Today, there is substantial British investment in Greece. British companies are winning business in EU-funded infrastructure projects which are now transforming Greece. That is a good side of EU funding.

We want British companies to win more. Trade between the United Kingdom and Greece has been increasing steadily over the past few years. The balance of trade is strongly in our favour, as it turns out. British exports to Greece for the period January to November 1994 totalled some £843 million, but our market share of some 6.5 per cent. suggests that there is room for us to do better still, and we shall endeavour to support efforts in that direction.

Like the hon. Member for Knowsley, South, I also wish to deal with the wider picture. Greece is unique in the European Union, in that none of its immediate neighbours are fellow European Union members, which has its implications. Greece's membership of the Union thus provides vital links with countries which are not—or not yet—members, but whose security and economic health are important to us. It is a position that brings particular difficulties which we must understand, and special responsibilities which we must work to encourage.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the dispute that Greece has had with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia over the past two years. Regrettably, there has been even more difficulty, so it was all the more welcome to see the efforts of Cyrus Vance and the readiness of both sides to work together, which bore fruit in the interim accord. With the entry into force of that agreement on 15 October, the way has opened to a resumption of normal trading; so, too, has the route to a co-operative and peaceful neighbourly relationship between those two countries.

We welcome the new constructiveness and the way in which both sides have kept their nerve in the wake of the appalling assassination attempt on President Gligorov. I am glad that Greece responded quickly with messages of sympathy, offers of medical and other assistance, and even aid in detail, right down to giving the negotiating team a mobile phone. There was support at every level.

There are some tricky issues still to be resolved—the hon. Member referred to them—but the ships in Salonika harbour are loading up once again with goods to go to and from Skopje, and cargo traffic is also being received bound for Skopje. There is a willingness on both sides to keep the talks on track and look for solutions. That brings some real brightness to what are too often the clouded political skies of the Balkan region.

I hope, too, that a similar spirit of constructiveness will continue to prevail in the relationship between Greece and Albania. With effort on both sides, a past of antagonism and mistrust can be succeeded by a future of co-operation. As Greece has shown before, it can provide much-needed strong support to its neighbours and act as a force for stability in the Balkans. It has done so for Bulgaria during a difficult stage in that country's transition to a free-market, democratic society.

[Mr. David Davis]

The hon. Member mentioned Bosnia. Greece's interests are substantially engaged in the stability of its neighbouring region. We respect Greece's decision that, as a neighbouring country, it should refrain from contributing troops to UNPROFOR. It is important to recognise even a negative decision. We warmly welcome the Greek Government's recent decision to contribute to the costs of the rapid reaction force in Bosnia. The prospects for peace are now better than at any time since the conflict began and our thoughts have turned to how such a peace could be implemented. In this, too, I am sure that Greece will have an important role to play.

In the Balkans, and more widely, we look to Greece to play its part in creatively building a wider Europe—not a defensive, exclusive Europe, but an expansive and outward-looking one. We need Greece's continuing engagement in helping to make our key institutions work, in ensuring that NATO, the European Union and the Western European Union are as effective as they can be in underpinning the security and prosperity that are vital to the future of our continent.

In the context of building a secure and prosperous Europe, the troubled relationship between Greece and Turkey is a particular concern. The North Atlantic Alliance, for example, is gearing up for some of the most complex practical tasks in its history. We shall want our alliance to be functioning at the peak of its effectiveness. Willingness on the part of Greece and Turkey to agree to resolve their differences over the alliance's southern region command structure can only help.

The European Union, too, has some stiff tasks ahead, as we look forward to the addition of more new members and the consolidation of the Union's links with countries whose membership may still be a prospect for the longer term. Here, too, the relationship between Greece and Turkey will be important and it will be in both countries' interests to promote, not frustrate, each other's objectives as the Europe of the 21st century takes shape.

I deal finally with Cyprus. One cannot ignore Cyprus when considering our relationship with Greece. The impact of Graeco-Turkish relations on Cyprus is much debated. Some suggest that a solution in Cyprus will be possible only if there is more warmth in that relationship; others say that, to achieve real reconciliation between Greece and Turkey, there must first be a settlement in Cyprus. I do not think that we should chase our tails in such a debate. Whatever else might help or hinder the solution in Cyprus, an enduring solution ultimately depends on the will of the two Cypriot communities.

But, like Britain, Greece and Turkey are guarantor powers under the 1960 Cyprus treaty of guarantee, and they share with us the responsibility that that entails. I should like to see that responsibility discharged in both Athens and Ankara in applying downward—not upward—pressure on the deployment of troops and arms on the island of Cyprus. I rather think that the hon. Member for Knowsley, South agrees with me on that.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Knowsley, South has drawn our attention today to the spirit of pragmatism and co-operation which Greece is bringing to its relations with its neighbours. There will, I am sure, still be difficulties—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We must turn to the next debate.

Share Options

1.30 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss approved discretionary share option schemes, which began as a result of the Finance Act 1984. Earlier this year, there was much heat thrown on the subject, but not as much light as a good debate in the House of Commons might be able to throw on it.

Earlier in the year, we had a rather unhealthy public debate about share options, which was largely started by people with no experience of running companies and absolutely no experience of recruiting, retaining and motivating employees. In fact, quite a bit of the comment came from the Opposition Front-Bench team, and they do not have much experience in any of the key areas of running British business or industry.

The debate was more about the politics of envy of a small number of people than common sense. It focused on about 100 people in the country—a small number of directors of privatised utilities—who were given the general name "fat cats". No one asked if the newspaper editors who commissioned many of the stories on the subject fell into the category of fat cats, yet I understand that many of them earn much more than the executives of privatised industries.

No one asked if media stars, such as the lady who draws the six lottery numbers on a Saturday night, fell into the category of fat cats, yet I understand that she earns more than the majority of directors of privatised utilities. While directors of privatised utilities may be able to do her job and draw the winning lottery numbers on a Saturday night, I am not sure whether she would be able to do theirs.

One of the tragedies of the debate earlier this year was that it did not really focus on what share options are about. Sadly, what also happened as a result of the debate was that the people who lost out, who were forgotten, were not the 100 or so so-called fat cats but the 600,000 or so thin cats, who have also benefited over the years from share options. Those 600,000 people are ordinary men and women and I hope that this debate will be seen as their chance to have someone speak up for them in the House of Commons and get the message across.

In speaking up for one of the thin cats, I can do no better than to select a poem by Kay Every, a security attendant in the Asda store in East Retford. If the House will allow me, I shall extract a couple of short paragraphs from her poem. It says:

"I'm not a fat cat, just a skinny kitten.
I can't understand why I've been bitten.
PLEASE Mr. Chancellor, don't you see?
It's BIG FAT CATS you want—not little me.
So come on Chancellor, don't be mean:
leave us thin cats our saucer of cream."

She wants her share options, and I am not surprised.

I joined the Conservative party way back, more than 25 years ago, because it was the party that stood up for the rights of the individual to own. In 1991, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his views in that area by saying that in the 1980s,

"our aim was a life enriched by ownership, in which home, shares and pensions were not something for others—but something for everyone".

He went on to say:

"But this revolution is still not complete. In the 1990s we must carry it further. We must extend savings and ownership in every form."

I believe that share options are a form of extending ownership. How do they expand ownership? An option to acquire shares means that people become involved in the company for which they work. It enables them to feel part of the ownership structure of that company. Many go on to hold the shares that they can acquire as a result of share options.

Some—I accept—sell those shares. But what do they do? In many instances they use the resulting proceeds to buy themselves pensions. They do not have the inflation-linked pensions of civil servants or—frankly—of Members of Parliament. Many people find that owning share options gives them the opportunity to acquire capital and savings for use in their retirement.

I accept that some people sell their share options when they have value—if they have value, because not every share option will result in value—and repay their mortgages as the first step to increasing their position on the ownership ladder. So we should never take the view that just because share options result in the disposal of shares, people are not expanding ownership and their capital standings.

The Greenbury committee was cited earlier in the year as being against share options and the current tax regime for share options. That is not entirely true. I spoke to Sir Richard Greenbury after that was cited. He made the point that his report was about directors; it was not about ordinary men and women, low income and middle-income people, and their ownership of share options. He felt that Parliament was the place in which the tax position of those people should be debated—not in the pages of his report, which was focused on directors.

I shall deal briefly with some of the Treasury arguments against share options. It has been suggested that they help fat cats. In fact, from further research, people have begun to realise that the fat cats have any number of other methods of remuneration open to them, and many thin cats—some 600,000 as I said earlier—working in 6,170 companies, have been helped by share option schemes. Indeed, in my constituency, the ferry company P and O operates a share option scheme, and many hundreds of people have benefited as a result.

The gains from share options are often much more modest than people recognise. Some have been in the thousands or even the very low tens of thousands of pounds—not hundreds of thousands of pounds, as much of the publicity has focused on. Although it was suggested in a parliamentary answer to a question I tabled that the average income in the past year of those in share option schemes was £45,000, research by Proshare, the independent pro-share ownership organisation supported by more than 400 companies, shows that the average income among the people it contacted is much nearer to £16,500 than the statistics produced by the Inland Revenue show. That is because share options are seen as a way of democratising ownership and bringing the opportunities for ownership of shares in companies and interest in companies much further down the income scale to the low-income groups.

The Treasury suggested originally that share option schemes resulted in £80 million of lost revenue, but in an answer to a parliamentary question that I received

[Mr. David Shaw]

yesterday, I discovered that if any savings are to be made from the tax changes on share options, they will not be made until 2002 or 2003. The Opposition Front-Bench team should learn about that because the shadow Chancellor has regularly been on "Today" claiming some tax wheeze through which the Treasury could make enormous and immediate savings. Indeed, the calculation of those savings is only one side of the equation. It leaves out the important side, which is that no gains from share options can be made unless the inherent value of the company increases. Normally, that can be done only by an increase in profits. An increase in profits results in additional corporation tax revenues. So I believe that share options are self-financing or, if anything, result in more income for the Treasury because more corporation tax is paid by successful companies if gains are made through share option schemes by the employees.

It has also been suggested that alternative share schemes are available. While I accept that alternative schemes are available as a result of other financial legislation, they are not so popular. Answers to my parliamentary questions which I received yesterday show that the number of companies taking up those share schemes has been diminishing. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor must take into account in his Budget the fact that those schemes have not been so popular in recent years. It looks as if the focus is moving back towards approved share option schemes, or ADSOS.

Another argument that has been made is that share option schemes were introduced when tax rates were higher and that they are largely focused on top people. My experience is that such schemes have always been used for low and middle-income people. I should perhaps declare an interest as someone who has never benefited personally from share option schemes but has been a non-executive director of a company which awarded share options. The companies of which I was a non-executive director always awarded share options to people at secretary level and in middle management as well as to directors. There was always a focus on motivating and retaining people who were extremely important to the future performance of the company.

So I do not accept that, simply because share option schemes were introduced with higher income earners in mind at a time when tax rates were higher, we should stop them now when they are so successful in helping low and middle-income people. I do not accept that the fact that some employees sell their shares is an argument for getting rid of the schemes. That sale of shares widens the ownership of capital, and that is important.

There has been a suggestion that option profits are income and not capital. I remind the House that it takes three years to realise any profits from a share option scheme and that many people hold them for 10 years. That is not in the nature of income but in the nature of capital. I should also point out that no one in their right mind who was granted share options would attempt in the first year to approach their bank manager for a loan and no bank manager would award a loan against a share option in a scheme. The fact is that share options are not income on which loans can be granted by any bank. They are capital.

Share options represent a transfer of wealth or capital from the existing shareholders of a company to new shareholders—the employees. It is definitely a transfer of capital. That transfer is undertaken by the owners of the business. They are pleased to do so because they know that the employees are thereby encouraged to work harder and associate themselves with the overall benefits that the owners receive from the business. The identification of a common interest between employee and shareholder is something that we have certainly applauded and supported in the past.

I argue that we need share option schemes to help low and middle-income employees. We should never forget that the Proshare research has shown that the average income of a member of a share option scheme is more likely to be £16,500 today than the higher figures that have been quoted. We need share option schemes because they encourage the creation of a share-owning democracy. We need them because no money is required at the grant of an option so such schemes are particularly suited to help low-income employees, who do not have the capital to involve themselves in save-as-you-earn share option schemes.

We also need share option schemes because they are effective for companies and involve little bureaucracy, whereas the other schemes involve much more. I should mention that the campaign for share options with which I have been associated has received support from many companies including Forte plc, Cable and Wireless plc, Walker's Crisps Ltd.—a subsidiary of Pepsi Cola—Dixons Group plc, Tarmac plc, WH Smith Group plc, John Menzies plc, the Burton Group plc and Next plc. All those companies are large, but the House should not think that only large companies are interested in share option schemes.

Many smaller companies and high-technology companies regard share options as fundamental to the package that they offer their employees. Many high-tech companies in Britain today are under threat of having their employees recruited by silicon valley companies in the United States of America. Companies in America have share option schemes and we need them to retain the right type of people with their unique high-tech skills.

We should not forget how wide is the use of share option schemes among employees today. I understand from research that 96 per cent. of companies that are newly quoted on the London stock exchange have had share option schemes. They are not the larger companies, but small and medium-sized companies obtaining flotation on the London stock market for the first time. They regard share option schemes as a fundamental means of helping their staff accumulate capital. That is part of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has talked about—helping us to develop a competitive, enterprise economy.

I shall conclude my remarks so that my colleagues, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), will have time to speak. Share option schemes are fundamental to the enterprise economy and important for recruitment, retention and motivation of employees. They encourage the development of a common interest between employees and shareholders. They are terribly important in what we are trying to achieve as a Conservative party in Britain and what the Conservative Government are trying to achieve.

1.47 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on his

success in the ballot and on his single-minded determination in conducting this campaign. The suggestion that share options should be taxed as income and not capital has no relevance to the vast majority of fat cats. They use up their capital gains tax exemptions elsewhere and pay tax on gains from their share options at the same rate as their marginal rate of income tax. It is the small cats who would suffer from such a change—the Asda checkout girl rather than the chief executive of Asda.

It is also wrong to suggest, as the Government did, that share options should be taxed when they are exercised. The Confederation of British Industry has pointed out in its Budget submission that if that happened, there would be every incentive for shareholders to crystallise the gain and sell the shares overnight. No one wants to be taxed on a paper gain when there is a risk that the share price will go down rather than up.

There is no doubt that share options increase the loyalty of employees and are a useful recruitment tool. I remember asking the chairman of a newly quoted public company in the 1980s what was the benefit of a public quote to him. He said, "Very simple. I can offer employees a share option. That has enabled me to attract people who would otherwise not have come to the company." I hope that the Government will, even at this late time, have second thoughts on the proposal.

1.48 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Jack): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on securing this debate. He has pursued this particular campaign with vigour and made his views known to the Government and people outside. I hope that we can agree on one thing—that our party is the party of wider share ownership. Since 1979 the number of individuals holding shares has increased from 3 million to 10 million. Many of those first bought shares in privatised companies. That was a policy that we pursued vigorously. Around 2 million people now hold personal equity plans and getting on for 2 million hold shares or options under all-employee share and option schemes. Those are achievements of which we can be proud. However, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary does not believe that that goes far enough and she is working on other ideas to try to expand yet further the number of those owning shares. We very much wish to encourage share ownership.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover has set out his views forcefully. He advocates share options as incentives and as a means to wider share ownership. Let me take a few moments to pick up on his theme of shedding some light on the matter by describing the Government's position.

Share options and shares both have a place in rewarding and incentivising employees. But share options and share ownership are different things. Share options can play a role in providing incentives to work and encouraging loyalty. They bring rewards if the company's share price performs well, but they carry no risk.

My hon. Friend referred to the former Chancellor, Lord Lawson. When he introduced the relief for approved share options he said that it was designed

"to increase the incentives and motivation of existing executives and key personnel by linking their rewards to performance."

The tax relief was designed to encourage share options as incentives. That was when income tax was charged at up to 60 per cent. and capital gains tax at 30 per cent. Share options are now an established part of the incentive packages of executives and, as my hon. Friend has said, others too.

In the light of the way in which share options granted under the 1984 relief had developed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided that the relief should be ended. That does not mean that companies cannot continue to use options to incentivise, but they will have to do so without a tax break. However, that will not kill off options. Many companies have been offering unapproved schemes for many years and even within approved schemes around one quarter of option holders chose to exercise their options without qualifying for the tax relief. Option schemes can and will continue without tax relief. If companies and shareholders think that options are right for their employees, they can continue to use them.

My hon. Friend mentioned some of the research undertaken by Proshare. I had the opportunity to read its latest report this morning and I shall study it further and carefully because it contains some important messages. It is interesting to note that, in reaction to the current situation, it is evident from table 5.1 in that research that some 86 per cent. of the companies who were questioned clearly, in one way or another, remain committed to using shares or share options as a way of rewarding or incentivising their staff. There is no flavour in the research furnished by Proshare that they have been put off the idea. However, I shall consider the matter carefully because it is a thorough piece of work and worthy of further reading.

My hon. Friend referred to the number of people in various schemes and I would like briefly to deal with that. My data may differ from his because he quotes from a selective sample and I quote from a sample taken by the Inland Revenue. He talked about the number of people in schemes and referred to figures of up to 600,000. Our returns show current membership at some 200,000. We talked to a number of companies with approved executive share option schemes. Some say that there are 6,000; we say 4,000. In terms of the average income, which my hon. Friend attested to based on the Proshare analysis, the Inland Revenue sample of individuals granted options in 1994-95, showed an average figure of £45,000. We may have to beg to differ because we come at these figures from different points of view.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jack: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I should like to make a little progress. I may well be able to give way to him as I come towards the end of my remarks.

My hon. Friend has argued that approved schemes are an important way in which to promote wider share ownership. But, as I have said, there are other views on the matter. I want to put on record the findings of two independent surveys. Proshare, an organisation with which, as my hon. Friend said, he is associated, drew our attention to the fact that, with regard to the actions of those who hold options,

"In 60 per cent. of cases, companies indicate that 90 per cent. or more executives immediately sell their shares"

on exercise of the option.

[Mr. Jack]

A second survey by the Monks partnership states:

"In the majority of companies, most employees sell all their shares on exercise. The percentage of employees who retain all of their shares is typically around 5 per cent."

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to those two perspectives because they rather weaken the case for claiming that there is an element of long-term share ownership. Either way, both surveys show that there is a marked desire by option holders to sell their shares on exercise.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jack: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I have given up some of my time so that he could make his own contribution to the debate and I want to make some progress. I shall try to give way at the end.

Those figures question the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Dover that approved executive share option schemes are the best vehicles to promote wider share ownership.

My hon. Friend touched on the alternatives, about which I shall say a word or two in the time remaining.

Share ownership is important to some people. I remember meeting the managing director of one of our regional electricity companies who told me of a modestly paid linesman who, at the time of privatisation, had bought shares and had continued to invest through one of the schemes that I have mentioned, save-as-you-earn. He was incentivised. He would tell his managing director just to keep the share price going up. We understand that psychology.

But there are alternatives. Profit sharing schemes allow an employer to give an employee free shares worth up to £8,000 a year. Around a million people currently hold shares in those schemes. Save-as-you-earn schemes give tax relief to employees who save up to buy shares by means of exercising share options under the scheme. Again, about a million people have a stake in that scheme. Some of my hon. Friend's constituents in Dover, working for P and O, also follow that route. I looked at that company's annual report and found that it, too, had a SAYE scheme.

Both those schemes have to be offered widely to employees. Both are designed to encourage employees to hold their shares and both really do achieve wider share ownership.

My hon. Friend claims that profit sharing and save as you earn schemes are not flexible enough, so in addition we need approved share option schemes. Let me put that point into context. About 4,000 companies currently have approved share option schemes. They currently cover some 200,000 employees—less than 1 per cent. of the private sector work force. Profit sharing schemes and save-as-you-earn schemes cover nearly 2 million people—one in eight of the total private sector work force—covering, in 1993-94, shares worth more than £1.5 billion in total. That is evidence that the schemes are popular and work.

We have not closed our minds to the way in which those schemes operate and are constructed. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said, the door is still open for us to receive representations. Already many, including one important representative from the high street, have made some constructive suggestions on the matter. We also have, as I have said, personal equity plans and venture capital trusts, which are a further way of disseminating wider share ownership. I said that I would try to find a moment to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover, and I now do so.

Mr. David Shaw: My figures were taken from Inland Revenue statistics. The figure of 600,000 shows the widespread numbers of people in low income groups who have come into share option schemes. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear that in mind. In the Budget, we should be looking at helping many people on low incomes own a stake in the country. Even if they have to sell their first round of share options, they may not have to sell their second one. Once they have sold their first one and repaid their mortgage, they will be in a position to hold shares for the long term.

Mr. Jack: To paraphrase the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, my hon. Friend can say that but I cannot possibly comment at this stage, although I have noted carefully what he had to say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover also touched on the smaller company and the start-up company. It is important to put it on record that there are ways in which a company can organise its initial issue of equity to deal with the recruitment and retention of people who are there at the start and who may well be anticipating future increases in the value of the company, so their getting a share in the future gain is not wholly reliant on the issue of share options.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover for securing this opportunity for both of us to shed a little more light on this particularly important subject and to put it on the record. Our minds are certainly not closed on reviewing modifications to the save as you earn and profit sharing schemes and my hon. Friend has done the House a service in securing this important debate.

Solihull Hospital

1.59 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): I am pleased to have the opportunity in this short Adjournment debate to bring to the Floor of the House an issue that is tremendously important to the residents of Solihull and east Birmingham.

First, may I give the House a little history? After decades of campaigning and fund-raising—much by local organisations—the new Solihull district hospital opened in August 1994, at a cost of about £35 million. In the following 12 months, it was twice turned down for trust status and it now has a deficit of £7.8 million a year hanging over it.

Following an auditor's report by Price Waterhouse, a consultation document on the future of the hospital has been drawn up by Solihull health authority. That consultation ends this Friday.

The solution favoured by the health authority is to merge Solihull district hospital with Birmingham Heartlands hospital in east Birmingham, under the Heartlands management. Neither I nor anyone else concerned about the future of health care in Solihull and east Birmingham pretends that things can go on as they are—£7.8 million is a massive deficit and something has to be done. But neither can anyone underestimate the anger and sadness among people that things should ever have been allowed to get into this position.

The new Solihull general hospital not only gives local people good local hospital care but is an important part of their community. There has been a hospital in Solihull for years, but everyone united around the new building. Its construction was a goal that everyone shared. The hospital is a source of civic pride, and rightly so. Its doctors and nurses are highly respected, its new facilities greatly admired and its independence is valued.

At a time when health care is too often judged on a profit and loss account, none of us should ever forget that that sense of civic pride and local worth is to be valued and preserved.

There is a real question about how a new hospital has managed to run up such a large debt in such a short space of time. I ask the Minister to consider three questions, which seem to be at the root of the hospital's difficulties. Why was the estimated cost of running the new hospital so wide of the mark? Why did the hospital management fail to bill health authorities for care carried out? Why was the estimate of the number of patients that would be repatriated from other local hospitals so badly over-estimated?

Solihull hospital has suffered from both poor management and lack of support from the regional health authority. Frankly, it was foolhardy to proceed on the basis that 20,000 patients would be repatriated from Heartlands hospital, when it was only estimating 14,000. Indeed, had repatriation from Heartlands and the south Birmingham acute unit run at the rate forecast, those two hospitals would probably have found themselves in financial difficulty. It was unforgivable that the information system at the new hospital was so poor that some purchasers were not billed for care given.

Solihull hospital was planned in an era of planned hospital provision. When it opened, it was into the era of the national health service internal market. No one, but no one, seems to have done anything to help the hospital to make that difficult transition.

If the management system had been better, the hospital had been offered price support when its planned activity level was reached and the regional health authority had helped with the pressures associated with the opening of the new accident and emergency department, as had been discussed, it might have been a different story.

As it was, the new hospital seemed never to stand a chance. Those who work there and those whose health care it was planned to meet were let down by poor management, bad planning and the lack of apparent will to make the hospital the success that it deserved to be.

I do not think I use too strong a term when I say that local people feel betrayed. Many of the problems facing the hospital should and could have been foreseen. The people of Solihull and east Birmingham have paid the price for poor management and planning.

Whatever our feelings, however, we know that we must look to the future. The public are offered two choices. Either the hospital merges with Heartlands, or it closes. If it merges, there will be reduced accident and emergency facilities, in-patient admissions and some reduced paediatric care. Some children's services will no longer be available at the Solihull hospital. What a choice—in fact, no choice at all.

The feeling against both those options is overwhelming. From Solihull hospital consultants to patient support groups, from parish councils such as Bickenhill to the Solihull borough council, the options seem to carry no support. The community health council in Solihull does not support them, nor does the council in east Birmingham. People accept the need to deal with the crisis, but they feel strongly that other solutions ought to be considered.

The final decision is likely to land on the Minister's desk. When he comes to that decision, I ask him to consider the following. First, many of the recommendations of Price Waterhouse, which would reduce the deficit, could be implemented if Solihull hospital remained independent—there is wide agreement that those savings amount to £4 million, which is half the current yearly deficit.

Secondly, it was unreasonable to expect the repatriation of patients from neighbouring hospitals to occur within a six-month period. That is not to say that it will not happen and that contracts cannot increase, but it needs to be targeted over a long and more realistic period and financial support has to be offered to the hospital while that transition is made.

Thirdly, the regional health authority should support the new hospital while it is carrying the high capital costs for the new building. Fourthly, the hospital needs an efficient management system, so that it can bill accurately and give management the information it needs.

If those things were done even now, local people feel that Solihull could retain an independent hospital. I urge the Minister strongly to give serious consideration to their wishes. If it is thought that past errors cannot be rectified and if the hospital cannot remain independent, I ask him to consider the alternatives that were not included in the "Difficult Choices" document.

[Ms Estelle Morris]

Above all, I ask that any changes allow Solihull hospital to keep its 24-hour accident and emergency service. The pressure on Birmingham accident and emergency departments, including Heartlands, from the closure of the general hospital is immense. It is not so long since Birmingham Members of Parliament were telling the Minister of the crisis in hospital queues in Birmingham accident and emergency departments. The closure of any further accident and emergency facilities could jeopardise the progress that has been made in the past 12 months.

Only last week, the community grieved over the death of a 15-year-old schoolboy, Jamie Hoccom, from meningitis. He was taken to Solihull hospital and had to be transferred. I do not suggest that that had any effect on his care. I merely point out that, in an emergency, minutes matter.

There are alternatives, yet no work seems to have been done on developing them. The option that is being put to the public is not a merger, but a takeover. People fear that Solihull hospital will become an outpost and a subsidiary, not an equal partner. They worry that, if financial problems arise at Heartlands, Solihull hospital's services will be cut. Closure or takeover is not what people want; independence or partnership is what they ask for.

The campaign run by the people of Solihull and east Birmingham to secure their hospital has been tremendous. The leadership of Solihull borough council and its hospital sub-committee, to which I pay tribute, the campaigning zeal shown, in particular, by the *Solihull News* and the *Solihull Times* and the commitment of staff and patients earns them the right to have the future of their hospital considered at the highest level.

I hope that the Minister will respond this afternoon to the concerns that suggest to the people of Solihull and east Birmingham the existence of a hospital system in crisis. I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

2.9 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I assure the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) that I shall not cut into his time. I know that we all share a strong anxiety and I shall be brief.

I hope that the Minister will not mind if I say how strongly my constituents feel about this matter. I represent Meriden, the county constituency or rural part of Solihull borough. The merger poses particular difficulties for my constituents because villages such as Knowle, Dorridge, Meriden, Balsall Common and, even further afield, Cheswick Green, Earlswood and Dickens' Heath are so remote from Birmingham Heartlands hospital that it is inconceivable how transport could be arranged from them.

The demographic profile of Solihull borough, including Meriden, shows that there are many older people who are living longer, who need more hospital care and who do not have cars. It is difficult to imagine how their transport to Birmingham Heartlands could be arranged. This is a matter of enormous importance not only to Solihull council—I share the view of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) of the leadership it has given—but to the consultants. There is a united view that a merger with Birmingham Heartlands would not be beneficial.

Closure of the hospital is inconceivable, as, with Stafford and elsewhere, it was the flagship of the Government's building programme in the midlands. To consider closing it because of a £7.8 million deficit would defy belief.

My hon. Friend the Minister has stated—and I welcome it—that after the detailed consultation with local people, including my constituents,

"no decision has been made about the level and type of services provided at Solihull Hospital. This will only be done when the residents of Solihull and those in the surrounding areas have had the opportunity to express their views. The Health Commission will then consider carefully all proposals to ensure local services are provided in the best possible way."

Will my hon. Friend the Minister be more specific in his response about what role the Health Commission plays, what powers it has and what thoughts can be communicated to it by Solihull council, local Members of Parliament and others who are concerned about the matter?

My hon. Friend continues:

"If it is thought that a merger is the best way of providing those services, there would then be a further full public consultation."

Will he expand on that and tell us in some detail how it would work and what we can do to ensure that we get the right message?

I mentioned transport. I emphasise what the hon. Member for Yardley said about the importance of accident and emergency. We have provided a flagship facility for Solihull residents. The loss of a full and proper service—and I do not accept this suggestion—and its replacement by some sort of 20-hour attendance system would require assurances that the service was full and proper and could cope with a real emergency.

I am concerned about the children's ward, although I understand the problem of staffing and obtaining doctors. I will conclude to allow my colleagues to speak. To judge from the mailbag at my advice bureaux over the past few months and in every other way, this has been the key issue affecting the rural part of Solihull, which is my constituency of Meriden.

2.15 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) on securing this debate so that we can discuss the future of Solihull hospital before the end of the consultation period. As she explained, the hospital caters not only for Solihull but for some of our constituents in Yardley and Hodge Hill who are referred there by their general practitioners, especially by GP fundholders. The one doctor in my constituency who has told me that he uses Solihull hospital was the first—and, I think, is still the biggest—fundholder in my constituency.

It is ironic that Solihull hospital is faced with closure or takeover as a direct result of the internal market imposed on the health service by the Government. That is the blunt fact. We are told that the catchment area—I know that the phrase is out of date because of the changes in the health service, but it is a phrase used by management of Heartlands hospital—of Solihull hospital is too small. However, it is no different from what it was when the hospital was originally planned. Provision should have been made for proper funding but, because of the workings of the internal market, it is not going to

get the custom—we have to use such phrases now—that it needs to be financially viable. It is a matter of money. It is not a matter of what will provide the best health service for the people of Solihull and east Birmingham.

To be fair to the management of Birmingham Heartlands hospital, they tell me that it was not their idea that they should take over Solihull hospital. They were approached by the regional health authority and asked if they would save Solihull hospital. What the RHA really asked was for the management of Heartlands hospital to save the Government's face. The reasons for the problems in Solihull have nothing to do with the care provided by doctors or nurses and everything to do with the internal market.

What is now proposed by Solihull health authority is that there should be, in the words of the Heartlands management, again one hospital on two sites. I am concerned about the effect of that on those of my constituents who look to Solihull hospital for their care. I am even more concerned about the overwhelming majority of my constituents who look for their care to Birmingham Heartlands hospital. With the closure of the general hospital in Birmingham, almost all my constituents have come into the catchment area of Heartlands hospital.

Although the proposals have not been spelled out yet, some people in east Birmingham will be told that they must go to Solihull hospital. They will be told by the management of the combined hospital that they must go to Solihull for operations that would previously have been undertaken at Heartlands hospital. We have not yet been told which operations will be involved.

Similarly, some people in Solihull will be told that they must go to Heartlands hospital—there will be no choice in the so-called internal market—for their operations. That is bound to mean greater pressure on services at Heartlands, especially on emergency services, which, in turn, will mean a deterioration in service for my constituents who live in its catchment area and who depend on its services.

We are told by the management of Heartlands hospital that the specialists there will provide cover for what is described as an outpost at Solihull. I make no apology for using that word, because it is the word used by the management of Heartlands hospital. That is how they conceive of the Solihull site: an outpost to be covered by consultants currently working at Heartlands. If consultants are covering an outpost several miles away, it follows that they will not be giving all the time that they presently give to my constituents served by Heartlands. That is a deterioration in the service enjoyed by my constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Yardley asked why we could not have a partnership between the hospitals. I accept that there are problems in departments, such as paediatrics, which face difficult decisions. Those problems could be met by a partnership between the two hospitals, but we are told that this cannot be done. We are told, with specific reference to the paediatric speciality—the children's ward to which the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) referred—that a partnership arrangement would spread resources too thinly. Why would a partnership, but not a merger, spread resources too thinly? That does not make clinical sense. The same situation would apply to both.

We put that point to the management of the Heartlands hospital and were told that, because of the consultants, they had to take over Solihull and have one hospital on two sites instead of a partnership to provide the expertise needed by Solihull. In fact, we were told that the consultants would refuse to provide cover for Solihull unless it were a merged takeover hospital. The management of Birmingham Heartlands hospital said that they could insist that consultants provide cover only by giving them an instruction to do so—and they could give that instruction only if they were allowed to take over Solihull so that it became one hospital on two sites. If that is true, it is a deplorable comment on the state of the national health service in both east Birmingham and Solihull.

2.20 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): I am glad of the opportunity to respond to such an important debate, and I thank hon. Members for expressing their views in a forthright manner. I also acknowledge the presence on the Front Bench beside me of my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), who has campaigned vigorously on the issue. Although he may be obliged to remain silent, I assure the House that he has not been silent in pressing the hospital's case in his constituency. He has also arranged a number of meetings with me, and led a delegation from the local newspaper, the *Solihull News*, when a petition was presented to me.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) has an interest in the hospital because, although it is slightly outwith the boundaries of her constituency, many of her constituents use it as well as Birmingham Heartlands NHS trust. I am aware—from what I have read in the press, and from what hon. Members have said and written to me—of the intense local debate in Solihull about the future provision of health services in general, and about the hospital in particular. Although those issues are intertwined, they are nevertheless separate issues and must not be confused.

In her opening remarks, the hon. Member for Yardley seemed to suggest a predicated merger of Solihull and Birmingham Heartlands. That is not the case. The matters that are currently out for consultation relate solely to the local health authority's future proposals for the purchasing and structure of health care for the people of Solihull. Of course, any purchasing decisions will bear on the future of Solihull hospital, but it would be wrong to misunderstand the position. It is not inevitable that a merger will follow. I hope that the House will understand that, and that the public debate will be conducted in that knowledge.

We await the conclusion of public consultation and the steps that will follow. It would not be helpful for either the people of Solihull or those working in the hospital to assume that future directions are written in stone; much remains to be decided. Any proposal for merger of the two hospitals would be separate, and would have to be submitted for further consultation.

Ms Estelle Morris: I acknowledge that there would be further consultation in the event of a merger. However, the exercise is aimed at reversing a £7.8 million deficit, and the only financial proposals that have been advanced so far depend on such a merger. If someone somewhere has a different set of figures presenting other options, the people of Solihull would be delighted to see them.

Mr. Malone: Hon. Members will be pleased to hear that I do not intend to anticipate what the consultation

[Mr. Malone]

will reveal. Announcements will be made in due course, and if the matter arrives on the desks of Ministers they will view it with an open mind. I hope that my assurance will be accepted by the hon. Lady, her hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and my hon. Friends who have an interest in the matter.

I understand that, in the heat of public debate, it is more difficult to tease out the various strands—to identify where consultation on one suggestion ends and the possibility of another proposal may well begin. It is my purpose, however, to reassure the hon. Lady and the people of Solihull that nothing can be said to be a foregone conclusion.

The consultation document proposes that, in some instances, services that have been provided at Solihull hospital will in future be purchased from other hospitals in the area, notably Birmingham Heartlands NHS trust. That proposal makes the fairly common assumption that an ultimate merger may well be suggested. As I have said, public consultation on the plans continues, and I shall not pre-empt the outcome.

I can, however, give some idea of the timetable. The consultation period is due to end on 27 October; the health authority will then consider the responses that it has received. I believe that the outcome will be discussed at a public meeting of the authority on 10 November.

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) did not raise the point in the debate, he has spoken to me before—along with my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull—and has asked me whether I would be prepared to meet a delegation from Solihull metropolitan borough council to discuss the future provision of health services in the town. I should be happy to meet such a delegation and listen to its views, once the current public consultation is complete but before any final decision is made. I hope that my hon. Friends will take that as an earnest of my good intentions, and of my understanding that this is a serious public issue.

The hon. Member for Yardley set out the background rather well. We are clearly not where we expected, and would like, to be. The financial problems facing Solihull hospital are extremely difficult. The hon. Lady asked three questions about what had happened and the implications of those events. I understand that a survey has been carried out by Price Waterhouse, and the health authority's external auditors have also been asked to investigate the position immediately; their findings are being examined very carefully. I do not wish to predict what Solihull health authority's audit committee will say, but it is considering the findings and is expected to report its recommendations to the authority by early next year.

That, too, is a separate matter. I do not suggest that those investigations will have any particular relevance, other than in examining the past. As the hon. Lady said, we need to look to the hospital's future.

During the investigation of the problems, things have not been standing still. The health authority, which is managerially responsible for Solihull hospital, has replaced the previous management team with an experienced team of managers whose task is to ensure the continuation of the day-to-day management of the hospital, and the provision of a good local service for the people of Solihull.

Let me tell my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden that there is no question of there being an overall shortage of funds in the area. Over the past five years, there has been a 6.7 per cent. real terms increase in Solihull health authority's budget allocation from West Midlands regional health authority. The problem lies in the unexpected outcome of developments in the hospital itself. I understand the serious concern about what appear from the Price Waterhouse report—which has been published—to be serious misunderstandings about the hospital's position both before and during the period of its application for trust status. I assure the House that I take that very seriously. We shall await with interest the outcome of the consultation process and read with great interest what the health authority's auditors say, because that must be examined.

Finally, I assure the House that it is our concern that the people of Solihull have the best possible health service, to which they are entitled. The debate has been extremely useful in illuminating the issues, and I thank all hon. Members for their contributions.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [19 December].

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Loch Leven and Lochaber Water Power Order Confirmation

Mr. Michael Forsyth presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Loch Leven and Lochaber Water Power; and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 31 October and to be printed. [Bill 179.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

1. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process. [36852]

6. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the middle east peace process. [36857]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): We warmly welcome the signing on 28 September of the interim agreement concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. We look forward to the Palestinian elections, which are due to take place in the next few months. I shall visit the region early next month, which will give me the opportunity to emphasise Britain's strong political and practical support for the peace process.

Mr. Ross: I welcome the Secretary of State to his new position. I look forward to his contribution to the middle east peace process. I am sure that he would wish to join me in welcoming the start of the withdrawal of the Israeli defence forces from Jenin today, which is a sign of good will, but will he also join me in condemning the decision by the United States Congress to attempt to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which is in direct contravention of international law and the prohibition contained in United Nations Security Council resolution 242 on the acquisition of territory by force?

Will the Secretary of State also, however, welcome the decision by the President of the United States to delay the implementation of that in order to help the peace process—

Madam Speaker: Order. Questions are getting enormously long, especially for the first one. We ought to get off to a better start than that.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. I also appreciate the beginning of the withdrawal by the Israeli forces from the west bank. As far as the position of the US Congress is concerned, we believe that that is an unhelpful development at this stage and we are pleased that the United States Administration has dissociated itself from it.

Mr. Gerrard: Does the Minister agree that, having signed a peace treaty with Israel, in a country such as Jordan continued support for the peace process depends on ordinary people noticing clear benefits, including economic benefits, from peace? Does he accept that Jordan suffers from an exceptional burden of foreign debt, which inhibits attempts to develop the economy? What steps would the Government be prepared to take to help reduce that burden?

Mr. Rifkind: I do, indeed, recognise that problem. We have already forgiven all aid debt and we were also happy to help at the last Paris Club rescheduling of Jordan's debt. We have a £4 million per annum bilateral aid programme focusing on education and telecommunications. I do recognise that there are important objectives in helping the Jordanian economy. The United Kingdom is playing a substantial part in that process.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my right. hon. and learned Friend on his promotion and on his decision to go to the middle east in person. Does he agree that it is somewhat anomalous that Israel, which is the only democracy in the middle east, has yet to receive a royal visit? Can he give us an assurance that one may be quite imminent?

Mr. Rifkind: In the past year there has, of course, been a visit to Israel by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh in a personal capacity. Naturally, royal visits are important issues and they are considered with regard to all the implications. I am sure that the continuing improvement in the overall climate in the middle east will make high-level visits to Israel continue to improve in the years to come.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. and learned Friend consider that, at this stage in the peace process, the winding up of the Arab boycott office would be a sensible step forward? Will he make representations to that effect to Arab Governments?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I very much agree with my hon. Friend, and I believe that the boycott is already withering on the vine. It would highly beneficial if it were to be completely terminated, and that is increasingly the view of many Arab countries in the region as well.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: When the Secretary of State visits the middle east shortly, will he try to seek a meeting with President Assad of Syria? If he is able to secure such a meeting, will he press the Syrians to enter the peace process, as that could be the most significant thing to assist the process?

Mr. Rifkind: I hope to be in Damascus during my visit to the middle east, and I agree with the hon. Lady that it would be very beneficial if Syria were to approach the peace process in a constructive and forward-looking way. There have been some modest signs of progress on that front, although we appreciate the difficulties and sensitivities involved. But I believe that Syria is virtually the last of the building blocks to be put in place to help to achieve a comprehensive peace in the middle east. Therefore, the British Government would very much wish to encourage Syria's involvement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Can my right hon. and learned Friend describe the nature of the assistance that the Government are providing to the Palestinian community?

Mr. Rifkind: We are giving substantial cash help towards the Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere, and we have also indicated a willingness to assist in the elections which are to take place in Gaza and in the election of Palestinian representatives. An EU-led group of observers will go to the middle east, and the United Kingdom will play an important part in that process.

Mr. Fatchett: May I, from this side of the House, offer my congratulations to Chairman Arafat and to Prime Minister Rabin on continuing the peace progress in the

middle east and on this morning's developments? Does the Foreign Secretary agree that if the peace process is to be successful, both the Israelis and the Palestinians must experience real advantages—security for the Israelis and self-determination and prosperity for the Palestinians? On the latter point, will the Foreign Secretary indicate what further international efforts are being made to spread and speed up the flow of development aid, both to Gaza and to the west bank?

Mr. Rifkind: May I first congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the assumption of his new shadow responsibilities? I very much agree with the view that there must be clear benefits to both Israel and the Palestinians from the peace process, and I suggest that that is already happening in various ways in the middle east. Israel is increasing its links with the Arab countries and is becoming a normal country in the region, while the Palestinians are beginning to realise many of their aspirations. The international community can help in that process, particularly in the economic field.

Intergovernmental Conference

2. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the objectives of his Department for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement. [36853]

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set out our priorities for the intergovernmental conference, notably in this House on 1 March. We want a European Union which is open, flexible, free-trading, efficient and responsive to popular concerns.

Mr. Whittingdale: Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to do all that he can to promote our vision of an enlarged and outward-looking community of nation states? Will he utterly reject the proposals published by the Labour party earlier this month which would result in that party giving up the British right of veto and would remove our right to opt out permanently of European proposals such as the single currency and the social chapter?

Mr. Rifkind: I strongly endorse what my hon. Friend has said. I thought it remarkable that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who speaks for the Opposition on foreign affairs, made no reference in his speech to the Labour party conference to what appeared in a document published by the Labour party on the same day, which said that there will be no permanent opt-outs with regard to any future Labour Government. The only question appears to be when Labour would surrender British interests, and not whether.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Following the remarkable speech by the Defence Secretary to the Conservative party conference, the Foreign Secretary told a group of Conservative Back-Benchers that he had "learnt the lessons". What lessons has he learnt?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not recall seeing the hon. Gentleman at that meeting. Therefore, I had better simply say to him that I do not recollect making any such remark.

Mr. Whitney: May I first, as chairman of that meeting, endorse my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the previous question? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are a number of indications that the Government's hope for a sensible approach at the IGC is shared by our European partners? Does he agree that the best way of achieving agreement is for the Government to continue to approach the IGC in a constructive and positive spirit?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I do believe that that is right. We have specific proposals in a number of areas that the conference will consider. We have already published our proposals with regard to the Western European Union and defence matters, and the Government are currently considering a number of other matters also. I assure my hon. Friend that we will always approach such a sensitive and important issue constructively: seeking to identify areas where there is the prospect of agreement, but making clear those matters upon which the United Kingdom might not be able to support proposals from other quarters.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: What is the Government's objective at the IGC with regard to the extension of qualified majority voting? As the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers have committed themselves to securing reform of the common agricultural policy—which all hon. Members support—how will the Foreign Secretary achieve it without extending QMV in that context?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman knows, qualified majority voting exists already in many areas. We believe that those areas that currently require unanimity do so because of the profound importance of the matters covered. Therefore, we do not believe that it is appropriate to extend qualified majority voting beyond its present remit.

Mr. Renton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would make good sense for the Government to go to the IGC with some detailed, positive proposals that are likely to find favour with a number of our European Union partners? For example, I refer to the question of the number of commissioners, or the length of time and the interval that major countries may hold the presidency of the European Union, and those other areas where my right hon. and learned Friend will be carrying his thinking further forward.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to say that a range of practical improvements can be made with regard to the workings of various institutions. In addition to the areas referred to by my hon. Friend, we are also considering the European Court of Justice very carefully. We believe that we will be able to make a number of useful proposals in that sphere which would result in the improvement of the court and that might respond to certain recent concerns. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has made a viable and constructive contribution on the reflections committee, which is helping to prepare the ground for the intergovernmental conference.

Ms Quin: Does the Foreign Secretary agree with the statement passed at the Labour party conference, which was referred to by his hon. Friend? It says:

"a common approach on foreign and security policy needs to bind all member states and believes therefore that decisions must continue to be taken by unanimity".

If the Foreign Secretary agrees with that statement, why does he continue to misrepresent our policy?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no need to misrepresent the Labour party's policy. While the Labour party has indicated its views on common foreign and security policy, in the same document it says that it wishes to abandon Britain's right of veto in the:

"areas of social, industrial, regional and environmental policy".

I could ask why the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends do not give the same publicity to that declaration as they give to other assurances that they make occasionally.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend then confirm that the Government will not give up the veto under any circumstances?

Mr. Rifkind: That is, indeed, right. We believe that one of the great strengths of the European Union will be the creation of a Europe with which the peoples of Europe are comfortable. That requires all the people of Europe—not just those in the United Kingdom—to believe that, when important national interests are at stake, changes that could have profound implications for their well being and quality of life will be made only on the basis of unanimity.

Lockerbie

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the role of Mr. Andrew Green of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to investigations into the Lockerbie crime. [36854]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Sir Nicholas Bonsor): From 1988 to early 1991, Mr. Green was head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Department responsible for the international aspects of the Lockerbie affair.

Mr. Dalyell: He certainly was. What possible reasons did Mr. Green have for agreeing with the Americans in January 1989 that Lockerbie should be played low key?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am not aware of any such agreement. I shall look into the matter and come back to the hon. Gentleman, if I may.

Mr. Dalyell: In view of the unsatisfactory, ignorant and evasive nature of that reply, I hope to raise the matter on the Adjournment for the seventh time.

Madam Speaker: Sir Teddy Taylor.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Could the Minister indicate—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but, as the hon. Gentleman is seeking to raise the matter on the Adjournment, the question is closed.

Bosnia

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met other Foreign Ministers to discuss Bosnia. [36855]

Mr. Rifkind: I last met European Union colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 2 October.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Secretary of State realise that when they gave NATO the job of dealing with Bosnia and bombing a number of the Serb strongholds in the name of the United Nations, it was a serious qualitative change in the method of approach and that there will be serious misgivings in future if it is repeated elsewhere?

On another issue, is the Minister aware that for the past two years a number of people in the House and elsewhere have been saying that the Muslims needed weapons and that the embargo should be lifted? How come, in the aftermath of the bombing, the Bosnian army was able to advance more than 100 miles, capturing 20 towns and villages, with all the weapons at hand? Where did they get them from?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that two explanations for what the hon. Gentleman inquires about are, first, that despite the embargo there has clearly been a supply of weapons from various countries and, secondly, Croatian regular troops were assisting the Bosnian army in western Bosnia. That clearly had significant implications for the military advances that were made at that time.

Sir John Cope: In seeking a settlement in that part of the world will my right hon. and learned Friend do his utmost to ensure that it is comprehensive? I have in mind particularly the position of Kosovo which is hard pressed by the Serbs. If the present leverage and momentum does not enable us to relieve that pressure in Kosovo it could be the next flashpoint and the next point of escalation.

Mr. Rifkind: It is highly desirable, for the reasons to which my right hon. Friend refers, that any political settlement should produce stability in the region. There are two issues which it would be highly desirable to settle alongside the matter within Bosnia. One is Kosovo, to which my right hon. Friend refers, and the other is the situation in eastern Slovenia where there is great tension between Croatia and the Government in Belgrade. Clearly, it would be highly preferable if those matters could be addressed and if progress could be made. Whether that will be achieved it is too early to say, but I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is a very important objective.

Mrs. Mahon: Given the UN human rights monitors' reports that atrocities have been committed against Serbs in Krajina by the Croatian army, will the perpetrators, when caught, be charged with war crimes?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady is certainly correct to say that, sadly, atrocities have been committed against members of all the various communities. Those in Krajina who have been expelled from their homes or who have fled from their homes because of fear for their lives are as much refugees and victims of this ghastly war as those of other communities. Prosecution is obviously a matter for the prosecuting authorities.

Mr. Wilkinson: Owing to the evident problems of command and control, can my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the participation of a Russian contingent in the peace enforcement force in Yugoslavia is not in any sense made a precondition for its deployment? Is it not important that the force be got into place when the powers on the ground believe that it should be and not when the Russians agree? They have never been a Balkan power.

Mr. Rifkind: It is, of course, very important that any implementation force should be ready to take over its

responsibilities as soon as a peace settlement is agreed which would then require implementation. The Russians have indicated an interest in serving as part of that force. It is desirable that they should participate. Discussions that are taking place at the moment have made some progress but they still have to resolve certain outstanding issues as to the likely nature of their involvement, the implications for the way in which the implementation force would operate and those particular functions which they could best contribute towards resolving. It is desirable that the implementation force should be broadly based and I think that the current discussions will help to achieve a satisfactory outcome which will not in any way damage the operational effectiveness and coherence of the implementation force. That is a crucial objective.

Treaty Ratification

5. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to reform the procedures for the ratification of treaties. [36856]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): There are no plans to change our procedures.

Mr. Trimble: I am sorry to hear that because I am sure that the Minister does not wish to see a repetition of the fiasco that we saw in the House when the Maastricht treaty was being ratified and approved in parliamentary terms. Therefore does he agree that it is desirable to bring treaty-making wholly within parliamentary control so that all aspects of such treaties which can have such a massive effect on the constitution of this country can be properly considered and examined by the elected representatives of the people?

Mr. Hanley: I believe that ample opportunity is given for debating the provisions of a treaty, if Parliament so desires.

Western European Union

7. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his Western European Union counterparts to discuss the further development of a common foreign and security policy. [36858]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): The Western European Union Foreign and Defence Ministers last met in Lisbon in May this year; the outcome was published in a communiqué of the meeting, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. They will meet again in November.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Minister for that short reply. How are the various and differing views in the reflections committee, especially regarding the future relationship between the Western European Union and the European Union, developing, and which, if any, countries are still pushing for the WEU to be a fourth pillar of the European Union?

Mr. Davis: Our stance has been laid out in a document on our views to the WEU that we have put around. The primary concerns in that document are not to erode our national sovereignty in terms of the command of our forces to support the integrity of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; not to duplicate NATO to maintain the important transatlantic dimension in the alliance, not to jeopardise that in any way, and to create a practical capacity to carry out Petersburg missions in particular. So far, there has been a wide variety of views in the reflections group on this matter, including the subordination of the WEU to the EU, which we have resisted.

Mr. Colvin: I take it from my hon. Friend the Minister's answer, therefore, that he is against a merger between the EU and the WEU. Will he also confirm that, with regard to WEU enlargement, Her Majesty's Government would resist an application by any state to become a WEU member unless it was already a full member of NATO—and by full member I mean part of the integrated military structure of NATO—so that it could fully meet any commitment under article 5 of the Washington treaty?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right that full WEU membership requires article 5 commitment and therefore membership of NATO, so that is correct.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister acknowledge that up to 250,000 Europeans died during the three years that it took NATO to recognise the need to intervene powerfully in Bosnia, and does he therefore acknowledge that, notwithstanding anything that the Secretary of State for Defence may say, an urgent need exists for an effective European security structure?

Mr. Davis: I do not think that the two halves of the hon. Gentleman's question necessarily connect. It is not clear how an external body could necessarily prevent a civil war if the people of that country are determined to have one.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend take into account the fact that a number of us who serve on the North Atlantic Assembly have found that certain members of the assembly do not always have the same agenda for the operation of WEU as we do and that they may want to use the WEU to weaken NATO and the NATO connection? Will he be aware of that and ensure that the British position keeps the relationship with American forces in NATO very much in mind?

Mr. Davis: I hear what my right hon. Friend says. Resisting that sort of idea, proposal and initiative is the front and centre of our policy in Europe and in the WEU.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Minister will be aware that one of the areas agreed by the Government for joint action under common foreign security policy is nuclear non-proliferation. Why then does he not use the next WEU meeting to speak up for the 80 per cent. of British people who want Britain to condemn the French nuclear tests? If he really believes that closer integration in Europe would cut Britain's ties around Europe, why does he not give some support to Australia and New Zealand, which find that Britain is the only Commonwealth country that supports France against them? Does he not recognise that tough talk in Blackpool and in Westminster on protecting Britain's security interests cannot conceal the shameful silence on this matter that has made this Government the willing accomplice of France?

Mr. Davis: It is interesting to see the hon. Gentleman's background coming back to haunt us. This is of course a

clear matter of the French national Government's interest in security. We take those matters seriously, unlike the Labour party. The French Government have clearly said that, like ourselves, they are committed to a comprehensive test ban treaty being successfully achieved in 1996 and the tests are a step towards that aim.

Mr. Garnier: Will my hon. Friend confirm that rather than listening to the muddled and inconsistent thinking of the Opposition, he will underline the NATO transatlantic link and not allow the WEU to be folded into the European Union in the way that some Opposition Members have suggested?

Mr. Davis: I am entirely in sympathy with my hon. Friend's comments. The NATO alliance has worked extraordinarily well in the past 40 years to preserve the peace of Europe. The transatlantic dimension is a key part of that alliance and we will preserve that as a major part of our policy.

Cyprus

8. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the current situation in Cyprus. [36859]

Mr. Rifkind: The present division of Cyprus is unacceptable. We are giving active support to the UN Secretary-General's mission of good offices which we believe offers the best hope of a just and lasting solution.

Mrs. Roche: What does the Secretary of State have to say about the plight of the enclaved people who live in the occupied north of Cyprus and who are subjected daily to human rights violations and abuses? Does he not agree that it is about time that the British Government, who are a guarantor power in the area, exerted their influence on the illegal regime of Mr. Denktas and on Turkey itself?

Mr. Rifkind: When there is a division of a territory such as in Cyprus there are always personal tragedies and people caught up in it. That should give added impetus to the attempts to achieve reunification of the island on an acceptable basis. It is that which will offer the best prospect for the welfare of the people to whom the hon. Lady referred.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To what extent does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that we may be able to use Cyprus's application to join the European Union and Turkey's desire to have closer trading links with the EU as leverage to try to bring both sides in the north and south together, living in a bi-communal settlement?

Mr. Rifkind: It is indeed the case that negotiations with Cyprus about possible EU membership are due to begin at the end of the intergovernmental conference. I have no doubt that the negotiations would have much better prospects of success if we could see political progress in Cyprus which could lead to the unification of the island. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that as a factor to which I hope that all those involved in the dispute will give proper attention.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Since the European Union decided to negotiate the accession of Cyprus into the Union, the Greek Cypriots have withdrawn their support from the United Nations confidence-building measures. What reasons have the Greek Cypriots given for that reversal of policy?

Mr. Rifkind: A number of factors may have led to that. The important objective is to look to the future. The next step will be for the American presidential envoy to visit the island soon for talks with the various leaders. That should be encouraged and I hope that in future the confidentiality that is so crucial to any prospect of progress will be respected by communal leaders on both sides of the island.

Dr. Twinn: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that no party to the problems in Cyprus should be allowed to exercise a veto on Cyprus's entry to the European Community? Does he agree that there needs to be good political will on both sides of the argument and that that is clearly lacking in the Turkish Cypriot community?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend said, there can be no veto. It goes without saying that progress that would lead towards reunification of the island would improve the prospects for success in the complex negotiations. All accession negotiations are difficult and when those negotiations involve an island which is currently divided like Cyprus there are difficulties which the Community has not had to address in the same way in the past.

Mr. Robin Cook: I welcome the Foreign Secretary's observation that there must be no veto on Cyprus's application. Is he aware that the Prime Minister has told the House that it would be extremely difficult for Cyprus to join the European Union unless the division of the island is resolved? Does he not realise that that is an open invitation to Turkey to rule out Cyprus's membership by making it difficult to resolve the division of the island? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now correct that error by giving unequivocal support to Cyprus in its application to join the European Union, thereby ruling out any Turkish veto?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course we look forward to a successful Cypriot negotiation for accession to the European Union. It is simple common sense to say, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done, that an island that is divided and has not had political progress towards reunification will have much more difficult negotiations than would otherwise apply. The hon. Gentleman is being unrealistic if he does not recognise that fact, which is well understood in Cyprus by all the communities concerned.

Inward Investment

9. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what practical help his Department offers to potential investors in the United Kingdom. [36860]

Mr. Hanley: We give advice to potential investors about opportunities in Britain. We put them in touch with commercial contacts here and we set up fact-finding visits to the United Kingdom. We have had great success in doing so in recent years.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he encourage his officials who are providing

the information to potential inward investors to consider with special care the opportunities in the north-west of England, particularly Blackpool and the Fylde coast, where there is an extremely skilled high-tech work force? Is he aware that the area has not been successful so far in attracting inward investment in any significant quantity from overseas, despite the skill of the work force?

Mr. Hanley: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff overseas promote inward investment to all areas of the United Kingdom and encourage potential investors to take advantage of skilled work forces wherever they are. I shall draw what my hon. Friend has said to their attention.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I welcome every pound of investment that comes into the country, but there is a phenomenon to which I must draw the Minister's attention. Is he aware that it is much easier for a rich Nigerian who is well-connected with the present military Government to enter the United Kingdom than it is for an asylum seeker who is threatened with gaol or worse, who now, under leaked Government proposals, will be told that he or she must return to Nigeria, with all the human rights and civil rights problems that exist there? Is that just and is it fair?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman opens up a completely different matter. If he tables a question about it, I shall willingly answer.

Middle East

10. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's contribution to the middle east peace process. [36861]

Mr. Hanley: We are a major donor to the Palestinian people, providing £83 million over three years. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said earlier, Britain will be making a substantial contribution to the EU-organised observation of the Palestinian elections.

Mr. Townsend: During my right hon. Friend's visit to the middle east, and that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, will they be raising the plight of the dispersed Palestinians who are not on the west bank but in other countries in the region? Is it not wholly unsatisfactory that the future of those Palestinians should depend on talks between the PLO and the Israeli Government? Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that he recognises the Government's responsibility, as a member of the United Nations, to look after displaced people wherever they may be?

Mr. Hanley: I agree with my hon. Friend that that is an extremely important matter and I undertake to do what he asks.

Mr. Norman Hogg: When the Under-Secretary and the Foreign Secretary visit the middle east, they will presumably meet PLO representatives. Will the Minister tell us whom they will be meeting and where they will be meeting them?

Mr. Hanley: I am both pleased and sorry to correct the hon. Gentleman. Actually I am a Minister of State. Given the direction of my recent career, it may be only a matter of time before I am an Under-Secretary.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I will both be making visits to the region in the near future. I can assure him that we shall be meeting as many of the relevant people as possible to make progress in this most important matter.

Former Yugoslavia

11. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in former Yugoslavia. [38663]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Although skirmishing has continued in north-west Bosnia, the situation is generally much quieter following the ceasefire which came into effect on 12 October. We remain concerned about the continuing tense situation in eastern Slavonia.

Mr. Ainger: Is the Minister aware of the claims that are made in European newspapers that United States intelligence services knew about three weeks before Srebrenica was overrun that that would take place? Is he further aware that the same intelligence services were tapping the phones of Generals Mladic and Pericic, the chiefs of staff of the Serbian army? Is he also aware that that information was not passed on to the United Nations, to UNPROFOR or to any of the NATO allies, including the Dutch, who were guarding the enclave? Does he realise that, as a result, some 8,000 Muslim men have disappeared, many presumed murdered? Will he now institute an inquiry into those claims? If they are proved to be true, what action will he take?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not for a moment believe that what the hon. Gentleman alleges is true. Clearly, I am not going to comment on intelligence matters but, with regard to the fall of Srebrenica, I am sure that it was regretted as much by our United States allies as by ourselves.

Kashmir

12. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to pay an official visit to India to discuss Kashmir. [36864]

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary hopes to find an early opportunity to visit India. I was pleased to visit India earlier this month and discussed Kashmir and a wide range of other issues with members of the Indian Government.

Mr. Lidington: Will the Government continue to bring home to the Indian Government the concern still felt in this country about continuing reports of human rights abuses by the Indian armed forces in Kashmir? Will they impress on the authorities in New Delhi that the best thing for all involved would be for such allegations to be investigated by impartial and independent observers and for the Indian Government to give permission for such observers to go to Kashmir?

Mr. Hanley: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. We certainly continue to be concerned about human rights in Kashmir and we have regularly raised our concerns with the Indian Government. Indeed, I did so only two weeks ago. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met the Indian Prime Minister earlier this week. We welcome

the policy of openness increasingly adopted by the Indian Government. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Kashmir in early May. The International Committee of the Red Cross was recently granted permission to operate in Kashmir and began its initial work on 12 October.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister confirm that India has established an independent human rights commission and that it is the British Government's policy to support the Indian Government's efforts to persuade all parties in Kashmir and Jammu to take part, at the earliest possible time consistent with security, in elections?

Mr. Hanley: I can certainly confirm what the hon. Gentleman said. I can best summarise by saying that we believe that the best way forward for Kashmir involves three main steps. The first is simultaneous progress on dialogue between India and Pakistan as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement. Without dialogue, there can be no progress. The second is improvement in human rights in Kashmir and a genuine political process there. The third is a clear cessation of external support for violence in Kashmir.

Mr. Jessel: On that question of external support for violence, is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), myself and four other Members of the House a year ago were shown in Kashmir a cache of Russian arms which must have got through from Pakistan to the militants in Kashmir and could not have come by any other route? Does he mean that?

Mr. Hanley: I have said repeatedly to those whom I have met in recent months that we urge the need for an end to any external support for militants in Kashmir. External support serves only to fuel the problem.

East Timor

13. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Indonesia concerning their occupation of East Timor; and if he will make a statement. [36865]

Mr. Hanley: We regularly raise the question of East Timor, including human rights concerns, with the Indonesians at ministerial and official level.

Mr. Corbyn: I am pleased to hear that the Minister does raise the matter with Indonesian officials. I hope that he takes the time to tell them that since their illegal occupation of East Timor in 1974, 200,000 people have been killed in what can only be called genocide against the Timorese people, but the British Government's so-called requests to cease such human rights violations have had no effect whatsoever principally—I suspect—because the Government are happy to supply virtually any guns or weapons, which can be used to kill people in East Timor, that the Indonesians wish to buy, and to promote trade with that country. Does he not realise that the Indonesian Government will move only if we cut off the supply of arms and consider at least some form of economic sanctions against them until they cease this brutal occupation of a country, their abuse of human rights and the killing of Timorese people?

Mr. Hanley: We remain concerned about reports of continuing human rights abuses in Indonesia and in East Timor. We certainly let the Indonesian Government know of our concerns and they are well aware that their actions are in the world's limelight. As for arm sales, all sovereign states enjoy the right, under article 51 of the UN charter, to their own self-defence. Applications to export UK defence equipment are scrutinised against established criteria and internationally agreed guidelines. We do not allow the export of arms and equipment which is likely to be used for internal repression in Indonesia or East Timor.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I rise as an officer of the all-party British-Indonesian parliamentary group. Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in fact, overall it benefits East Timor to be part of—perhaps—the fifth largest country in the world? Although I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) that there have been human rights abuses and atrocities in Timor, the very constructive contact that the Government have with the President and Government of Indonesia is very much to the benefit of the people of East Timor, and must be continued. Indonesia is an important country, in trade, political and cultural terms, going back hundreds of years, for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: We certainly urge the Indonesian Government to discuss the matter with the East Timorese. We have no evidence that UK-supplied equipment has been used for internal oppression in Indonesia or in East Timor. If the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has any evidence of it, I would willingly receive it. However, to my hon. Friend I say that, indeed, relationships are good and what he said was quite right.

Mrs. Clwyd: As the Minister is so concerned about human rights in East Timor, why do the British Government fund the training of paramilitary police, who go on to carry out human rights abuses in East Timor? Why are the Government funding a transmigration project which is moving people from Indonesia into East Timor? Why are they funding a short-wave transmitter project, which will be used to broadcast the propaganda of the Indonesian Government? Does he think that the Government will be in the same position as they were over the Pergau dam? While the National Audit Office is carrying out its survey into the allegations that I have made—that Government aid is being used illegally in Indonesia—can he stand at the Dispatch Box and tell us that he has every confidence that that aid is being used legally?

Mr. Hanley: The NAO, as the hon. Lady knows, is examining the question of aid to Indonesia. The review began in September and we await the result with great interest. The projects through which we contribute to the economic and social benefit of Indonesia, where 27 million people live below the poverty line despite some good economic progress, are important to those people. UK-funded projects have nothing whatever to do with any arms sales. The hon. Lady's allegations are being examined by the NAO.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the way forward surely is for a settlement to be achieved by bringing all the sides together, including representatives of Portugal, to solve the problem of East Timor? Does he further agree that the Indonesian Government have spent a great deal of money on investment in East Timor and achieved a great deal for

the people and the infrastructure? Given that there would be guarantees of religious freedom and special status, surely the long-term future and happiness of the people of East Timor would be better served by it remaining part of Indonesia?

Mr. Hanley: We continue to believe that dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia under the United Nations Secretary-General's auspices offers the best chance of finding a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement to the question of East Timor. The next meeting will be held in London in January 1996. I hope that the discussions will deal with substantive issues such as a reduction in the military presence and devolution. We also welcome the intra-East Timorese talks in Austria. I hope that those talks will continue and lead to progress. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is trying to ask a question and he must be heard.

Sir Russell Johnston: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order. That will not do at all.

Sir Russell Johnston: What can I say, Madam Speaker? I am sorry. A wee while ago, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) chided the Foreign Secretary for failing to support the Australian Prime Minister in his condemnation of French nuclear tests. Does the Minister think that the Australian Prime Minister's position on the high moral ground has been affected by his recent statements absolving the Indonesian Government of any wrongdoing in East Timor? Has the Minister had any discussions with the Australian Prime Minister on that extraordinary position, which runs against all the evidence that we have?

Mr. Hanley: The issue was not raised when I met the Australian Prime Minister in Papua New Guinea recently. Therefore, I have nothing to say on the matter.

Iraq

14. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest developments regarding Iraq and compliance with United Nation resolutions on the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. [36866]

Mr. Rifkind: At the September review of the United Nations sanctions, the Security Council stressed the need for Iraq to comply with all its UN obligations, including that on the Kuwait missing persons. We have stressed that Iraq must produce substantive new information on missing persons and on prisoners of war. We shall keep up the pressure.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he agree that it is outrageous that, five years after the liberation of Kuwait, the Iraqis are still defying United Nations resolutions aimed at securing the release of its prisoners of war? Further, has he noted that yesterday's border meeting between the Kuwaitis and the Iraqis has produced no progress and not one prisoner has been named to be released? Will my right hon. and learned Friend please bear in mind the distress of the Kuwaiti people and give the matter priority, while considering the wider issue of news of the enormous chemical and biological weapons stockpile, which has now been revealed to the world following the defection of Mr. Hussein Kamil? I understand that there is sufficient anthrax to destroy the world's population five times over.

Mr. Rifkind: We share my hon. Friend's concern about the more than 600 missing persons. As she said, the Iraqis have not yet provided any satisfactory information as to what might have happened to them. I deeply agree with my hon. Friend that the revelations in recent weeks about the development of anthrax as a weapon of mass destruction by the regime of Saddam Hussein is a clear demonstration of the brutality and irresponsibility of the regime that still rules in that country. It explains why sanctions are still necessary until the resolutions of the United Nations have been fully complied with.

Mr. Gunnell: Given the nature of the use of the ballot box in Iraq recently, does the Foreign Secretary agree that bringing genuine democratic processes into the region would place pressure on that regime? Does he agree that that should be started by the British Government giving full backing to the early calling of Palestinian elections to the national assembly?

Mr. Rifkind: It is clear that the recent so-called referendum in Iraq was a farce. It has been widely recognised as such. I believe that there is serious intent to have genuine and proper Palestinian elections. An invitation has been made to send external observers and the United Kingdom, along with many other countries, will do so. We look forward to that being an important step in the right direction in the development of the Palestinian entity.

Intergovernmental Conference

15. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress in the reflections group in preparation for the European Union intergovernmental conference in 1996. [36867]

Mr. David Davis: There have been 10 meetings so far of the study group preparing for the intergovernmental conference. The chairman of the group, Mr. Westendorp, issued an interim report, on his own authority, on 1 September, which has been placed in the Library of the House. The group is due to present its final report to the Madrid European Council in December.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister will have heard the Secretary of State, in reply to the second question this afternoon, reiterate the Government's commitment to openness in the European Union. In the light of that commitment, will he now reiterate the Government's support for the Swedish Government's decision to publish papers previously kept secret in Brussels? Will he welcome the decision of the European Court of Justice in the case of *The Guardian* and the publication of Council minutes, and will he give us a commitment that in future the Council of Ministers, being the only legislature in the democratic world that meets in secret, will meet in public?

Mr. Davis: The British have been in the lead in many areas of transparency within the Union. The fact that we publish our minute statements, our votes and the lines that we take in each of the Councils that we attend acts as an

exemplar in this. Holding Councils in public would have the effect of driving negotiations into the corridor, and that would not be in the interests of transparency.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Did my hon. Friend notice the other day that Chancellor Kohl made it quite clear, in robust and forthright language, that unless, at the IGC, Europe moved in his direction with regard to having a single defence policy by 1999, there would be a threat of war and difficult dislocations across Europe? Did my hon. Friend further notice that, in the course of that, the Commission president did not chastise Chancellor Khol for the nature of his language? Will my hon. Friend now take the opportunity to join me in so chastising him?

Mr. Davis: We will take a robust line in ensuring that our particular view on defence in Europe will be adhered to.

Ms Eagle: Can the Minister explain the conundrum between the Government's position in support of enlargement, which requires as an absolute first step the basic reform of the common agricultural policy, and their position on the veto? Is it possible to reform the CAP without affecting the veto when it is clear that Germany and other nations will not allow such reforms to take place? Therefore, how can the hon. Gentleman possibly expect enlargement to be a reality?

Mr. Davis: Very large areas of the CAP are already decided by qualified majority voting.

Brazil

16. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with Brazil. [36868]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am delighted to be able to tell my hon. Friend that our relations with Brazil are excellent.

Mr. Arnold: In developing the theme of transatlantic co-operation, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the importance of Brazil, one of the largest of the Atlantic nations with a GDP greater than that of Spain, and a country in which we take a considerable amount of interest? In taking forward discussions with Brazil, will he give a thought to inviting to this country next year President Cardoso, the new anglophile President of Brazil, who would help considerably with the development of that theme?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I congratulate my hon. Friend on instigating the debate last week which went in some depth into our relationship with Brazil. To elaborate slightly today, what he says about trade is absolutely right. United Kingdom exports to Brazil have reached record levels, exceeding £500 million in 1994 and up 56 per cent. this year. We also have an investment programme in Brazil worth £1.93 billion, and we signed an investment promotion and protection agreement in July 1994, demonstrating the depth of our commitment to that country.

With regard to the visit, I regret that I cannot give any specifics to my hon. Friend, but Her Majesty's Government very much hope that President Cardoso will visit us again, as he did for the world war 2 celebrations.

Mr. Purchase: Should it not be a feature of our developing relationship with Brazil constantly to draw attention to the growing difference between wealth and poverty there, which can be witnessed on the streets of Rio and, indeed, to the environmental problems that are developing as a result of the massive industrialisation and privatisation programmes, as witnessed by the state of the waterways, on which one can almost walk due to the effluent that is discharged into them? Is not it right that, in our relationships with such countries, particularly Brazil, we should emphasise the problems that arise?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman is right. We must not lose sight of the conditions of the poor in Brazil, particularly the street children, and of other human rights abuses, which are, of course, not limited to Brazil, but are a problem in many areas of Latin America. We concentrate on such matters in discussions with the Brazilian authorities. We also try to offer assistance in solving the problem of the Brazilian street children.

Former Yugoslavia

17. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's current policy towards the states making up the former Yugoslavia. [36869]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Our policy has three aims: to save lives, to prevent the spread of the conflict, and to draw the parties away from fighting and towards a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Hughes: Further to earlier questions, can the Minister assure us that, as well as dealing with immediate crisis areas, which are the subject of particular attention, the Government, with all their partners both European and transatlantic, are seeking to ensure that all the other areas of the former Yugoslavia are subject to the same level of diplomatic interest so that, if there can be resolution in Bosnia, there can soon be a clear resolution in the whole of the former Yugoslavia for all time?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I can certainly assure the hon. Gentleman that we are doing our best to assist the peace process, not only in Bosnia, but throughout the former Yugoslavia. I visited Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia only two weeks ago, so I very much hope that we shall be able to make progress. Of course, the Bosnian question is critical to the future of the whole of the former Yugoslavia and we must concentrate on solving that appalling problem.

Bosnia

18. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Bosnia. [36870]

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier.

Mr. Wicks: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that, just as 50 years ago, Nazi war criminals were brought before a tribunal and properly judged, so today there should be no hiding place for those who have initiated war crimes, be it the policy of mass rapes, of murder or of frank genocide? Can he reassure the House that the Government are giving resources and support to the war crimes tribunal and that, however senior within their regimes those people may be, justice will be done?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a number of individuals have appeared and are appearing before such tribunals. Warrants have been issued against Mr. Karadzic and General Mladic, which shows that even

those at the most senior level in the Bosnian Serb hierarchy are subject to the laws to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Know-how Funds

19. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to extend the scope of the know-how funds in the Baltic states and Georgia. [36872]

Mr. Rifkind: The know-how fund will continue to provide rapid and flexible assistance to the reform process in the Baltic states. During the visit of Mr. Shevardnadze, the President of Georgia, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the doubling of know-how fund assistance to his country—to US$2 million.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Secretary of State impressed by the lessons from the Baltic states on the effect of the devolution of power to the state of Latvia, which has a smaller population than Scotland, and Estonia, which has a smaller population than Wales? Having learnt that lesson, will he note the great value of the know-how fund in precisely targeting projects there and providing pump-priming to them? Will he continue with the very fine work initiated in Georgia, which is more at peace than it has been for many years, to ensure that country the same benefits from the know-how fund?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman would be slightly unwise to describe Latvia's new status as being the result of a policy of devolution. That is not how most people would describe what happened to the old Soviet Union. The know-how fund is a most valuable way to assist reform in those countries. I believe that it has been very warmly welcomed.

Indo-British Partnership

20. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is doing to maintain the impetus of the Indo-British partnership. [36873]

Mr. Hanley: We are actively involved in ensuring that the impetus of the Indo-British partnership is maintained through a targeted series of trade missions and ministerial exchanges. In the first half of this year alone, United Kingdom exports to India have increased by 20 per cent—that is on top of 20 per cent. last year—and UK investment approvals by almost 50 per cent.

Mr. Spring: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our growing commercial links with India will be further boosted by the recent cut in Export Credits Guarantee Department rates and that our relationship with India on so many levels has never been so excellent?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When the Indo-British partnership was established by the two Prime Ministers in January 1993, few would have thought that it the past two and a half years would have such a glowing history. Total bilateral trade is up by nearly 50 per cent. in those two years. UK exports to India now stand at £1.3 billion. Imports are up 18 per cent. and I mentioned our record on exports.

UK investment in India has increased tenfold from 1992 to 1994 but my hon. Friend is also right that to say that, at many different levels, we have an excellent relationship with India; long may that continue.

BILL PRESENTED

Disabled Persons Civil Rights Commission

Ms Liz Lynne, supported by Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. David Chidgey, Mr. Matthew Taylor, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. David Rendel, Mr. Nigel Jones, Mr. Don Foster, Mr. Charles Kennedy and Mrs. Diana Maddock, presented a Bill to establish a Human Rights Commission with comprehensive responsibility for enforcing, monitoring and providing advice on the civil rights of disabled people to ensure equal access to transport, education, employment, goods and services and public life: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 November, and to be printed. [Bill 180.]

Trade Union Employment Rights

3.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to give effect to the employment rights and relationships between the social partners as provided for in the European Social Chapter; and for connected purposes.

The essence of my Bill is to amend the law so that the much vaunted and heralded so-called opt-outs obtained by the Prime Minister no longer form part of our law. The social chapter of the Maastricht treaty and the earlier European social charter of 1989 are often confused. Of course, exaggerated and inflated claims are also made about them, especially by Conservative Members.

There is one subject on which I agree with Conservative Members who have criticised the Prime Minister in relation to the Maastricht treaty. They have realised that his much-acclaimed triumph in obtaining opt-outs from the social chapter are not worth the paper they are written on—in the long term. They are a sham, because, inexorably, there will be improvements in place of work conditions and employment practices for workers right across Europe.

Those improvements will be obtained, first, through the normal collective bargaining process between employers and trade unions. Secondly, there are multinational employers who think big and who wish to extend good employment practices to all their workers right across Europe. They are confident about their management style, and they believe in motivating their work forces and treating them as mature, informed and committed. Such employers, such as United Biscuits, will have no hesitation in enacting and creating works councils.

Thirdly, the Prime Minister's opt-outs have been diminished in value by judicial decisions; not so much by the European Court of Justice, whose decisions are rare though they are given much publicity, as by our domestic court and tribunal structure. For instance, in an important judgment, the House of Lords pointed out that the Government were wrong, and that they did have obligations to part-time workers, thereby extending the rights of such workers.

Sooner or later, the Government will lose in the courts on the question of the working time directive, which, quite reasonably, seeks to limit the average working week to 48 hours and the average working day to 13 hours or eight hours for night work. Most importantly, it will for the first time, if enacted—I think it will be enacted through court decisions—give workers a legal entitlement to at least four weeks paid annual leave, something which other workers throughout the European Union have but which is denied to workers in the United Kingdom.

The good news is that a Labour Government are on the way. Of course, that Labour Government will have no hesitation in abrogating the opt-out provisions of the social chapter, and they will also seek to implement the spirit of the social charter of 1989. The bad news is that there are still 14 or 15 months to go.

For many workers, time is not on their side. Between now and the advent of a Labour Government, hundreds—if not thousands—of workers will have been disadvantaged in relation to comparable workers with comparable skills in similar industries elsewhere in Europe. Most workers in the United Kingdom will not have the time or the resources to seek remedies through tribunals or courts.

I believe that, in the interests of everyone involved, and of the United Kingdom as a whole, we should now lift the constraints on so-called opt-outs, and begin to talk positively—here and in the Council of Ministers—about rights and opportunities relating to workplaces and careers. We should do all we can to demonstrate a change of attitudes to employment rights here in the United Kingdom.

In any event, much of the protocol in the Maastricht treaty requires unanimity—including the provisions relating to social security, protection of workers, including those whose employment is terminated, representation and collective defence of workers, and the conditions of third-country nationals residing in the European Union. In that regard, the opt-outs are demonstrably meaningless.

Important measures are currently being enacted elsewhere in the European Union, such as the directive on works councils, which provide for a civilised, democratic dialogue between employer and work force. Over the coming months or years, British workers will be excluded from the benefits and security that these provide, and from the provisions of other directives, such as the directive on part-time workers. That directive is still greatly needed, despite the House of Lords judgment, because so many people are being exploited by "zero hour" contracts and other disadvantages merely because they work part time.

One directive that is coming up is described, rather cumbersomely, as

"the reconciliation of work and family".

It is designed to promote equal opportunities and flexible working models to reflect the changes in society. It incorporates provisions relating to parental leave, job security and employment practices, along with an end to the "zero hour" contracts.

The Government have made a shameful attempt to seek derogation until the year 2000, instead of implementing the directive providing protection for young people in June 1996 along with the rest of Europe. That directive would restrict the working hours of children under the age of 15 who are undergoing training or work experience, to eight hours a day or 40 hours a week. Employment would be restricted to two hours on school days, 12 hours a week in term time and 35 hours a week during school holidays.

In this day and age, we should embrace such provisions rather than resisting them. It does no credit to the United Kingdom that the Government still pretend that they can resist the inevitable, and it does nothing to help workers who are currently disadvantaged. It is time that we abandoned the sham nonsense of the opt-outs, and started playing our full part with our social partners in trying to build a fair and equitable Europe based on employment rights that allow people to develop their skills to the fullest extent and enjoy their lives to the full.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. Kevin Macnamara, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Jim Cunningham, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Ken Purchase, Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Robert Ainsworth and Mr. Bill Olner.

TRADE UNION EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Mr. Mackinlay accordingly presented a Bill to give effect to the employment rights and relationships between the social partners as provided for in the European Social Chapter; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 November, and to be printed. [Bill 181.]

Opposition Day

[20TH ALLOTTED DAY]

National Lottery

Madam Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.29 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its concern at recent suggestions that current Government spending on the arts be met by Lottery funds, and reaffirms its wish that funds raised for good causes from the National Lottery should be used for purposes additional to, and not in substitution for, items set out in the Government's existing expenditure plans; believes that when the current contract for the operation of the National Lottery comes to an end, the new Section 5 Licence should be on a not-for-profit basis; proposes that a Lottery Consumers Council should be established to oversee the work of the Lottery regulator; deplores the delay in establishing the National Lottery Charities Board; insists that the funds raised for good causes should fairly benefit every part of the country and every community; and calls for reform of the distribution mechanisms for Lottery funds in order to ensure that this is achieved.

The national lottery was established by Act of Parliament in 1993, and began operating about one year ago. Its establishment met with widespread, but not universal, approval. It has quickly become very successful at raising funds and making huge profits for the operator. Camelot has a licence to print tickets, and another to print money.

The money for distribution is an important addition to capital available for the arts, heritage, sport, charities and, of course, the millennium fund. The lottery and the method of distribution of the proceeds have also quickly become hugely controversial, for several predictable and predicted reasons—perhaps none more so than the payments of huge sums of money to a family for papers that many people felt belonged to the state in the first place.

What has gone wrong? Quite a lot, and mainly because of Government stubbornness during consideration of the National Lottery etc. Bill, and Government inaction since. The present Secretary of State, to her credit, apparently recognises at least some of the failings and problems, and has the opportunity to make some changes. She can certainly have our support if she agrees to do so.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): The right hon. Gentleman mentioned profits. Does he accept that the lottery organisers, Camelot, had to take all the commercial risk? That is something that the Labour party simply does not understand. It does not understand the concept that a company must take risks, and is entitled to the profits if it is prepared to take those risks.

Dr. Cunningham: A rather over-laboured Conservative central office argument, I fear. There is no risk to Camelot. It is a one-way bet in a one-horse race with a national private enterprise monopoly, with a sweetheart deal with the BBC that, if it had been ITV, would have cost it tens of millions of pounds. I fail to see where the hon. Gentleman's argument stands.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Littlewoods Pools has made very

successful profits on 2 per cent. of turnover in the many years that it has been in existence? The Government gave Camelot 5 per cent. of the turnover with no competition, exactly as my right hon. Friend says, and it has made an unbelievable profit.

Dr. Cunningham: What is more, it has been given tremendous advantages over the pools industry into the bargain.

The failures are too much profit-taking by Camelot; threats of Treasury appropriation of the proceeds of the lottery; damage to the fund-raising of many charities; confusion between capital and revenue implications of funding; required matching funding conditions that are too onerous, or simply not available to too many people who seek to benefit; the failure—so far, at least—for there to be any fairness in regional distribution; bureaucracy and inefficiency in the system itself; and no public voice or oversight or scrutiny of the process. I shall discuss those issues.

No one—with the possible exception of Camelot staff privately among themselves—envisaged or predicted that such excessive profits would go to the operator. Those profits are said to be about £1 million per week and increasing. The lottery is a national monopoly run by private enterprise. The Government gave a seven-year contract with no breaks for reconsideration, but the regulator apparently has the powers to act to end those excessive profits.

Part I, section 4 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 places overriding duties on the Secretary of State and on the regulator. Section 4(2) says:

"the Secretary of State and the Director General shall each in exercising those functions do his best"—

[Interruption.] I am quoting from the 1993 Act. If the Secretary of State will forgive me, that is what it says. It continues:

"to secure that the net proceeds of the National Lottery are as great as possible."

That is an overriding duty on the Secretary of State. Part I, section 6, of the Act gives the director general powers to vary any condition of a licence. So between them, the right hon. Lady and the director general can act on the problem now. Part I, section 11, gives the Secretary of State powers to issue a direction to the director general to this effect.

We know at the outset of the debate that, if the Government and the right hon. Lady want to take action to deal with excess profit-taking by Camelot, they can. The right hon. Lady has the power, and the option is available to her. What we on this side of the House want to know, and what the people of this country want to know, is whether she will use those powers to maximise the amount available for distribution to good causes.

The right hon. Lady inherited an unsatisfactory situation, but she can act now—or, let us say, at the end of the financial year—to correct the situation.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) *rose—*

Dr. Cunningham: I will give way in a moment.

I urge the right hon. Lady to do so—the question is, will she? I will be happy to give way to her first if she will answer that question. Well, Madam Speaker, that is the first question to be ducked. I will give way to her hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), who may have more courage.

Mr. Evans: If the Labour party wins the next election, will the main thrust of its policy be to make the lottery less successful by limiting prizes, clobbering Camelot and interfering with the scratch cards? Is not the Labour party's problem that the national lottery is a great success?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman could not have been listening when I started my speech. I said that the lottery was a success, and added that it had widespread, but not universal, support. His questions were a complete misinterpretation of what I have said and what I am about to say. The hon. Gentleman—like his right hon. and hon. Friends—never seems to learn.

The experiences of the public being exploited as consumers of water, gas and electricity are being repeated by the lottery, and that is not what people want. People want to play the lottery for fun and enjoyment—I do so myself—and their first objective is to win. But they also hope and expect that the majority of what is left after the prizes are taken goes to good causes. That is the public's feeling on this issue, and they do not support the level of profits that are being made in the present monopoly.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The right hon. Gentleman complained about the regional distribution to charities as a result of the lottery. Bearing in mind that the north-west region is second only to Yorkshire in terms of the amount received, how would he redistribute the money? What would his constituents think about the right hon. Gentleman recommending a redistribution away from their area?

Dr. Cunningham: The first weakness in the hon. Gentleman's argument is that my constituency is in the northern region and not the north-west, but we will set that little error aside. The hon. Gentleman is simply talking about the distribution of charity funding, and not the overall distribution of funds, so he is wrong on both counts.

The public strongly support the argument that much more of the money that is being taken as profit should go to good causes. They have a flutter to try to win, but they believe that their losses will help the good causes that they support. They do not believe that the creation of vast profits and huge salaries and bonuses for Camelot should be any part of the lottery.

The case for a not-for-profit operation, as our motion today sets out, is very powerful. The existing contract must be honoured—there is no doubt about that—but Labour in office will ensure that, when a new contract is due, it must be on a not-for-profit basis, thus releasing many more millions of pounds for the arts, sport, heritage and charities alike.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Does my hon. Friend agree that charities distribution has overlooked a number of good causes? I refer particularly to the hospice movement. Will my colleague impress upon the Secretary of State that that is a good and a worthy cause that should receive prime consideration?

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend has made his point very well, and I hope that the Secretary of State and those who are responsible for charities funding will take his point on board.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The right hon. Gentleman's argument assumes that a

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

non-profit-making organisation would run the national lottery as well as Camelot does. Will he acknowledge that the national lottery is the most effective lottery in the world? It is run more efficiently than any other lottery, and its administrative costs are one third that of other lotteries. The hon. Gentleman cannot guarantee that a non-profit-making organisation would do anything like as well for good causes.

Dr. Cunningham: I am prepared to make a concession to the hon. Lady, who is a constituency neighbour. She is correct to say that nothing can be guaranteed in such matters; there were no guarantees about the existing system, either. Camelot, as it presently exists or through some management buy-out, will be perfectly entitled to bid for the new contract when it becomes available. If it were successful, why would a new regime run the lottery less efficiently?

I now turn to the additionality argument, and we must put some more important questions to the right hon. Lady in that regard. From the outset, ministerial promises came thick and fast in order to reassure everyone that lottery funding would be additional to Government departmental spending programmes. That clear, essential commitment increased support for lottery legislation in the House and in another place.

When unveiling his national lottery plans on 17 December 1992, the then Secretary of State for National Heritage said:

"The national lottery will be an additional source of money for schemes that might otherwise never be realised. This money will not substitute for other Government spending"

Speaking at an English Heritage conference on 16 September 1994, the Prime Minister said:

"On the Government side"—

then he paused and continued—

"Treasury please note—we will make no case by case reductions on conventional public spending programmes to take account of awards from the lottery. The money raised by the lottery will not replace existing Government spending".

However, the Prime Minister's colleagues in the Treasury soon had other ideas. The Chief Secretary has already tried to raid the lottery funds, and we read that the Secretary of State is locked in a struggle with him. She made sure that we knew about that by leaking her letter to him all over the place; not only did we know, but he knew we knew.

In her letter, the Secretary of State said that this could not be countenanced, because

"it would be the clearest possible broken promise".

That has never stopped the Government in the past, so I do not think that that is much of a guarantee. I ask the right hon. Lady to give the House an unequivocal assurance today that she has won that battle and that the lottery funds will always be additional expenditure. Can she give the House that assurance now? I am again willing to give way if she is willing to give that assurance.

Perhaps I can put it another way: will the Secretary of State confirm that her departmental budget is safe, and that there will be no cuts in her spending programmes in next month's Budget? Can the Secretary of State give us that assurance? I am pretty sure she cannot.

Perhaps the Secretary of State can answer an easier question. I refer her to a statement by her hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), who is chair of the Tory Back-Bench finance committee. [HON. MEMBERS: "Chairman."] Chairperson.

Speaking to Conservative students at York university on Friday 20 October about the right hon. Lady's budget and the Heritage Fund, the hon. Member for Bridlington said—I wonder whether he had the courtesy to tell the right hon. Lady—

"We should cut £200 million a year off the heritage budget, which is now over £1 billion. The arts are getting enormous sums of money from the National Lottery and therefore the heritage budget should no longer be a sacred cow."

Does the right hon. Lady agree with her hon. Friend?

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): For the avoidance of doubt, I shall intervene, because it is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is struggling about what to say, and filling his speech with gaps. It may have been different when the right hon. Gentleman was shadowing the Deputy Prime Minister, but I intend to make my own speech in my own time, and I do not intend to help the right hon. Gentleman get through the time that has been allocated to him by filling up the gaps in his speech.

Dr. Cunningham: I am quite entertained by the right hon. Lady's intervention, because she is just like the Deputy Prime Minister. He never answered any questions, either.

Apparently there are great differences among Cabinet Ministers and between the right hon. Lady and her influential—we have to assume that the hon. Member for Bridlington is influential—Back-Bench colleagues. We shall wait to see who emerges victorious in this continuing battle about Government expenditure.

Apparently, there are also differences between the Secretary of State and her colleague at the Welsh Office about the status of lottery grants in Wales and awards to organisations in the Principality. The Secretary of State for Wales seems to have deemed it public expenditure. I wonder whether she agrees with her colleague on that.

Who is really in control of the decisions? The House was told by the Government, especially during the debate on Manchester's Olympic games bid, that it would certainly not be up to any Minister to decide whether Manchester's bid should receive money. However, the Prime Minister announced that £100 million from lottery proceeds would be available to fund a British academy of sport. We are not against such an academy, but who took the decision? Was it the Prime Minister or the Sports Council? It would be interesting to see the minutes of the discussion before that decision was made.

There is a real question to be answered, if any are ever to be answered. It is: are Ministers manipulating the lottery proceedings behind the scenes for political ends? There is a certain accumulation of evidence to that effect. Total independence in connection with the use of lottery proceeds was guaranteed to the House, but now the waters are being well and truly muddied. It is not as if the Treasury is not already doing well enough out of the lottery, because it is a substantial beneficiary. It took £410.7 million from the lottery between November 1994 and September of this year. . .

Before the lottery was established, there was wide debate about its impact on the revenue-raising activities of charities and on other businesses such as the football pools. There were clear and insistent warnings to the Government, but Ministers brushed them aside, and they still do.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has carried out its own studies, and it concludes that very serious damage to voluntary sector incomes is apparent. That organisation estimates losses of about £330 million in the first year as a result of the impact of the lottery. I shall shortly turn to grants to charities, but whatever the total at the end of this first year, they will in no way match the shortfall that is being experienced by charities.

The voluntary sector study confirms that the public are confused about the true beneficiaries of the lottery. It confirms that fewer people are donating, and that losses among fund-raising organisations are widespread.

The National Lottery etc. Act received Royal Assent in November 1993. The impact on charities was predicted then, yet only last week, after constant pressure from the Opposition Benches as well as from charities, was the Home Office moved to decide to investigate the position—too late really to repair or prevent the damage that has already taken place. Ministers in the Home Office have been negligent and dilatory, and the charities have had to pay the price.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): This matter was debated at some length in the House during consideration of the Bill. I was surprised to hear the right hon. Gentleman saying yesterday on the radio that the Government had not listened to what had been said by the voluntary sector during that debate, because his hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), in explaining why Labour supported the Bill's Third Reading, said:

"Ministers did listen to the genuine concerns expressed. To their eternal credit, they promised to reflect on the many points that we had to put to them. That promise was kept."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. 1114.]

Who is right: the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde or the right hon. Gentleman?

Dr. Cunningham: Ministers may have listened but, in relation to this point, as the hon. Gentleman knows, they took no action to monitor the impact on charities' fund-raising until his ministerial colleague announced a decision last Friday. The Act received Royal Assent in 1993. Do not tell me that they listened on that point: if the hon. Gentleman says that, he has not got a leg to stand on.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund has announced a 17 per cent. increase in charity given to it over the past year, and the British Red Cross a 25 per cent. increase, and this is the first year of the lottery?

Dr. Cunningham: I am pleased for those charities, but has the hon. Gentleman heard about what happened to Tenovus, which lost £1.5 million in the first year—income that was wiped out by the introduction of the lottery? Of course some have done better, but there is no doubt that a much larger number have done and are doing much worse.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I want to support his argument, not least because, just a few days ago, the Royal National Institute for the Blind announced that it had lost £500,000 since the inception of the lottery.

To close the gate once the horse has bolted is not good enough. Those of us who were on the Standing Committee that considered the National Lottery etc. Bill argued persistently throughout that money would be lost to charities as a result of the lottery, not least because of the experience elsewhere in countries such as Ireland, where 16 leading charities had written to the Taoiseach pointing out that their donations had been massively reduced since the lottery was established there, so they knew in advance what the impact would be.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman is right, and I am pleased to be able to agree with him on that point.

As the honorary president of a number of voluntary organisations in my constituency, I know from local experience the damage that has been done to the fund-raising activities of charities and voluntary bodies.

The National Lottery Charities Board is also controlled by the Home Secretary. Yesterday, I read in the *Evening Standard* that the right hon. Lady the Secretary of State for National Heritage is locked in a battle to wrest control from him. Why does she not just tell him that it is an operational matter? He would be bound to give it up then.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Timothy Kirkhope): Ho, ho, that was a good one.

Dr. Cunningham: Pretty good.

The right hon. Lady described people in charities and voluntary organisations as "whingers", but they have a legitimate right to criticise the Government over the lottery's impact and the long delay in the announcement by the National Lottery Charities Board. Of all the funding bodies, it was the last to make any grants in one of the most crucial sectors and one of the sectors most affected by the lottery. It has been submerged in bureaucratic obfuscation and delay, and still, out of something in excess of £230 million available to it, only £40 million has so far been allocated. The right hon. Lady, to quote her, may be "bored with the whingeing", but the millions of people active in the voluntary sector are justifiably angry with the Government.

A Labour Government will seek a partnership with the voluntary sector on these matters. Those involved have enormous energy and initiative, and deliver excellent services and support to millions of people. They and the volunteers have been treated shabbily by the Government, who, according to successive ministerial statements, do not appear to recognise that, although voluntary bodies want to work in partnership with the Government, they fiercely defend their independence and wish to maintain it. The Labour Government will guarantee that they can do so.

The charities board announced grants this week of £40 million, and it has promised another £120 million by the end of the year. However, it must have more than £240 million available to it by now. Why is the money being held back? Why is the board being so dilatory, especially when the charities have been so disadvantaged? It needs a shake-up.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The board deserves some credit for working hard on an equitable regional distribution, and for ignoring the xenophobic ravings of the Tory right about who should be the beneficiaries of the grants.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): In fairness to the people involved in the charity distribution, will the hon. Gentleman recognise that the Sports Council and the Arts Council have had many years of experience in distributing funds around the country, and that the charities board was something new? The hon. Gentleman would have been the first to complain had not serious consideration been given to establishing it properly and doing it well. The hon. Gentleman is so carried away with wanting to denigrate a great success that his normal rationality has escaped him.

Dr. Cunningham: I rarely get carried away in this Chamber even after interventions from the hon. Gentleman. Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that the board began from a standing start, unlike some of the other funding bodies.

I am not aiming my anger at individuals. What has the Home Secretary been doing all this time? He has ministerial responsibility. The Secretary of State for National Heritage is innocent of this charge, because she does not have any power, although I rather suspect that she wishes she did. On the whole, these decisions would probably be safer in her hands than in the hands of the Home Secretary. All sorts of things seem to slip through his fingers.

The system—I am talking about the system as a whole, not the charities board—seems much too time-consuming, bureaucratic and inefficient. That may explain the massive disparities between allocations in different parts of Britain.

Some counties—Surrey and Wiltshire, for example—have so far been given the equivalent of about £50 per head. In Cumbria, where my constituency is located, the figure is 90p per head. That is a colossal disparity, and is unsustainable. It is those disparities which are making people justifiably angry. Before Monday's announcement, the northern region had received £2.5 million in total, whereas the London region had received £141 million—almost 60 times as much.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman join me in congratulating my constituents on receiving £280,000 this year for a children's centre in Hebden Bridge? The hon. Gentleman's motion says that the funds should be "raised for good causes", and not for specific things. Does the hon. Gentleman think that all this bureaucracy would be washed away were the Home Secretary, either this one or a subsequent one, to chair the board? I think not.

Dr. Cunningham: I certainly would not want this Home Secretary to chair any organisation with which I had to deal.

I am making a different point. Part of the bureaucracy occurs when people want to make applications for grants. As the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) said on the radio the other day, people cannot find their way through the paper chase, and they are put off. They do not have the resources to cope, and they are disadvantaged as a result. I am, of course, delighted for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents. Pica village hall in my constituency received about £9,000, and I am pleased about that, too. I was talking about disparities on a per capita basis as well as on a regional basis.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): The charities board, alone of the distributing bodies, makes a distinction between grants made to national institutions and those that are made to local or regional institutions. Does my right hon. Friend consider that it would be advisable if the other distributing bodies were to take that approach?

For example, does anyone believe that the money made available for the Churchill papers was to the benefit of the people of Cambridge, any more than the Royal opera house moneys were specifically for the benefit of the people of London? Does my right hon. Friend accept that London has received £1.5 million of the £40 million of charitable moneys—less than 4 per cent? That is out of keeping with the level of social need and depravation within London.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend's comments about the Churchill papers. I do not suppose that the people of Cambridge have benefited from that grant in any way.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree with me that the people of Cambridge did not feel that they were beneficiaries following the £13 million that was paid for the Churchill papers. Does he accept that there is outrage in my constituency? Most of my constituents feel that the real beneficiary is the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill).

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hawkins: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way. The hon. Gentleman must concede that I have been generous in my response to those wishing to intervene. I know that many Members wish to contribute to the debate.

Disparities are to be expected in the first year of operation. I support, and as often as I can enjoy, important international institutions in London. They are an asset to the nation as a whole. They deserve support for the excellence of their work. They attract visitors to Britain. They are usually beneficial to our economic and social well-being. I wish them well. It is essential, however, to have some fairness and regional balance in the allocation of funds over time to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the regions of England.

Many of our fellow citizens do not, and never will, have ready access to London institutions. That must be borne very much in mind. It must also be understood that there are many excellent theatres, orchestras and companies in the regions, as well as in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, that are equally as deserving of support as the London institutions. Their audiences and patrons are entitled to expect it.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No. I apologise to the hon. Lady, but I must move on.

The lottery was given a substantial competitive disadvantage over the pools from the outset. There has been a consequent loss of income to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and to the Football Trust. Grants to rugby league, rugby union and county cricket—not only to soccer—are thus affected. None of these areas of expenditure is eligible for lottery funding.

Local authorities, too, have difficulties in promoting projects because of lack of matching funding. That is especially true of some of the hard-pressed inner urban areas, where problems of unemployment, homelessness and social neglect are at their very worst.

Funding for sports facilities, music and other education and community projects is desperately needed in the inner cities, but, as I have said, matching funding is not available. The Minister of State, Department of National Heritage said:

"I heard someone mention the selling of school playing fields . . . We also intend to allow schools, with their local communities, to buy back land to make even more sports facilities available for young people."—[*Official Report*, 16 October 1995; Vol. 264, c. 5.]

That is fine, but where is that land?

Why were the playing fields sold in the first place? Perhaps the Minister would like to explain. If they can be bought back, what will happen to the supermarkets, car parks and houses now standing on them? They were sold for development and for profit. It is no good offering capital funding if no account is taken of the inevitable associated recurring revenue spending which necessarily follows. I urge the right hon. Lady to consider this issue. I know that many of the people in the funding organisations are giving her the same simple important advice.

There is one further point on capital grants. Why does the millennium fund have a £100,000 minimum grant? That requires the same amount of matching funding to be provided. In other words, nothing costing less than £200,000 can be proposed. At a stroke, hamlets, villages and small towns in rural areas are seriously disadvantaged as a result. They are simply not in that league of matching funding, and are therefore excluded from being beneficiaries. The right hon. Lady sits in the chair and can have that changed. I believe that she should do so as a matter of urgency.

To resolve some of the problems that I have described, the distributing bodies should be directed to identify gaps in geographical and subject provision. The boards must surely have some strategic sense of direction and purpose. Regional and local bodies, societies and groups should be encouraged to work together to find solutions where they cannot find them individually, and there should be some flexibility if they do in the requirements for matching funding to allow projects to proceed. The medical research charities should be included as potential beneficiaries, but I believe that some care is needed.

Of the 87 members of the Association of Medical Research Charities, 74 are fund-raising; the rest are endowed. Between them, they have a turnover of some £360 million, of which £200 million comes from fund-raising. Only five of them raise more than £10 million, and all but 13 are small charities spending less than £500,000. Their umbrella organisation has pointed out that some of them, as the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) reminded us, have improved their position, while others have seen their position deteriorate.

Big charities can afford to meet the challenge of the lottery by reorganising their fund-raising. The smaller ones have found it much harder to adapt. However, it is not an easy matter to make informed, quality judgments about scientific and medical research programmes. It may be necessary to set up either a separate body, or at least a separate mechanism, to deal with these important but complex issues. I should like to hear what the right hon. Lady has to say on that important point, and I am sure that the House would, too.

Many people feel excluded by the existing procedures from benefiting from the lottery, either as individuals or in their communities. They believe that they and their communities are unlikely to benefit in future, even though many of them buy tickets regularly. There is a case for much greater public involvement and scrutiny of what is happening. Not everyone, however, can afford to pay £400 to go to a seminar to learn what is going on with the national lottery proceeds and how to make applications for them.

We propose a lottery consumer council to involve people—*[Interruption.]* As this is the Government who have given more power and expenditure control to quangos than any Government in living memory, a period of silence from Conservative Members would be sensible.

We propose the council simply because people want to be involved. We propose that it should have a variety of duties, including scrutiny, and giving information and guidance to the public about what is going on. It would advise in the public interest, and it would work alongside the director general, but with different priorities and duties. The right hon. Lady should not underestimate the growing public feelings on these issues, expressed strongly on the social implications of gambling by the Churches as recently as yesterday.

I have one further proposal to make.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way.

In this country, we have been inclined over many years and under successive Governments—I do not hold the Government or the Secretary of State responsible for any of it—to allow talented young people to struggle on alone, or with parental support if it is available. That applies to athletes, artists, musicians, scientists, inventors and designers, and it is well established as one of the gaps in our approach, whether in education, further or higher education, or funding.

We should consider the establishment of a talent fund from lottery proceeds to address that failing of the present system. I hope that the Secretary of State has already had that proposal put to her. It is worth serious consideration, and I urge her to give it some thought.

Our motion addresses the need to improve the way that the lottery is run and to improve the distribution of proceeds from it. We on the Opposition Benches support the lottery; we want to develop and build on its success. Our proposals would reinforce the best aspects of the lottery, and make it more open, fair and accountable. The Secretary of State has the necessary powers to make most of those changes now. She should do so.

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the huge success of the National Lottery and the enormous sums of extra money it is raising for the Good Causes Fund to go to the arts, sport, the heritage, the caring charities and the celebration of the Millennium; believes that the operator, whose selection was endorsed by the NAO, is running the lottery efficiently and cost-effectively; congratulates the distributing bodies on making an excellent start in spreading the benefits of the Lottery throughout the land; and calls upon the Opposition to recognise this success and the opportunity it brings to improve the quality of life.'.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in this debate about the national lottery, to answer a number of questions and to put the record straight. A great deal of misleading nonsense has been spoken, fuelled, I am afraid, by Labour Members. The facts are clear: the national lottery has been a tremendous success; it has been a tremendous success for the millions of people who play and enjoy it each week; it is a success for the good causes which are benefiting so handsomely from its proceeds; and it is a success which the Labour party's approach would ruin by denying an unprecedented opportunity for thousands of good causes to realise their dreams year after year.

The lottery has been with us for less than a year. As I speak, I am very mindful of the presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who steered the Bill through all its stages with great care, precision, attention to detail and a great degree of consultation. Having waited more than 150 years since the previous lottery in this country, the lottery has become a national pastime in a matter of months. The success has been built on the sound foundations which we put in place in the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. The structure was agreed by the House after a great deal of careful debate and preparation.

Let me explain why the Labour party would destroy that progress. In the pursuit of ideology, about which I shall say much more in a moment, the Labour party would harm tens of thousands of retailers, thwart popular ambition and rob good causes of hundreds of millions of pounds. It would lose friends, lose votes and lose respect. I predict that its policy will change within a year—although I doubt whether even Mystic Meg would be brave enough to predict how many times it will change in that year.

Before moving on, I welcome the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to his post. He is an experienced member of the House and I look forward to many a joust with him. As I said, the right hon. Gentleman is experienced; he knows the ups and downs of politics as well as most. I commiserate with him over the shadow Cabinet elections. Government Members know that Opposition Members cannot safely be let out to vote and put crosses by the right names.

Dr. John Cunningham: I am really charmed by the right hon. Lady's felicity. I have given a lot of thought to lotteries over the past seven days, as she can imagine. But as a lifelong supporter of the Labour party and Newcastle United, I am well used to dealing with both triumph and disaster. It is just that the disasters have been a bit too frequent lately.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's remarks.

As for the operation of the lottery—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Secretary of State has just said that Opposition Members cannot be relied upon to put crosses at the side of names. Only a few months ago, Tory Members of Parliament trooped up to the Committee Room upstairs. Ten of them went in and voted twice. Eight of them went in and did not vote at all. One of them, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), did not go in because there were no cameras there. Two of them finished up voting for my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and one of them has joined us already. Who is the other one?

Mrs. Bottomley: I suspect that it is something to do with the nature of the debate that there is such a spirit of enjoyment and levity in the Chamber today. I say that only as a statement of what the national lottery has done to our national life.

About 30 million people play the lottery every week—three out of four households. Few pastimes have attracted this level of participation. Some people have complained that we are encouraging people to spend money that they cannot afford on the lottery.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The Secretary of State talks about the number of people who participate in the national lottery. Does she agree with me, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and other hon. Members on both sides of the House who signed early-day motion 1268, which states that the sale of national lottery instants is inappropriate for normal retail outlets? In view of the decision of the Director General of the National Lottery that no licence should be granted for national lottery games that could encourage excessive gambling, will she consider the case for withdrawing the sale of instants to such ordinary retail outlets and confining them to establishments licensed for gambling? This is a serious point.

Mrs. Bottomley: It is a serious point, but the hon. Lady will understand that I hope to deal with it in a proper place later in my speech. I shall merely say in passing that the effect of her proposal would be to stop the British Legion introducing its new initiative, which is likely to result in great benefit for an excellent cause.

Let us go back to the previous scare story, namely, that people would spend more than they could afford on the lottery. Last week, the family expenditure survey showed that the average household spent £2.10 a week on its regular flutter on the lottery. That is not a large price to pay for the chance for people to dream about what they would do if they won the jackpot. As for what the right hon. Member for Copeland implied, the survey also showed that the better-off play more and the worse-off play less.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It is the other way around.

Mrs. Bottomley: The evidence from the family expenditure survey—a very reputable survey—last week was precisely that the better-off play more and the worse-off pay less. Many hon. Members play. There was some debate—

Mr. Couchman: My right hon. Friend will have read the reports this morning of the Church of England's

condemnation of the lottery. Would she find it more convincing if the Church of England followed the example of the Church of Scotland and abjured not only the lottery but claiming from the lottery? I believe that the Church of England has put in 267 applications for some £19 million, to follow the £1 million that it has already received. Does she agree that it must find itself in a considerable dilemma, as the Bishop of Liverpool has said?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. The Church and its organisations are likely to be major beneficiaries from the lottery, not only in terms of restoration of magnificent buildings but because the various branches of the Church are often involved in excellent causes to support families or promote sport in deprived areas or in artistic activities. The lottery is a great opportunity for the Church. As two hon. Members have raised that particular point, it is only right for me to deal with it now.

The lottery was set up with extremely careful regulation. We are virtually the last country in the world to have a lottery. It is one of the most successful lotteries in the world. We have learnt lessons from others about regulation. We have established the Office of the National Lottery and appointed the director general, who is charged explicitly with maximising the return for good causes, ensuring propriety and protecting the interests of those who play. In the report published last week, the director general referred to the work that he has undertaken to look for any evidence of excessive gambling behaviour in other countries as a result of the introduction of a lottery. He has not been able to find any evidence that the national lottery has led to excessive gambling. But those who are concerned about that, including the churches, should urgently seek a meeting with the Director General of the National Lottery, who is expressly charged with protecting the interests of the players.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will my right hon. Friend promise to ignore the sanctimonious claptrap that we have heard from the churches this week and the crescendo of whingeing from Opposition Members? Has not the national lottery been a complete success in Britain, particularly in Scarborough where work on the Alan Ayckbourn theatre would have been delayed had it not been for the £1.5 million from the national lottery? It has made a fantastic theatre available to the people of Scarborough and the many people from all over the world who come to visit us.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. The theatre in Scarborough is one of more than 500 bodies that have received an Arts Council award from the national lottery. There are 54 theatres throughout Britain that have received an award, giving them an opportunity to invest in local arts in a way that they would never have thought possible.

We are one of the last countries to have a national lottery and it is an especially successful one. I hope that I have dealt with the concern about some of the effects on people's behaviour and our commitment to entrust the director general to continue to monitor that, to look into the evidence and to be available to those who wish to discuss it.

There has been a considerable debate about the size of the prizes.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have been permissive in the extreme in allowing interventions and I shall be abused by Opposition Members if I do not make more progress, because many hon. Members with constituency projects—

Mr. Banks *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be seeking to catch my eye at a later stage.

Mr. Banks: You know that I will, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate your efforts, Madam Deputy Speaker, to maintain an orderly House.

There are those who carp about the prizes. I want the House to know that capping the prizes and cutting the prize fund are the route to an equal distribution of very little. It is big jackpots that are the route to generous distributions of significant sums of money. Evidence here, as around the world, is that a big jackpot increases participation and the sum raised. The whole point about the lottery was to maximise the amount coming through for good causes.

The Opposition cannot live with the fact that the results have so exceeded anyone's expectations at the start. In the weeks when the jackpot has rolled over, between 10 and 20 per cent. more has come through for good causes. That means, for example, that theatres such as the one in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) can benefit.

Sir Donald Thompson: The good causes do benefit, but does my right hon. Friend agree that when people buy a lottery ticket the good causes in which they are interested are themselves and their families?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, and acutely, my hon. Friend has a precise knowledge of human psychology, as befits a former Whip. If people wish to give to charity, they should give to charity. If they play the lottery, for the most part it is for the fun, the promise of a big win and the participation in a great national activity.

Some say—this is almost beyond belief—that huge prizes bring misery to the winners. Now we know that it was misery that led millionaires to give a reported £80,000 to Labour's leader in the battle to run his party. Wealth is not the source of misery for champagne socialists, so why should it be the source of misery for the rest of us?

In fact, the House will be aware that it is rare for one person to win the jackpot; it is generally shared by three or more people. Out of about 280 jackpot wins so far, only 18 have been for more than £5 million, and many such jackpots are shared by syndicates of up to 20 people. How many of those 18 have been made miserable by the experience, we do not know, but we can guess that there are many more people willing to change places with them.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I confirm what the right hon. Lady just said about the syndicate? My wife did not do the lottery, but she found that all her work mates did and realised that, if they won, she would be the last person left in her department, so she joined the syndicate as well.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to hear about the hon. Gentleman's domestic experience. When I review the

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working of the lottery, I will bear in mind his experiences and those of his wife before deciding on any modifications in the rules or arrangements.

The substance of the Opposition's gripe is their utter loathing of the private sector and outrage that the operator, Camelot, could have the nerve to make a profit out of running the most successful lottery anywhere in the world. The House and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) might well benefit from hearing about the issues involved in deciding the operator.

In 1991, the Opposition said that they favoured a national lottery for the arts—they did not mention all the other good causes that have benefited. Of course, they wanted an inquiry—that goes without saying for an Opposition policy—to find out how that could be achieved with the lowest possible cost. We have the lottery with the lowest possible cost. That is what the Director General of the National Lottery was charged to do when considering the bids for the licence.

The recent report from the director general states that the Camelot bid

"offered the greatest contribution to the Good Causes . . . and retained the lowest percentage of turnover to cover its operating costs and profits".

The report continues:

"More would have been kept by The Lottery Foundation . . . for operating costs and profit than Camelot proposed over the same range of revenue scenarios".

So, in awarding the licence to Camelot, the director general chose the best deal for the good causes from the eight bids to run the lottery.

If that were not enough, the National Audit Office confirmed that the evaluation process was

"comprehensive, consistent, logical and properly controlled"—

praise indeed from the NAO.

The operator has fully justified that decision. Camelot got the lottery up and running within six months of winning the licence—an achievement for which it should be congratulated. It has raised more than £1,119 million for good causes. Its bid had the lowest retention for operating costs and profits and was the best for good causes, which have benefited to the fullest extent. It is predictable that the Opposition would prefer an operating bid that would cut the cash for good causes but satisfy their ideological hostility to profit and the private sector. That is new Labour.

Dr. John Cunningham: That is not true. The Secretary of State chose not to listen, or is deliberately ignoring what I said. The reality is that our proposals were seeking, not to reduce the money available for distribution, but to maximise it. Under the Act, the right hon. Lady has an overriding duty to ensure that the money is maximised. Will she allow the excessive profit levels to continue, or will she use her powers to reduce them?

Mrs. Bottomley: I was going to avoid flatly contradicting the right hon. Gentleman, since it is our first debate and his first day on the subject. The licence will run until the end of its period and it is not within my powers to intervene during that time. The right hon. Gentleman fails to understand. Does he know that, in New Zealand, operating costs are 14.3 per cent., in Denmark they are 14.8 per cent, in Ireland they are 16 per cent., and in Holland they are 25 per cent? He is right—people dislike statistics when they know that they disprove their argument. Funnily enough, when the statistics go the other way the Opposition are only too happy to engage in a debate on the figures. In this case, the operator retains 5 per cent. over the licence period. That is a formidable achievement and no other lottery anywhere in the world has done it.

I ask people in the country more widely to hear the Labour party's loathing of profit and of the private sector. It is exactly like its rage about and wish to meddle with British Telecom and the cable companies. It seems to have no sense of honour or principle of maintaining contracts or of allowing the private sector, if it takes a risk, also to take the benefit that emerges if it delivers the most efficient lottery anywhere in the world.

Mr. Ashton: Is the right hon. Lady aware that Camelot conned Peter Davis? The impression was given that to install 10,000 terminals in newsagents would take two years and that the lottery would not make a profit, or break even, for two years. Those terminals were installed in less than six months. The Government and Peter Davis should have had the technical knowledge to know that 10,000 terminals could be installed in six months and that the lottery would be running at maximum profit from day one. That was a major mistake by Peter Davis and the Government.

Mrs. Bottomley: I tend to have more confidence in the commendation from the National Audit Office that the selection of the operator received than in even the distinguished judgement of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that had Camelot not succeeded in getting the terminals into newsagents, the first people to criticise would have been members of the Labour party? Labour would have loved the lottery to fail. It cannot find anything, so it is just carping.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes it all the more clear why I must make some headway with my speech. Clearly, interventions from Labour Members are going to take the debate much wider.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: I must make progress.

Let me move on to the next bright new idea from the Labour party—a quango to regulate the quangos. This is a familiar theme: along with a review, a quango. They like all those sort of concepts in the Labour party. It is unclear whether this would just be a kind of Walworth road imprimatur on all that happened through the lottery.

Oflot was charged with protecting the interests of those who play the game. The recent report demonstrated that there have been very few complaints from members of public. If there are any areas in which it can improve its responsiveness to those who play the game, it will no doubt do so. It is not right to compare those who play the lottery with users of water, electricity or gas since evidently, those who do not wish to play the lottery have a simple power at their disposal—to stop playing.

I shall move on to the comments of the right hon. Member for Copeland about additionality. It is the case, as my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South said when he took the Bill through the House and as my right hon. Friend the

Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) has said on frequent other occasions, that lottery money is additional to public expenditure. It is additional to the money that would otherwise be provided for all those good causes. The national lottery money is clearly public money, however, and the good causes fund is managed by my Department, as is well understood.

The distribution of that money is the responsibility of independent bodies, as Parliament agreed. I may not always like the decisions that they make, but they are independent bodies, and my view—I think that the Labour party is quite wrong to meddle in the process—is that we should accept those judgments, difficult though they are.

There have been a number of cases, however, where schemes have had difficulty because there was a Government scheme, which was designed to lever in money from the private sector, and so they were unable to match this public funding with lottery money, which itself is public sector money. The most notable case recently was that of the Wales tourist board. I am pleased to be able to inform the House, on behalf of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has made it clear that in future it will be possible for Wales tourist board projects to be matched with lottery money. That is an example of the pragmatic and practical way in which I believe we should see the lottery unfold. If there are problems in the early months and years I shall not be a bit surprised, but sensible solutions can be found. What is ludicrous is the idea of pulling the system up by its roots, changing all the rules and regulations and going off in a different direction.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Does the Secretary of State accept, despite the runaway success of the national lottery—which has been acknowledged on all sides—that among the losers are the 1,717 people in Glasgow, Cardiff and Liverpool who have lost their employment with the football pools companies? My colleagues on Merseyside are making strong representations about that. The lottery is having a damaging and long-term effect on the pools industry.

In the interests of consumers—if that is what we are to call them—in the gambling market, should not something more than a review be carried out? Should not the regulations be examined to ensure that the widest possible choice is available? The bingo promoters also claim to have been affected—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows that interventions should, by their nature, be short. I think that she has had long enough.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will be aware that a number of concessions were agreed to help the industry to which she refers. We shall continue to examine the issues that have been raised. One of the strengths of the lottery awards, however, is that they are going to many of the sectors—the arts, heritage and sport—in which there are rising employment and new opportunities. Seeing the regeneration of opportunities arising from the lottery is enormously exciting. It gives us an historic opportunity to change the face of the nation for the generations to come.

By enriching the cultural and sporting facilities of our nation and investing in our unrivalled built and natural heritage, we can create a springboard for success and endeavour as we move towards the new millennium. We are committed to that vision. As the lottery continues and more and more funds are distributed, I expect every man, woman and child in the country to have access to cultural and sporting facilities. That has been possible only because of the national lottery.

The Prime Minister's new sports initiative is set to transform opportunities for sports men and women, young and old, across the country. Schoolchildren will have the opportunity to become more involved in the living theatre, and in museums and galleries, thanks to the developments made possible by the lottery.

I endorse what the right hon. Member for Copeland said about talent and the possible establishment of a "talent fund". That is comparable to the initiative that I shall announce on Monday. The Millennium Commission is considering an award scheme enabling us to invest in the next generation as we approach the millennium.

The culmination of such investment will be the millennium festival. I have the honour to chair the Millennium Commission, and have been able to see the way in which we can fund projects that otherwise would not be possible: for instance, the 2,500 miles of cycle track up and down the country, the renaissance of Portsmouth harbour—a £40 million scheme—and the Doncaster earth centre. It is a wonderful opportunity. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes), who voted against Third Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill, realised that it would bring Doncaster such a formidable opportunity for regeneration, and an environmental centre that will be known the world over.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Why is the Millennium Commission insisting on only one site for the festival and exhibition? There should be at least three sites—one in Scotland, which has a very different culture and whose people would want to celebrate the millennium differently from Londoners.

Mrs. Bottomley: Conservative Members believe that we are a united kingdom. We intend to make a celebration of the new millennium possible, and to mark the turn of the century in a single place that will be visited by people from all over the country.

However, by then there will also be the 12 landmark projects funded by the Millennium Commission, and many smaller projects throughout the country. As the plans unfold and we respond to consultation and debate, we shall ensure that the shared national experience at the festival site links in, as I believe that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) would want, with the many other projects throughout the country.

Mention has been made of the National Lottery Charities Board, which made its first award to caring charities this week. It has had an onerous task to reach this time. It was a new organisation, unlike many of the others, and it had a large programme of work. I believe that the announcements that it has made are welcome, but they are only the beginning. The charities board will make two more waves of announcements before Christmas and afterwards there will be further waves.

The right hon. Member for Copeland referred to the medical charities. He knows the obvious reasons why I have always supported their inclusion among groups that may benefit from the national lottery. I am pleased that,

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once poverty and youth have been considered, health and medical charities are among those to which the charities board intends to give priority in the new year.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) mentioned hospices—a cause which he and I share. He will want to know that the Accord hospice in Scotland received £50,000 and St. Anne's hospice in Wales received £280,000 from the charities board.

There has been a great debate about the effect of the lottery on charitable giving. The evidence is mixed, to say the least. I looked up the evidence, such as it was, from Ireland. Independent research commissioned there by the Irish national lottery concluded that the majority of the charitable organisations that were surveyed had increased their gross private fund-raising income in real terms since the launch of the Irish national lottery.

In this country, there are examples—which my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) identified—of groups which have reported very favourable results this year. The last time that I mentioned them, I received letters of the nicest sort from some of them, saying that they preferred me not to mention them by name because it tended to discourage other givers if they were known to be having such a flourishing year.

I dare say that there has been an adverse effect on some groups—the right hon. Member for Copeland mentioned Tenovus—which had a comparable system of fund-raising. However, that does not explain why United Kingdom Charity Lotteries Ltd. has increased fivefold the amount of money that it raises for charities because it is using the interest in scratchcards—as is the British Legion—to join the latest craze in fund-raising. Sometimes we have flag days; sometimes we have coffee mornings; sometimes we have sponsored marathons. Scratchcards appear to be the most popular way of raising money for charities at the moment, and many of those enterprises are extremely successful.

Mention was made of the RNIB. What was not said was that it is its legacies that have decreased by £1 million. I do not think that at this stage the lottery can be blamed for a shortfall in legacies. Similarly, a recent MORI poll, organised by Comic Relief, showed that, of the people questioned, more people said that they had increased the amount that they were giving in donations since the introduction of the lottery than said that they had decreased their giving.

I accept that different groups will refer to different evidence on that matter. I welcome the fact that the Home Office is acting on its long-standing commitment to monitor the effect on charitable giving of the introduction of the lottery.

No one in the House can dispute the fact that the voluntary sector has had an enormous bonus in the past seven months: £1,190 million raised for good causes, the vast majority of which are voluntary organisations and charities of all sorts. It is not only the charities board that benefits disadvantaged or disabled people. Many of the arts groups and sports groups promote sport or art for disabled people.

The Jubilee sailing trust in Hampshire has been awarded more than £4 million to build a sailing ship for physically disabled people. The Quicksilver theatre for children—a touring theatre company—has been awarded more than £48,000 towards the cost of a new van with a chairlift to be used by performers with disabilities. Some £736,000 has been awarded by the Millennium Commission to the exemplary scheme in Northamptonshire for a park particularly designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. The first sign language video library for the deaf in Derby and a new school for the blind in Margate are among any number of awards which will help people with disadvantages and disabilities and which have been made possible because of the success of the lottery.

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): The items listed, while very welcome, are all one-off sums. Does the Secretary of State agree that the arrangement for applying to the charities board by which it is possible to give revenue sums to organisations should be extended to other bodies to enable those and other facilities to be run as well?

Mrs. Bottomley: I made it clear in my earlier remarks that the Government and the chairmen of the distributing bodies are taking a long look at the lessons learnt so far. It is only seven months since we began to distribute awards, and to change direction suddenly after so short a space of time and in such a substantial way would seem to me to be folly.

The Arts Council has made 54 awards to theatres, and I have noticed that a number of theatres up and down the country have suddenly realised that, if they get their applications in, they too can have an opportunity to improve their facilities. Often there is a great need for capital investment in many of our arts, sports and museum facilities throughout the country.

That brings me to the other issue raised during this debate—the question of regional balance. There have been some magnificent flagship projects, and I appreciate the remarks of the right hon. Member for Copeland about the understandable need for projects in London to receive support. London is the nation's capital, and many of our greatest artistic organisations have their headquarters here. Those organisations are providing a service for the nation, and are often providing an international service as well. Many of our flagship institutions are themselves legacies of previous lotteries, including the British museum—the most popular museum in the world. The former Westminster bridge was one of many monuments to be funded by a lottery. We want a tapestry of provision up and down the country so that constituency after constituency has its own projects which people know have been made possible only by the lottery.

Ms Lynne: Does the Secretary of State realise that the north-west is not receiving nearly as much money as London? Does she agree with the remark of the chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Gowrie, that he would be angry if he lived in the north? He was referring to arts funding.

Mrs. Bottomley: The task for us all is to look at the allocations as they emerge in the first year. We will then discover which parts of the country need to make more of an effort and what issues are involved. It may be that people simply do not know that they will only get lottery money if they apply for it. It seems that some people think that they will get an award in the post. If the hon. Lady has good and popular projects in her part of the world, she should encourage the people concerned to apply for money.

In terms of the Millennium Commission, the regional balance has been quite different. Compared with the amounts spent on the millennium forests in Scotland and on cycle tracks in various parts of the country—or with the huge amounts spent in Doncaster and Portsmouth—a relatively modest amount has been spent in London. The task now is to encourage people to realise that this is a remarkable opportunity.

The day-to-day projects, of course, are benefiting, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution collection at Chatham, which has received £335,000 towards the cost of housing the collection, and the Bennachie local community centre in rural Aberdeenshire, which has benefited to the tune of £311,000 from the Millennium Commission. An Arts Council grant has given young people in Downpatrick in County Down the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. A range of projects, such as the Millom amateur operatic society in Barrow, the Barrow and District table tennis club and the Kirkgate centre trust, have benefited. I regret that the right hon. Member for Copeland is so deaf to his constituents' interests that he continues to talk while I refer to just three of the 10 projects, amounting to nearly £250,000, in Cumbria.

Mr. Couchman: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the delight that the Gillingham Jumpers take in the £650,000 grant that will allow them to establish a national trampolining centre outside London, to the great advantage of their sport?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes the point precisely. There will inevitably be controversy about flagship projects, but it seems to me that trampolining is an exercise in which all in political life should engage.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Lancaster university has been delighted to welcome a flagship project in the form of the Ruskin library. It is a magnificent project, which has enabled us to gather many documents together. We have also received wonderful grants for the youth theatre and for our sports facilities.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is a vigorous champion of the lottery and she alerts her constituents to the opportunities that it presents. She helps her constituents to access that wonderful new source of funding that enables people to realise their dreams. I am pleased that my hon. Friend mentioned a library, as there have been many inaccurate comments about libraries of late. Libraries can receive funding through a number of sources—through the arts, the heritage side and possibly through the Millennium Commission as well.

I am reminded of the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), who I think was somewhat mean-spirited in her reference to the Churchill papers. Not only have those papers come to her city but she failed to tell the House that the Arts Council has awarded the Junction in Cambridge £95,000. The Cambridge Arts Theatre Trust has received £6.5 million, the Fulbourn parish council has received £19,000, the Over community centre has received £126,000, Hills road sixth form college has received £739,000 and St. Neots Museum Ltd. has received £50,000. That is a much fairer commentary on the pattern of funding provision from the lottery. We are ensuring that small groups—not just those that grab the headlines—have the opportunity to take forward their arts, heritage and education proposals.

The national lottery has changed the face of funding in the arts, sport and heritage. More than £586 million has already been awarded to 2,111 excellent projects—and that is just the start. Over the next seven years, the total contribution to the five good causes is expected to amount to more than £9 billion. It is the people's lottery: millions play, millions watch and millions win. In the years ahead, a bonanza of billions of pounds will benefit the causes that we value.

The national lottery truly is the "dream machine"—both for the 30,000 people who have a flutter each week and for those organisations that flourish as a result of that flutter. It has been an enormous success so far and that success will not be undermined by the cynicism and carping of the Labour party.

When we enacted the lottery legislation, Labour—after much wringing of hands—voted for it. Some of the wayward hordes on the Opposition Back Benches failed to do so, but many of their constituencies have received lottery awards just the same. The Government, the licensed operator and the distributing bodies have brought about a success beyond the expectations or the dreams of the lottery's most fervent advocates. It is a national institution devised by a national party in the national interests for our nation's future.

Labour looks to destroy, undermine and to belittle the success of our lottery. No lottery retailer, winner or person interested in good causes should support Labour's lottery policy. I advise those in the industrial and commercial sectors to take the Labour party's vituperative approach to the successful lottery operator as a very sinister indication of its gut feeling about the private sector.

We celebrate the lottery; we celebrate its success and we plan for its improvement. That improvement will be based on practical experience and constructive suggestions. We will not be driven by ideology or prejudice against success. The Labour party's line on the lottery is simple: snuff out success, punish profit and cheat the good causes of the deal that they deserve. I urge the House to recognise that sport, the arts and heritage have a wonderful opportunity. We are investing in the young and in the millennium and we are providing help to the needy. I commend the lottery and our amendment to the House.

5.5 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I rise to speak for only a few minutes. I did get a little dizzy with excitement about the success of the lottery—although I have not noticed that success on the council estate that I represent. Undoubtedly, its success will trickle down to those who are out of work sooner or later.

I have put on record my opposition to the concept of a national lottery. I am still far from happy about it, but I accept that it is here. When the idea was first debated, I predicted that Governments of all persuasions might be tempted to dismiss their responsibilities by allowing lottery money to sort out the problems that are normally the province of central Government. I am not saying that that is happening too much at present, but I believe that it will occur.

I remind the House that when the Government first announced their plans for the lottery they claimed that its primary purpose would be to provide money for good causes: arts, sport, heritage, charities, the voluntary sector

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and the millennium fund. In other words, it was claimed that the money would improve the quality of life of those who were disadvantaged through poverty.

Of course, one of the first such disadvantaged families to benefit was the Churchill family, which received £14 million for papers that most of us thought already belonged to the state. Another poor recipient of a generous award was Eton college—every working class person gets there at some time or other. It is estimated that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will receive about £400 million, which is more than the combined allocation to charities and sporting organisations.

Mr. Brandreth: To be fair, I must point out that Eton college did not receive an award: the college was only one partner in a scheme to build an athletics track. The main beneficiary was the Windsor, Slough and Eton athletics club, which is open to and provides sporting facilities for the whole community.

Mr. Michie: I feel much better now, Madam Speaker. Although the lottery is probably here to stay, it has caused problems—despite the Secretary of State's good news. The Government have managed to unite the churches on the issue, which is a miracle in itself. The churches are united over the lottery mainly because they are working at grass-roots level. We are talking not about the churches that oppose gambling in principle—one certainly would not say that about the Catholic church, for instance—but about those that see the lottery's effect on poorer people.

The lottery is creating problems for those who can least afford it. I do not accept the Secretary of State's argument based on a survey that showed that, on average, people spend only £2 per week and, therefore, there is no real hardship. I do not believe in those averages. Some of my constituents, who can ill afford it, spend £2, £4 and £5 on scratchcards and lottery tickets. Those people are trying to find their way out of the poverty trap, which to some extent has been created by the Government. The lottery is also having an adverse effect on what I would call the good charities that do a damned good job of work and on those volunteers who do it free of charge.

The lottery has changed the ethos of charitable giving. In our communities, people in pubs and clubs may have won the equivalent of one or two pints of beer in a prize draw but they knew that they were buying tickets in support of the local football club, a local children's hospital or some other good cause. The ethos has changed, and that is having an effect on charities.

The desire to be rich quickly through a lottery or by gambling is, of course, a personal decision but, speaking personally and not on behalf of my party or anybody else, I think it is disgraceful that the Government encourage people to gamble, to get rich quick, without accepting the responsibility and the consequences that go with it. I realise that the lottery will continue, but there must be reform. I support Labour's motion, especially the parts about section 5 licences, about making the lottery non-profit making and about a fairer distribution of grants. That has already been debated and will continue to be debated.

I also suggest reducing the cash prize. I know that will be controversial but I cannot for the life of me think why somebody should want £27 million and can say, "It will never affect my life or my family." In time it will prove to have an opposite effect. Why cannot the prize money be distributed more widely if the lottery has to remain continue? That should also be taken into account.

In the past decade, the nation has been encouraged by the Government to take the attitude, "I'm all right Jack", and to look after number one. Fortunately, most people in this country still care about others and many of them care in adversity. It is the Government's duty to encourage that caring attitude by providing resources from the Treasury and not by way of scratchcards or Saturday night gambling.

5.11 pm

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): It is a great pleasure to participate in such a good-natured debate, the character of which owes a great deal to the two opening speeches. I admire the skill and enthusiasm with which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage has addressed herself to her office. I hope that she knows that she has the enthusiastic support of us all.

I am also enthusiastic about the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I am genuinely surprised—and this is not a cheap crack—that the Labour party considers that it has so many able and professional spokesmen that it can discard the right hon. Gentleman. I am glad that he still speaks from a senior position on the Front Bench, and although I cannot pretend to agree with everything he said I enjoyed his speech. It is a tribute to his powers that he was able to make such a speech just a few days after taking up his post.

Whatever quibbles or fundamental differences people may have in the context of the lottery we can surely all agree that it has been a spectacular success. Nearly 30 million people—70 per cent. of the population—regularly play it. Some £1 billion has already been received in about a year, which is twice as much as was predicted. Much of that success is due to the efficiency with which the operator, Camelot, set about its task.

I am sorry that Camelot's role has become a matter of controversy. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt extremely ably with criticisms of Camelot, thus sparing me the need to do more than say in the spirit of good fellowship to the right hon. Member for Copeland that surely the Labour party cannot have it both ways. If the National Audit Office had condemned the manner in which Camelot was awarded the contract Labour Members would rightly have jumped up and condemned it. They cannot dismiss as if it is a matter of no moment the fact that the National Audit Office commended in highly specific terms the reasoning of Mr. Davis and his team in preferring Camelot.

Dr. John Cunningham: I am grateful, if not embarrassed, by the tribute of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, for whom, as we all know, the Department was created. It is rather sad that he is not still in it. He is missing the point. Of course we accept the verdict of the National Audit Office: that is not and never has been in dispute and it is a complete verification of the decision. I am not arguing about the decision to award the contract to Camelot. The point is that in the first year Camelot is quickly into profit. In the second year it will have a very large profit, and from then on it will be into excessive profit.

We are saying not that Camelot got the contract unjustly or that the decision was wrong but that it is heading rapidly for huge, excessive returns on its investment. The Secretary of State and the director general have powers to take action to deal with that, and they should use them.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his clarification. The issue turns on what one considers to be excessive. As I understand it, although, of course, Camelot must speak for itself, over the seven years of its licence it anticipates raising some £9 billion through the lottery. As soon as £3.7 billion has been raised, which will happen quite soon, more than 30 per cent. of the take will go to good causes, only 1.5 per cent. will go to Camelot and less than 1 per cent. after tax is its profit. With the greatest respect, it is hard to see that as excessive.

We must recall that Mr. Branson, admirable entrepreneur that he is, lent his name to an application that was more expensive and would have cost more than the Camelot application. The right hon. Gentleman must be careful not to let it appear that the Labour party would prefer a non-profit making organisation, even an inefficient and ramshackle one, to an efficient, profit-making organisation.

We all feel some concern about the pools industry, about which the Opposition have made many genuine points. But it seems ironic that Opposition Members are ready to speak out for an industry that is entirely about private profit while condemning the lottery, in which only the operator makes what in the context of the turnover is a very modest profit.

Before leaving that issue, for the avoidance of doubt I should say that because I register an interest as an adviser to part of the Racal group it was erroneously suggested by one or two newspapers when the Camelot grant was made that I was in some way associated with Camelot because Racal is one of the participants. I have absolutely nothing whatever to do with that part of Racal and I never uttered a sentence to any Racal executive about these matters. I speak as I do because I genuinely believe that at a time when catastrophe can be seen in all manner of projects the fact that Camelot has worked quickly and efficiently should be commended. The future must look after itself.

A point that troubles me has not been mentioned much so far and it is the question of the tax take. I think that I can safely say that the Treasury's ambitions were rather larger than the 12 per cent. for which it was ultimately forced to settle. Because the lottery has been such a success the Treasury has done rather well. The right hon. Member for Copeland said that the Treasury would get over £400 million. I am not making a pedantic point when I say that I gather that the figure could be as high as £500 million and, of course, there will also be the corporation tax from Camelot's profit. Therefore the lottery is a nice little earner for our Ken.

One gathers that some senior figures in the Treasury still bear the bruises of what they regard as a defeat in failing to get a higher tax rate. However, if anyone is contemplating introducing a higher tax rate in the forthcoming Budget I urge them to think again because in the history of spectacular own goals that would merit a chapter all on its own. An increase in taxation is provided for in the rules and 60 per cent. of the cost of that would come out of the prize money and 40 per cent. would come from the good causes. That would damage the credibility of the lottery because international experience shows that it is the amount of the prize money that conditions the amount of interest in a lottery. Every time there is a roll-over week purchases rise by 20 per cent. and there is another £3 million for good causes.

Mr. Ashton: Was not the same mistake made when commercial television—a licence to print money—was introduced? The system has since been adjusted and now other companies bid for the franchise, as Carlton Television and Central Television did. Would it not have been much better—I know I am saying this with a bit of hindsight, but the system should be introduced—if people had bid to run the national lottery franchise? Five per cent. for running it was an arbitrary figure because it was not known how long it would take to install terminals. The Government passed everything on to the man giving the franchise—they took a step back and did virtually nothing—and we the public and Parliament are entitled to reconsider the whole system.

Mr. Mellor: The best time to reconsider it is when the franchise runs out. I am also enthusiastic about the hon. Gentleman, although not to the extent of wanting Sheffield Wednesday to win tonight—he is a director of the club if anyone has forgotten—but, if the Government had had anything to do with the allocation of the franchise, we know what would have happened: it would have been suggested that one of the component parts of the franchise made donations to the Conservative party and that the whole thing was another example of sleaze. It is just as well, therefore, that the Government kept out of it.

May I be forgiven for just going back to a fundamental point about the creation of the lottery? We need to understand that it was created to benefit good causes that could not expect to benefit, to the extent necessary to do the job that needed to be done, from the normal public expenditure debates that go on, whatever party is in power. People sometimes say, "The money should go to the health service." I believe in the health service being funded and the Government have a good record in funding it, but that is a matter for the public purse.

In normal public expenditure, one cannot expect the restoration of the Royal Opera house or the construction of a new opera house in Cardiff to take priority over the legitimate demands of the health service, and that is why the lottery was created and why particular causes were identified. Provided we do not lose sight of that, the lottery could be a great success, not merely in its ability to generate money but in the good that the expenditure of its money can do.

The fact that the lottery is a huge success in generating money does not mean that it will be such a success in the long run. It will be a huge success only if money is spent wisely. My enthusiasm for some of the ways in which the money is being spent is muted and I say that in all candour, not simply because we all have a duty, especially those of us who were implicated in the creation of this thing, to speak out if we identify certain things going wrong.

It is said that there is bound to be controversy over the allocation of money. Up to a point that is true, but only up to a point. I shall consider the four distributing bodies and forget for a moment about the national lottery

[Mr. Mellor]

charities board. I am not aware of and have not read a line of criticism of any of the distributions that the Sports Council has organised, so one must presume that, run as it is by a blunt northerner, Rodney Walker, from the world of rugby league, it has got it right.

The Arts Council has done a good job and some of the controversy that it has sailed into has been inevitable. Of course there are people who are going to object, for instance, to large grants being given to Covent Garden, and I understand that. Covent Garden has only itself to blame if it is seen as a elitist institution from which most ordinary members of the public, which includes practically all of us here, are disfranchised and it has become a place where wealthy business men take their friends and where the public is somewhere up in the gods.

With that history, Covent Garden cannot wonder about the controversy, even though it will place some of the blame on the fact that it has not received the same amount of public money as other international opera houses, but let us leave that argument on one side. If we are serious, however, about having international opera in this country, we cannot continue with a house where the scenery is moved by first world war submarine engines. In taking on public opinion, as to a degree the Arts Council did in making that award, it got it right.

We must ensure that the grants do not subsidise herds of white elephants, and anyone who is naive about this must study, as I was forced to and as no doubt my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is having to do even as we speak, the fate of the British library. Merely providing money for some grand construct does not guarantee that it is delivered.

I have a real worry: with all this money being handed out, who is monitoring how it is spent, who is ensuring that these wretched things are delivered and who is monitoring the time and the cost? I see scandals looming. I do not want to sound like Enoch Powell on a bad day, but one sees the River Tiber foaming with many unfinished projects and people must keep an eye on that.

If one were brash enough to give the other distributing bodies an end-of-term report, one would have to be muted in one's enthusiasm. Of course it is inevitable that the national heritage memorial fund should appear to be in the business of transferring resources from the have-nots to the haves as the people who own the heritage tend to be the haves and many of the people who buy the tickets tend to be the have-nots. In the face of that, it was courting disaster in making its first award the somewhat dubious purchase of the Churchill papers. I say that as someone who cares about the lottery's integrity. If the man in the street loses faith in lottery money expenditure being used for things that he and his family will benefit from, trouble and problems will arise.

The millennium fund proceeds at a stately pace, partly because of the rules that force it to go around the nation drawing in applications rather than more dirigiste principles. My concern sometimes is whether it is aiming for this millennium or the next one and what we will see in place when the great day dawns.

We are an age perhaps without a great deal of vision, in which people with vision are regularly trampled over by people who object because visionaries are uncomfortable people to live with and because this is the age of the nimby. The visionary therefore does not have much of a part to play, but it would be nice to use some of the substantial resources in the national heritage memorial fund to create buildings that people will look at in a couple of centuries' time with the same awe and wonder that they contemplate this place, Westminster abbey or some of the other great buildings around the nation. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry. I am bashing my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth)—it is nothing personal. I regret that such buildings will not be created.

May we go back to first principles? I remember, because I was there, when the proposition was first put that charities should be supported. It was never part of the original thinking of the lottery that charities would be beneficiaries. That was agreed because the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and others pointed out that charities would lose out—a rain shadow effect would be created by the imposition of the national lottery.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The proposal was in the White Paper and in my private Member's Bill.

Mr. Mellor: No, I am talking about before the White Paper. Before that, thank God, some thinking was done, as privately as leaks made possible in Whitehall.

During that process, it was determined that it would be appropriate for charities to benefit on the basis that nothing could be worse than debates in this place being disfigured by people saying that charities were going to lose out and so we should not have a national lottery. In other words, Paris was worth a mass and the mass was bringing in the charities.

The charities could benefit from that or it could be a Trojan horse—the jury is out on that. One of the things that saddens me—I fear that it is probably more the fault of the Home Office than the national lottery charities board—is that, somewhere along the line, people forgot that charities received money so that they could be recompensed for any losses. We have built a foolish rod for our own back in allowing it to be said that a cancer charity such as Tenovus, which raised £1.5 million a year for cancer research, will not get that money back from the lottery.

It is self-evident that, despite the efforts that were made to make the rules for small lotteries less oppressive, they are not of interest when big lotteries are around. I genuinely say that, if there is still time to rectify this, it would be sensible for national lottery charities board money to be distributed to charities that could show on any normal accountancy basis that they had made a loss.

I seriously think that it was an oversight that the Department that takes a lead on the national lottery was not given responsibility for the national lottery charities board and that it was left to the Home Office. The Home Office perhaps thinks that it has—and it probably does—bigger and more important things to do than dealing with the NLCB. When I contemplate the membership of the charities board and some of its operations, I realise that if the Home Office was a car factory the board would be a model made on a Friday afternoon before a bank holiday. Given the type of outfit that has emerged, which has taken so long to get its act together and has distributed the money in this politically correct manner, I am surprised that it was necessary to create such a bureaucracy. It could have been farmed out to Lambeth council, which would have done a similar job.

I do not wish to deal with some of the small, progressive charities that have benefited in this round. I have only one concern and it is that the national lottery should survive in its present form for long enough, without the money being taken for all manner of other things, to make a fundamental difference to the sporting and artistic fabric of the nation. If the board's actions undermine the lottery's credibility with the public, most of whom would not put money into the collecting tins of the organisations that have benefited in the handout, all of us who support the lottery have problems. I hope that something will be done to curb the excesses of the board before it drags the whole thing into disrepute.

It is easy to see what will happen because, alas, these things are all too predictable. The board has moved out into the more exotic fringes of charitable activity and it has been criticised for doing so. We know what will happen next. One or two of the operations will not be well run and perhaps some inefficiency or even a little fraud will creep in. The next story in the tabloids will be that someone has run off with some of the proceeds.

We are concerned that the national lottery should be something that our constituents—ordinary folk—think is a jolly good idea. Why, why, why could they not give the money to big mainstream charities covering a wide range of issues so that people could say, "Yes, that is where I want my money to go"? The failure to do that will cost the reputation of the lottery dear.

The one benefit that the national lottery charities board has over other distribution organisations is that it is able to give grants for current expenditure purposes. I know that the current-capital distinction is maintained in order to make it easier to defend the additionality rule that was negotiated with the Treasury when I was Chief Secretary. If the line is blurred, it is felt that the Treasury has a greater opportunity to get the money. Of course, people have failed to point out that the Treasury can cut sensitive grants and just say that it was not because of the national lottery. The Arts Council grant was cut two years ago, not because of the national lottery but because the Treasury wanted to cut it and the then Secretary of State agreed, I believe wrongly, that it should happen.

The plain fact is—I satirise only slightly to make this point—that there is no point having the best constructed theatres in this country if the troupes of players running around in them do not have the money to keep going. The additionality rule does only one thing—it protects existing public expenditure. It does not build in the sort of increases that will be needed if there is to be proper growth in the performing arts and other sensitive areas. If the best one can hope for is an Arts Council grant that does not increase in real terms, we will have problems unless there is a breach in the dyke. I hope that it will come.

5.33 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am diametrically opposed to the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) on the principle of the lottery, but he has done the House a service by the way in which he has presented the arguments for improving the lottery and for ensuring that it delivers what it was established to deliver. He was right to draw our attention to the need to compensate those charities that have lost out. I am glad that he touched on additionality, a point which was put to the Secretary of State earlier. I am glad that he reminded us that even the 12 per cent. figure which is taken by the Government is an underestimate and that, with the additional tax placed on the profits of Camelot, nearer to 14 per cent. goes into the Government's pockets.

From the Secretary of State we heard the litany of good causes—many of them are extremely good causes—which have been beneficiaries. Surely the philosophical issue which many hon. Members will want to address is whether it would be better to fund a hospice directly from the health expenditure budget or through a national lottery. At least the former would be based on the ability to pay through income tax. Rather than just pretending that anyone who does not like the national lottery is, ergo, opposed to funding hospices or any of the other good causes that the Secretary of State mentioned, the House should address that moral and philosophical question

The Secretary of State reminded us that this is not the first time that we have had a national lottery. It is worth reminding the right hon. Lady that a study of history does not augur well for the lottery. The previous lottery collapsed amidst allegations of corruption and with a loss of public confidence. The Conservative social reformer, William Wilberforce, having successfully abolished the slave trade in 1807 said to his friend, Henry Thornton,

"Well Henry what shall we abolish next? The lottery, I think".

I wonder how long it will be before the House has to consider the desirability of funding so much of our national programme of good causes, charitable works, arts, millennium expenditure and sports from something that is fuelled by gambling.

In April 1993, I was one of the 39 Members who voted against the national lottery in the final vote. I also opposed earlier attempts at introduction by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) who is here today and by the right hon. and learned Member for Putney. In Committee, I raised a number of concerns. I am grateful that today provides an opportunity, in Opposition time, to look at those questions again. I shall have no hesitation in going into the Lobby to support the Opposition's motion, although I wish it went even further.

Mr. Maxton: I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's arguments. Is he speaking for his party? Is he saying that the Liberal Democrats want to abolish the lottery? I want to know that, as do others.

Mr. Alton: If the hon. Gentleman had followed the party conference in the autumn, he would have seen that the Liberal Democrats debated the national lottery and produced some thorough-going proposals, some of which are similar to those in the Opposition's motion, to improve and change the lottery. The party is not opposed to the national lottery. It was a free vote issue when we discussed it in the earlier part of the 1990s and it remains so today. I am speaking on behalf of my party today by voicing my concerns about the lottery.

Mr. Jessel: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: Let me advance my arguments and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jessel: How do we know what the policy is?

Mr. Alton: I am coming to that.

[Mr. Alton]

In Committee I tabled amendments to ban scratchcards, to prevent the roll-over of obscene amounts of prize money and to impose limitations on advertising, especially those targeted at young people and those living in poorer areas. Even before the national lottery, the United Kingdom had the highest per capita level of gambling anywhere in western Europe. A total of £4.50 was spent per head every single week.

Mr. Tony Banks: I know the hon. Gentleman's views on this morally, but why did he describe the prize levels as obscene? It is rather patronising. I should like to win an obscene amount of money. The bigger the top prize, the more that lottery ticket sales increase. It is why people buy tickets.

Mr. Alton: That is precisely what I intend to deal with. It builds up an element of hysteria and frenzy. One winner obtained £17 million, which seems an extraordinary amount of money. That creates a frenzy which fuels the national lottery.

People do not consider the odds against winning. Vast numbers of people throughout the country pay massive amounts of money. The lottery is targeted at people who live in poorer areas. They think that somehow they will escape from their poverty or the conditions in which they live because of their stake in the lottery. There is nothing patronising about holding that view, because it has been demonstrated by research the world over. Indeed, the Secretary of State boasts that about 75 per cent. of the population have at some stage played the lottery. Anyone who dares question the premise on which the lottery operates is branded as a killjoy or, as implied in one or two interventions, a whinger. These are issues that are worthy of serious parliamentary debate and should not be so lightly dismissed.

In America, in 1989, Clotfelter and Cook published their study of lotteries, entitled "Selling Hope". They stated:

"We can conclude with considerable confidence that the lottery is a powerful recruiting device, which in 1974"—

that was the year on which they focused—

"was responsible for inducing about one-quarter of the adult population who would otherwise not have done so to participate in commercial gambling."

In other research, Professor Ernest Mittler states that the trend has been away from traditional lotteries towards the introduction of casino-style devices such as video lottery terminals. In turn, this has spawned the usual growth of organised crime associated with gambling.

I am cynical about the calls that I hear for research to be commissioned into the links between the lottery and gambling in the United Kingdom. The findings of American research that is already available are extensive and conclusive, but plenty of research has been undertaken in the United Kingdom. I draw the attention of the House to the work of Dr. Sue Fisher. In the 1993 edition of the "Journal of Gambling Studies" she examined the level of gambling among British children. She found that in one secondary school, 62 per cent. of children gambled on fruit machines, 17 per cent. at least weekly and 5.7 per cent. pathologically.

In August, the *British Medical Journal* reported that since the inception of the lottery and the relaxation of controls on gambling, there has been a 17 per cent. increase in calls to Gamblers Anonymous. Expenditure on the national lottery is more than £100 million every week, of which £40 million is spent on scratchcards. The accompanying hype, frenzy and even hysteria all underline the potential of the lottery for good and for evil.

When people are asked why the lottery can do good, they invariably reply that it helps charity. That argument has been trotted out from those on the Government Front Bench today. The stark truth is that only about 5 per cent. of the take goes to charity. We know that 85 per cent. of the charities that applied for funding in the first tranche were disappointed. On Friday, the Government announced that there would be more research into whether charities are losing out. Research is not needed. The Royal National Institute for the Blind has made it clear already that it has lost £500,000 since the launch of the national lottery. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates an overall decline of about £276 million.

The Secretary of State has alluded to the Irish experience. Trocaire, the largest third world charity in Ireland, saw a massive reduction of nearly two thirds in its income once the national lottery had been established there. In January 1992, I told the House that 16 leading Irish charities had written to the Taoiseach to tell him that charitable lotteries had lost half their income and that the situation had reached crisis point with 50 per cent. of charitable donations being lost as a result of the Irish national lottery. Why have we had to repeat the experience? What will more research tell us that we do not know already? Is it not another example of wilfully allowing the horse to bolt when it was within our power to shut the gate?

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): The hon. Gentleman is pretty scathing about the lottery. Many of us heard him speak in Committee on these matters. Has he made the same criticisms of the pools companies? The pools provide the same sort of gambling and the same inducement to gamble. Has he said the same things about horse racing at the grand national and all other meetings?

Mr. Alton: I shall move on to the liberalisation of gambling laws. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is straightforward. The pools and horse racing—I am not per se against any form of gambling—are not sponsored by the state. The national lottery is, and that is why it is fundamentally different.

What money goes where and who decides to give it to whom? There seems to be a gaggle of the politically correct and the chattering classes that is virtually unaccountable to the House or to those who buy lottery tickets. There is the suspicion that everything is worked out in an Islington wine bar. The regional discrepancies bear out that argument. Merseyside knew in advance that it would be a lottery loser for reasons to which the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) alluded. It was known in the area that there would be a loss of jobs in the pools industry. Jobs were bound to disappear, and they have.

It is arguable, therefore, that there should have been a bias to compensate for Merseyside's job losses. Instead, the region has received the smallest percentage share of lottery handouts, only 1.8 per cent. compared with London's 25.5 per cent. If the House studies the charts setting out regional giving and population, it will find the

discrepancies extraordinary. For example, some 9.4 per cent. of the population lives in the north-west of England, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) said in an intervention, only 4.5 per cent. of total lottery money has come to the area. Similarly, the area's application to the Millennium Commission for a national museum of sport to be established on Merseyside—the idea was supported by political opinion across the spectrum and by local authorities throughout the area—was rejected out of hand. That was at least an opportunity to sweeten the pill. Instead, there has been the inevitable bitter reaction that the process of dispensing funds is being distorted.

In July, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report that warned that the public's support for the national lottery would be lost unless the questions that I have outlined were properly addressed. It stated:

"The National Lottery is in danger of losing public sympathy. It stands accused of transferring money from poorer communities to benefit the rich, of not providing enough new money to good causes and of leading some people into addictive patterns of gambling."

It added:

"The report also proposes new safeguards to ensure that inner cities and other disadvantaged communities receive their fair share of an estimated £32 billion sale of lottery tickets during the first seven years."

My last quotation from the report warns

"of a possible public backlash—with disastrous consequences for charities and others who will increasingly depend on the lottery—unless there is action to reassure the public that its benefits outweigh any harmful social consequences."

Mr. Brandreth: The hon. Gentleman and I are neighbours from the north-west. We want, of course, to see a fair share of lottery proceeds coming our way. I think that he is being a bit churlish in not recognising how much is already coming to Liverpool on the sports side, for example, with the Greenbank project receiving nearly £500,000. St. Helens council—on Merseyside—is receiving nearly £1 million. Brouhaha International, on the arts side, is receiving nearly £33,000 and the Everyman theatre in Liverpool—it is one of our favourite theatres—is receiving nearly £100,000. We should recognise what is being achieved while, of course, asking for more for the north-west.

Mr. Alton: Of course I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. I shall take as an example one of the projects to which he referred. The Greenbank project relates specifically to disabled and handicapped people and—he would know this if he were familiar with its work—has lurched from funding crisis to funding crisis as its statutory funds have been reduced over the past few years. That raises the additionality argument that the right hon. and learned Member for Putney was talking about.

Public confidence will be sapped by the behaviour of the Government and by that of Camelot, which is known in Liverpool as Cashalot. It is unjustifiable that Camelot's five directors all received a bonus worth 50 per cent. of their salaries because the lottery started on time. In addition, they stand to collect a further 140 per cent. bonus if they meet their target figures by September 1997. What sort of good cause is that? That will bring the whole scheme into disrepute. Camelot's profits over the first five months amount to £4.5 million. The Government have taken £169 million over that period. What has that to do with good causes or the impulses on which the lottery was established in the first place?

An alternative bid was put forward by Richard Branson. He proposed that the money would go back into other charities. That would have been a better approach than that adopted by Camelot. No profit should be involved in the administration of the lottery. There is no need for there to be.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Under Richard Branson's scheme, the administrative costs would have been very much higher. Had the hon. Gentleman listened to a newsflash that arrived a moment ago, he would know that the profit made by Camelot is only 1p in the pound. It is making large sums because it is supremely efficient.

Mr. Alton: Nevertheless, in the first five months, it made a profit of £169 million. It is a monopoly. There is no reason why it should make such sums. The money could have, and should have, gone to charities.

In this context, I should like to mention the role of the BBC, which has effectively given Camelot the equivalent of £120 million of free advertising since the lottery was conceived. When the BBC's charter comes before the House, as it will in the next parliamentary Session, many of us will ask why a public corporation has been fuelling the national lottery.

It is also worth pointing out that the relevant BBC programme is watched by 27 per cent. of all children from the age of four to 15. Primary school teachers are increasingly reporting how children talk of nothing but their parents' stakes and, when asked to do imaginative writing, they write about what they would do with the money if they won.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Given that the programme is watched by children of an impressionable age, is it wise for the BBC to feature the Secretary of State for National Heritage on it?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman's question raises an important point about how the lottery can be used to create what the Government initially thought would be a feel-good factor, how it can be manipulated for political purposes and how the funds can be used like a pork barrel for the dispensation of goodies to favoured people in various parts of the country.

The lottery is a poll tax in carpet slippers. Once the word "fun" is attached to something, people queue up to surrender their money, which is then dispensed by unaccountable people to people and causes over which the House has no control.

The controversial payment of nearly £13 million for the Churchill archives followed soon after by the suicide of a man who had forgotten to buy his ticket; the repetitive stories of how undreamt of riches have led to broken marriages and families; the obscenity of pay-outs of up to £18 million; the lottery's regressive impact on the poor; its stimulation of gambling; its adverse effects on charities; and the creation of an entire culture based on chance rather than thrift, effort or prudence should surely make us think more deeply about the corrosive effects on British society of what the Secretary of State very foolishly described today as a dream machine. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends will be supporting the motion.

5.52 pm

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I find the morality of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)

[Mr. Tim Renton]

extraordinarily hard to follow. Why should the lottery have such a corrosive effect on poor innocent Britons when there has been a lottery in Spain, France and virtually every other European country for a great many years?

The hon. Gentleman uses the analogy of the United States. I was there at Easter, and I know that virtually every state has its own lottery. Some of those lottery proceeds are used to fund state expenditure, and I cannot say that people there seem especially corrupted or unhappy as a result. What is especially wrong with the lottery that is not wrong with horses, the pools, greyhounds or every other form of betting?

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): It is state-sponsored.

Mr. Renton: Yes, but what about the tote? That is supported by the state, and it is a quango. The hon. Gentleman should think through his argument.

All of us wonder whether it is the policy of the Liberal party to do away with the lottery. We should be grateful for some clarification.

What is fascinating to hon. Members of all parties is that we are for once debating a huge success, but Opposition Members clearly find it hard to come to terms with that; hence the concentration on the charity issue. That is important—

Mr. Tony Banks *rose—*

Mr. Renton: I shall deal with charities later, but I wish to make some other remarks first.

The difference between this debate and one that I might have had when I was Minister for the Arts three or four years ago is that then I would inevitably have been apologising to every hon. Member who asked, like my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), why some money had not been made available for a particular theatre, dance hall or gallery in his constituency. Today, almost every Back Bencher has said thank you to the lottery, via the Secretary of State, for favours received or favours expected. Leaving charities on one side, the change in the amount of funding now available for the arts, sports, heritage and the millennium is of an astonishing order.

When I was the last Minister for the Arts, between 1990 and 1992, I remember fighting the Treasury and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who was then Chief Secretary and who has now left the Chamber. I fought to get a £28 million, or 14 per cent., increase in the Arts Council's budget. When I got it, it was considered so astonishing that it merited a cartoon in the *Evening Standard*, which I have of course pinned up in the loo at home. Today, that £28 million represents almost exactly what is generated in one day by the lottery for the five good causes.

It must not be forgotten that our ability on the back of the lottery—which I, for one, certainly do not find evil—to do constructive work for the cultural and sporting infrastructure of this country is almost infinite. Members of all parties are right to say that we have a golden opportunity, and that we should not make a mess of it.

We have to come to terms with the fact that we are living with a fantastic success. Who would have thought, a year or two ago, that on the corner of almost every street, like a favourite pub sign, one sees the placard with the navy blue male fist and crossed fingers welcoming us in to the shop to buy a lottery ticket? It has become a familiar household insignia, and is potentially very productive for this country.

When I was Minister for the Arts, I had no doubts about the benefits of a national lottery. I knew very well that there was no other possible way that I could get from the Treasury a reasonably large increase for the arts, museums or galleries. I was taken around the Victoria and Albert museum by Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, the museum's brilliant director at the time, who has since retired. She pointed out to me the holes in the roof, from which water was dripping into buckets between the statues. I was taken to Sadler's Wells, and shown the site where the company would have loved to build a new theatre, although there was no possibility of it at that time.

I went backstage at the royal opera house, and was shown the submarine engines, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney referred, which were used to move the scenery up and down. People backstage told me that, amazingly, there had been only one fatal accident. That has all changed greatly for the better, as a result of the money available from the lottery.

Also in my position as Minister for the Arts, I remember visiting the Minister for Culture in Greece, who wanted huge sums of money to rebuild the classical amphitheatres along the Mediterranean coast, for the benefit of tourism but also for the sake of Greek history. As we drove from the airport, I asked the question that Ministers for the Arts always asked each other in those days which was, "How are you doing for money?" She said that she was saved by the lottery. It was a phrase that I never forgot.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Gentleman described a moment ago how the lottery and its sign was taking over from the corner pub as something with which people identified, and I am sure that that is true in many areas. Apart from that, what percentage of his income does he spend on lottery tickets?

Mr. Renton: That is a most extraordinary question. I do not think that it is of any relevance at all, but I take it that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the Church's complaint that those people on lower incomes are spending too much of their money on lottery tickets. He should be reminded of the remarks made by the Secretary of State when she quoted research which showed precisely the opposite: the evidence so far is that the amount relatively being spent on lottery tickets by those on higher wages is very much greater.

I shall return just for a few moments more to the period four or five years ago. I remember being absolutely thrilled when I was able to persuade my right hon. Friend the Member the Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), then the Home Secretary, that we should look seriously at the question of a national lottery, and when in turn we persuaded the Prime Minister to follow that line.

We faced, I may say, very strong opposition from Treasury Ministers throughout, including the Chief Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney, because they quite simply do not like hypothecation of revenue. They do not like money being

raised which is going to go to specific causes without going through the Treasury maw en route. But I am delighted that we got the lottery. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, played a large part in that process too, with his private Member's Bill.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I thank my hon. right Friend for his support.

Mr. Renton: Not at all.

All the things on the arts front with which I was concerned, which seemed impossible, are now possible, and they are not going to happen only in London, since clearly there is a limit to the number of tattered opera houses to be repaired in London. I have no doubt that, in future grants from the Arts Council, we shall see an increasing spread of the money available throughout the country.

Mr. Robert McCartney (North Down): Do I understand that the argument being propounded is that the ends justify the means? I know from experience in Northern Ireland, which has one of the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in the United Kingdom, that the most excessive gambling, the greatest gambling and the largest amount of money spent on gambling occurs in areas where there is—literally—no hope of employment. The greatest amount of money is being spent on the lottery in such areas, because it offers a dream or a hope which the Government do not offer through employment and thrift.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is trying to make a totally different point: to get the Government to spend more money on encouraging employment in Northern Ireland. I see absolutely nothing wrong at all with a lottery offering hope, fun, and the prospect, if one is lucky, of winning a lot of money, and if one is not lucky, of a reasonable proportion going to good causes.

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman said that we have run out of decrepit opera houses in London to patch up. If he were devising the scheme for handing out the money, would he change any of the rules to, for example, enable revenue funds to go to arts institutions rather than to the buildings?

Mr. Renton: I think that such changes are on the way already. I know that the chairman of the Arts Council was in the Gallery listening to the debate, but has now left. My understanding is that the rules have been changed, to the degree that, in an application for capital funding—capital funding going on at the moment—20 per cent. of the money allocated can be used for current expenditure. That change has taken place.

If anyone reads the *Arts Council News National Lottery Supplement* of August and September, they will see that there is a huge disbursement of Arts Council money, to, for example, theatres up and down the country. When I was Arts Minister, the Arts Council had no capital expenditure money available for theatres whatever.

I used to be taken to see beautiful Victorian Matcham theatres whose roofs were falling in, which needed *x* millions of pounds for repair and had no hope of it being done. Against that background, I persuaded Lord Wolfson to make £1 million available for a theatre restoration fund, which we matched with £1 million of Government money, in order that there was some money to repair and restore the great Victorian theatres of this country.

Now, there are 12 or so theatres on the list of organisations receiving grants. They are in west Oxfordshire, Bradford, Rossendale, Norwich, Southampton, Hull, Nottingham, Leeds, Sudbury, Bishop's Stortford, Barnsley—all theatres receiving lottery money for repair, rehabilitation, new projects. It is a tremendous development.

I turn to the charities. It was obvious that the charities would always be the difficult part of this exercise, because everyone has or should have their favourite charity or two, and we always think that the ones that we back or are involved with are the best causes—that is why we get involved with them.

The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) forgot to mention that the director general, or whatever he is called, of an individual charity, has an enormous effect on its fund-raising power for the time that he is in office. Why are people employed at reasonably high salaries to run the fund-raising operations of a charity? It is because such people have a track record of raising a lot of money. Some of that salary is often based on the results they achieve. I shall refer to the Royal National Institute for the Blind in a moment.

We should not put all charities in precisely the same box—all suffering, or all benefiting. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham pointed out earlier that the British Red Cross has increased its receipts this year. The Macmillan Cancer Relief Fund has increased its receipts. New charities spawn all the time, and in the past year I have become chairman of one new charity and gone on the board or become a trustee of two others—all unpaid, of course. Only a few days ago, I refused to become chairman of yet another charity, because they come along all the time, they always have brilliant ideas, and we are all trying for the same sources for money.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, in the story of charities as it develops, there are failures and there are successes. Many now benefit from quite a different source of money other than the lottery: gift aid, introduced by the Government. The minimum gift is £250, but for every £3 that one gives within that minimum gift of £250, the charity collects another £1 from the Inland Revenue, and—if one is a top-grade taxpayer—the donor gets 60p back. That is also an important new addition to the funds available to charities.

Of course it is a pity that the National Lottery Charities Board did not get going earlier. Many of us would have welcomed the first lottery awards going to charities from the NLCB. But surely, now that it has started, it would be a huge mistake not to allow it to operate for a year or two, but to insist on changes immediately. It would be a huge mistake to dig up the plant and look at the roots to see whether it was living or not. We must let it get on with its job, and trust that, as it gets to know its task and gain experience, it will act not only in a thoroughly responsible way, but in a way with which all of us interested in charities can be satisfied.

I have great sympathy with the communications director of the board, who I heard say on "Call Nick Ross" yesterday that enormous care had been taken in examining the 1,500 submissions received by the board, and that it had taken a great deal of trouble in how it awarded

[Mr. Renton]

money. Obviously, those who do not get any complain, and those who do feel very satisfied. That is the way of the world.

It is important that not receiving money from the charities board or, indeed, feeling the pressure from the lottery, should not be used as an excuse, a scapegoat, for difficult decisions that charities should have taken some years ago. I refer specifically to the RNIB, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, and also by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I have a constituency interest to mention, because the RNIB has just announced that it intends to close the Sunshine House school in East Grinstead that looks after children who are not partially but totally blind.

The children who go to the home are often unable to walk, but, through intensive treatment, they are taught to walk. One parent who came to see me at my advice surgery last Friday said that, when their four-year-old daughter went there, she could not walk at all and was likely to sit on a bean bag for the rest of her life. Thanks to the equipment there, such as multi-ply standing frames and custom-built wheelchairs, she and others are slowly learning to walk. Through learning to walk, they start to communicate, play in groups and so on.

It has been mentioned twice already that the RNIB's income this year has fallen by £500,000, but that is £500,000 out of a total revenue of £42 million. It is using that as a reason for closing the Sunshine home. It has given the parents only six months' notice. It is impossible for the parents to find other appropriate schools for their children by Easter next year. It takes 18 months to have the children re-statemented—to use the official term.

The absence of lottery funds is being used as an excuse for taking a difficult decision which has been in the offing for a long time. I should like to think that the parents could persuade the RNIB to postpone the decision, and to work with them on a business plan and a means of funding the £300,000 deficit in the home. The institute could then wait to see whether, in next year's round of grants from the charities board, it got the money that it needed. There is a possibility that it will do so, and it would be a great mistake if the home was closed in a hurry.

The Millennium Commission has had its critics. It started as a piece of paper from my desk in 1990 or 1991 to No. 10 Downing street suggesting that it should be set up. I had in mind what had happened in South Kensington after the Great Exhibition, when the spare funds were used to start the building of that great collection of museums. It is enormously important that the funds should be used to build monuments or buildings that will be not only representative of our lives in the year 2000 but signposts for generations to come. In that context, I recommend to my hon. Friend the Minister of State the project at Wakehurst Place gardens, a satellite of Kew gardens, to set up a millennium seed bank.

One specimen each of all British flora and 10 per cent. of the world's flora will be collected, including many of the plants that are now threatened with extinction in the arid and semi-arid regions of the world. Thus, a source of flora will be created that could be of immense help to future generations. People will be able to go to Wakehurst for seeds for propagation.

That will be not only a fantastic memorial but a great help to future generations in the propagation of plants. It will also meet our commitments under the convention on biological diversity agreed at the Rio de Janeiro conference. It seems to me exactly the sort of project that the Millennium Commission should be involved with. It would be a signpost for future generations of what we are doing now, and it would look ahead to the spirit of the future. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will support it.

6.13 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I declare that I was one Opposition Member who voted for the Second Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill. I would do so again if a similar Bill came before the House. I am in favour of the lottery. It has been a success, although it has its drawbacks. I am an occasional partaker in the lottery. I do not buy a ticket on a weekly basis. When I do, if am in on a Saturday evening, I watch the results. I get a buzz out of the fact that I might just win a large sum of money. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) says, I am not averse to winning a few million pounds if the opportunity arises.

I believe that the odds against winning the lottery are slightly similar to those that we would get if we walked into a bookmakers and asked what odds they would give on a spaceship landing and Elvis Presley getting out. Those are the sort of odds we are talking about, but I still get a buzz. I still think that there is a chance that I will be the one who will win this week. I enjoy it. I think that a lot of people enjoy it.

I accept that there will be some problems with addiction. I also enjoy a glass of wine on a Saturday evening, often at the same time as I watch the lottery results, but I am not an alcoholic and nor are most people who enjoy a drink. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) suggested that we should get rid of the national lottery because it encouraged gambling. I am sure that he is not a prohibitionist and would not seek to ban alcohol or tobacco.

Mr. Alton: I would ban tobacco.

Mr. Maxton: There might be a case for banning tobacco, but there certainly is not for banning alcohol.

It is remarkable that the Government are in such deep trouble that, even with a success story, they still manage to come out smelling not of violets but of the reverse. Somehow, the press has picked up the story that the lottery is not a great success. It is constantly on about the failures rather than the successes of the lottery. That may be because the Government are now doomed to failure.

I read things, particularly in the Scottish press, which are entirely wrong. I notice that the leader of the Scottish National party has now disappeared. His spokesman on the lottery carped on about the large sums of money that went to the opera houses in London as if that was money of which Scotland was deprived. She does not even understand that there is a separate Scottish arts fund which has nothing to do with London or the distribution of money in England and Wales. We distribute our own money through a separate arts council. I wish that the SNP would stop that sort of carping, but it is typical of

narrow-minded nationalism that is based on hatred and envy of one's neighbours rather than love of one's nation. The SNP shows that symptom on all occasions.

Scotland has its own allocation of money for arts, sports and charities. Those funds are separate from funds for England. If London was given millions of pounds more or less, it would not make a blind bit of difference to what happened in Scotland. So perhaps some of the press and the SNP should get their facts right before they make the comments that they do.

The lottery is far from perfect. I join my hon. Friends in their criticisms of the profits that Camelot has made. They are excessive. They are not the level of profits that the Government expected Camelot to make when they established the lottery. We may be gambling when we buy a lottery ticket, but no one seriously thought that Camelot was gambling when it was given the right to set up the lottery. If it was, the gamble has paid off enormously.

I tried to intervene in the speech of the Secretary of State to ask her a simple question. She was strong in her defence of the system that we have in place. If she believes that it is so right and if by some very strange mischance—I do not think that it is likely to happen—she was Secretary of State when the contract came to be renewed, would she renew it on exactly the same terms or would she reduce the profit that Camelot could take? Perhaps her deputy will answer that question when he replies to the debate.

I have reservations about the rolling over of the large prizes. I take the Secretary of State's point that when the prize is rolled over there is a 20 per cent. increase in the number of people buying lottery tickets the following week. That may be correct. I gather that that is roughly some £4 million extra, which the right hon. Lady said went to new causes. However, we could do things in a better way. Many people might buy a lottery ticket because they hope to win £27 million but many people still feel that it is wrong. Most people feel that they could get by for the rest of their lives on £9 million and do not really need £27 million. Therefore, we should look at different ways of using the roll-over.

I want to put a proposition to the House that I do not think has been put before. The first prize should not be rolled over or redistributed among the other prizewinners in that particular week. We should take the £9 million or £10 million, which is the first prize in any one week, and simply give it to the charities board for allocation to the charities. That would be simple and clear. It would require a change in the legislation, but it would be immensely popular with the British people and would solve many people's objections to the large rollover prize the following week. Far from £4 million going to the good causes, £9 million or £10 million would go to the good causes, and I should have thought that that was a good idea.

We must also change the rules on revenue and capital spend. The lottery is a bigger success than anyone thought in terms of raising money and the money that it has to give to the arts and to sport. But, as a result, we shall be building and renewing theatres, sports halls and running tracks. I holiday on the Isle of Arran which has a population of 5,500 and, believe it or not, it has been given £650,000 to build a theatre. That is great. It is wonderful. But it is a small area receiving a large sum of money. When all the capital projects have been completed, what will the money then be used for?

In Glasgow—I use Glasgow only as an example, not to suggest that Scotland is in any way being deprived—Scottish Opera is in dire financial straits and Glasgow Citizens' theatre, because of changes in local government, is facing cuts in its grant from local authorities. Strathclyde region is disappearing and it is a major contributor to the Citizens' theatre. There is no guarantee that the money given by Strathclyde region will be given by the much smaller local authorities that have been created which may well be more concerned with arts in their own areas than arts in Glasgow.

Neither of those bodies has any capital projects in mind. They do not need money for that. Scottish Opera does not want to build a new theatre and the Citizens' theatre has just completed a major overhaul and renovation without the lottery money. What they need is extra money for revenue spend—more grant for the sort of productions that they want to put on.

I accept the argument that even some of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench have put to me, that the great danger of using such money for revenue is that the Government may say that the Scottish Arts Council or the Arts Council for England do not need any Government grant and can just take funds straight from the lottery. That involves the great risk that if the lottery started to lose money it would not be able to supply the funds.

I hope that we shall have a change of Government in the near future. The Secretary of State may not give a guarantee that that would never happen, because Tories are a bit like that, but my Front Bench can give me a guarantee that if a Labour Government were in power they would not do that.

However, we should also consider how organisations could acquire specific money for specific revenue projects. For instance, if Scottish Opera wanted to do an international tour and needed money for that, perhaps it should be able to go to the lottery fund for a specific grant for that purpose. Or perhaps it could obtain specific grants for the training of its orchestra. That would remove the worry about a general grant.

In sport, I want to see the United Kingdom, its component parts and the British team, enjoying great success. One way in which we encourage more sport in Britain is by building and providing more facilities for our youngsters. But that is not enough. We need good coaches. We need to be able to tell good youngsters coming up that they will be given proper coaching and that they will have an income that will enable them to survive while they are learning to be top sportsmen. The lottery fund should be used for those purposes as well. Those are only some of the ideas that must be considered with regard to the lottery.

I finish as I started. There are criticisms to be made of the lottery, but in the main it has provided valuable income for the arts, sports and some charities, although I accept that there are problems there. I voted for the Bill on Second Reading and I would do the same again.

6.16 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

(Mr. Maxton) who made a notable contribution to today's debate, as he does to the Select Committee on National Heritage on which I serve with him. He makes a regular and sound contribution to the work of that Committee.

I want to return later to the hon. Gentleman's point about Camelot's profits at the beginning of his speech, but towards the end of his speech he mentioned the training of orchestras. I should declare an interest as a member of the council of the Association of British Orchestras, which has recently received an Arts Council national lottery grant of £22,000 which will be useful to the association in its promotion of the work of British orchestras.

That is just a small illustration of the lottery's tremendous success and the grants that it has been making. I am particularly glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) has returned to the Chamber because it was he who masterminded the introduction of the lottery, the placing of the Bill before the House and the setting of its course. I know that neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who took office about three months ago, nor my hon. Friend the Minister of State will mind my saying that. It really has, in the words of the Government's amendment, been a "huge success". It has exceeded all expectations.

I can remember my right hon. Friend the Member for two cities saying, when the Bill was before us, that he anticipated that the yield for good causes would be, on a cautious estimate, £400 million a year—£80 million for each of the five sets of good causes. We are not far short of three times that yield.

When we debated the national lottery in December 1994, we were told that the weekly average for good causes would be £12 million, which would have amounted to about £600 million a year or £120 million for each of the sets of good causes. The latest figure that we have been given is £1,100 million for about 10.5 or 11 months and it looks as though it will be £1.2 billion over the 12 months, which will produce upwards of £200 million for each of the sets of good causes, and perhaps more like £220 million or £230 million in a complete year. That is a tremendous success and it is a great pity that anyone should want to disparage it.

Nearly 30 million people in the over-16 age group who are entitled to play the lottery do so each week, which is about 68 per cent. of the population. Without doubt, it gives widespread pleasure to those who participate and a substantial yield in tax to the Government—at least £500 million a year in direct tax and another considerable sum from the corporation tax levied on Camelot, quite apart from what it throws up in value added tax and the income tax paid by those who work for the lottery. We are approaching a figure of £600 million, which is not far short of 0.5p in the pound on income tax—a worthwhile return to the Government, at which no one should sneer. The lottery can provide a significant contribution to the funds that the Government have to spend on education, health, pensions and so forth. It really is a brilliant national achievement.

The Opposition know perfectly well that the lottery has produced massive new support for the arts, sports and heritage and for the millennium fund and the caring charities. They also know perfectly well that it has produced a big tax yield, that it is highly popular and that it gives pleasure to a great many people. The Opposition also know that we would have had to introduce a national lottery because if we had not done so, under European Union law, continental countries could have sold their lottery tickets in Britain and siphoned money off to continental good causes—money that should have gone to good causes in Britain.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I take the hon. Gentleman back a couple of sentences? Why should the Government get a tax yield from the national lottery? It then becomes a form of taxation.

Mr. Jessel: Because the national lottery undoubtedly takes some money away from the football pools, on which the profits went to the Government. If the lottery had not yielded any tax, revenue to the Government would have been lost. It had to be done, therefore, and it was right that it was done.

The Labour and Liberal parties know that people like the national lottery, so they do not want to attack it in principle—except for the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who is always serious, earnest and sincere in his approach, although I could not accept his failure to reply when challenged about the moral issues he raised. He said that the lottery is immoral because people bet on it and so it reduces the income of poor families. When challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) as to the difference between the lottery and betting on horse racing and football pools, which are very popular in Liverpool, the hon. Gentleman was able to say only that those are provided by private enterprise, but the national lottery is provided by the Government, which seems to make no difference.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman has distorted what I said. First, I did not use the word immoral. I made it clear that I am not against gambling per se. I objected to the fact that the state is involved in a national lottery, takes substantial amounts out of it and, in the process, is destroying things like the football pools. The hon. Gentleman must be well aware that many jobs have been lost at Littlewoods, Zetters and Vernons and more will follow.

Mr. Jessel: So, the hon. Gentleman accepts or tolerates the football pools, but that form of betting and betting on horses and dogs is more likely to involve a heavy wager, which can bite substantially into the weekly or monthly wage of someone who might not earn very much, than the purchase of a lottery ticket. Very few people bet heavy sums each week on the lottery because it entails filling out many forms and most people cannot be bothered. If one is trying to protect the welfare of families, one ought to welcome any transfer of betting away from the heavier wagers that are likely on horse racing and football pools.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) mentioned jobs and some may well have been lost in Liverpool, but think of the jobs that have been saved in village shops. The lottery has been the salvation of many of those and has provided an enormous number of new jobs, which are spread throughout the country—the others are only in one city.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Village shops, small shops and corner shops in outer London areas, such as my constituency, are a central part of local

community life. People like to go into small shops, not only to purchase their lottery tickets, but to have a chat. They are part of the fabric of local social life, which is good, healthy and sound. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should welcome that.

The hon. Member for Cathcart mentioned Camelot and its profits. Historically, Opposition Members have tended to find the very notion of profit somewhat offensive. Hon. Members shake their heads, but a large proportion of Opposition Members dislike the idea of profits. We are told that, apart from the 12 per cent. going in tax, upwards of 50 per cent. going in lottery prizes and 30 per cent. going to good causes, 5 per cent. goes to Camelot. Two thirds or three quarters of that goes on operating costs, such as printing tickets, paying commission to small shopkeepers and on the promotional side. The remaining quarter of the 5 per cent.—or one eightieth of the turnover—is profit.

I believe that Camelot is running the lottery efficiently. If it is not, the contract will not be renewed at the end of the seven years. If it is running it efficiently, which it shows every sign of doing so far, how can it be in conflict with the public interest for one eightieth of the turnover to go in profit to that company, especially when that is subject to corporation tax, which again is a tax yield to the Government? We should welcome the fact that such a tiny fraction of the entire turnover is going to an organisation that is probably running the lottery very efficiently indeed. We should accept the American doctrine that, "If it ain't bust, don't fix it".

I have met very few members of the general public who really mind about Camelot's profits. It is much more Labour Members and some of the media who are trying to create a news story out of it. Stories come and go. I remember that when the lottery was introduced last winter, there was a great deal in the media about the privacy of winners and whether they were entitled to keep their winnings private. There were some lapses of privacy and Labour Members were jumping up down in indignation about it. People have half forgotten that now; it is hardly ever referred to these days. I think that the same will happen with the story about Camelot profits.

The vast majority of those people who participate in the lottery are concerned mainly about their chances of getting a winning ticket and a large win. Admittedly, the churches have been saying that people have fantasies about winning but I believe that people get pleasure from those fantasies. I certainly do. Some people do win, so they are not fantasies

Mr. Tony Banks: What other fantasies does the hon. Gentleman have?

Mr. Jessel: They are my own. I am prepared to talk about my fantasies about winning the national lottery but not about any others.

The other thing that Labour Members seem to have got excited about is distribution. Another look needs to be taken at the way in which the charities section is working. I rather agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who thought that more of the charities money ought to go to the great, established charities and less to small charities. There are about 1 million charities in the country. I happen to be a trustee of three small ones. They go on and on and seldom get wound up. A lot of them are much better than others.

I remember that some years ago, I was asked by a friend to subscribe to a charity for the deaf. I sent a small amount to it but the charity was unwise enough to send me a copy of its annual report, which I happened to look through and saw that 55 per cent. was spent on administrative costs and only 45 per cent. on the deaf. So I stopped sending it money and sent a small sum the following year to something else instead.

It is a fact of life that not all charities are anywhere near equally efficient; they go up and down like other forms of enterprise and activity. Not all charities are equally meritorious. I hope that the National Lottery Charities Board, in dealing with lottery money, will be critical to the point of ruthlessness in following up the grants that it gives to make sure that they are well spent.

I warmly welcome the sums that have been provided for the arts. The so-called flagship arts bodies receive money because they affect the general standards of the arts. Standards percolate down from the great arts bodies—the great opera houses, orchestras, ballets, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. That being so, one must expect funding for the live arts to be concentrated in the large centres of population because, almost by definition, performances in theatres, concert halls or opera houses have to be before a large number of people. Therefore people have to be bunched under the roof where the performances take place. Those grants are bound to be centred on large cities. If people do not live in cities or towns they will have to make a journey to go to such performances. People should expect that; it is entirely reasonable. Grants to other sections, such as charities, sports and heritage, can be spread geographically around the country more evenly than grants for the larger arts can be.

I hope the lottery goes from strength to strength. It is a tremendous feather in the cap of the Government to have brought it in. It is a brilliant national achievement. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill would not come off the fence and tell us whether he was in favour of it or whether his party was in favour of it because I think that the public are entitled to know. It seemed as if he was, on balance, rather against it. I hope that the whole House will vote with the Government tonight and make sure that the lottery goes on.

6.44 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is a gifted parliamentarian and a highly intelligent man. I therefore find it difficult to believe that he cannot follow the point of view of some of us that there is something inherently wrong about the Government—the state—encouraging and organising gambling. I cannot believe that he does not understand the difference between that and private citizens choosing of their own volition to have a flutter on a horse or the football pools.

The argument that the state's involvement is justified by the ebullient tax yield that results is extraordinary. Even the most rapacious free marketeers among Conservative Members would not argue that the state should encourage or organise the smoking of cigarettes or the drinking of alcohol on the basis that large sums of tax would thereby be yielded to the Exchequer. Whether or not they accept that argument, it is incumbent on Conservative Members to acknowledge that there are a

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considerable number of people, and I am one, who are distinctly uneasy about the state encouraging gambling, just as we would be about the state encouraging smoking or drinking.

It is a measure of what the Tory party has become, and of its garagiste mentality, that we heard earlier—not from the hon. Member for Twickenham, for no musician as distinguished as he could be called a garagiste—two Conservative Members sneering at the churches' views on gambling and the misery that it causes to a significant number of people. I thought that that was telling. The Conservative party should know that there are a significant number of people who agree with the churches' expression of unease, to put it no higher, on the issue.

I have listened to speakers on both sides of the House and been amazed at the poverty of the social lives of some hon. Members. Perhaps I have a much more exciting life than many hon. Members. I see that Conservative Members seem to agree with that. The idea that one could spend one's Saturday evening huddled around a television set getting a buzz from watching one of the most asinine, banal television programmes ever is ridiculous.

I watched the first programme and wrote about it. It was possibly the most ghastly televisual experience that I have had. The idea that one would stay in on a Saturday night—instead, perhaps, of going to the theatre—to discover whether, on a 14 million to 1 chance, one had become rich seems extraordinary.

The Minister suggested that sad little newsagents, with their boards outside, had taken the place of the local pub or hostelry as a focal point of community involvement. How anyone could compare sitting with friends in a pub in a warm, communal atmosphere, enjoying a Saturday night, with standing in the corner of a newsagents store filling in numbers and crossing one's fingers in the hope of becoming rich as a result is beyond me. I am sorry to say that that shows the poverty of imagination of many hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Twickenham confessed to having fantasies about winning the lottery. My fantasies are a lot more enjoyable and colourful than that. I can only sympathise with anyone whose life has begun to revolve around this rather sad little gambling addiction that is growing in the country. That is my essential point. I do not believe that gambling is fun. The fact that many people do it does not mean that it is fun.

People gamble for two reasons. They gamble to try to escape from desperate financial circumstances at a stroke, so that in one bound they may be free. If I may briefly make a party political point, there have been far more people like that over the past 16 or 17 years. They also gamble out of greed—the greed fostered by the philosophy of the Conservative party during those years, which involves knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. It is the "get rich quick" mentality that equates human happiness with the acquisition of pound notes and other material things.

Conservative Members sneered at the possibility that people who became rich from gambling might eventually become miserable, but a considerable body of evidence, from Viv Nicholson—as in "spend, spend, spend"—onwards suggests that those whose lives revolve around the wish, the hope, the prayer, the fantasy that they will become rich are likely to be disappointed when they do become rich, and will be no happier as a result.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): What the hon. Gentleman says may well be true, but surely it is a matter of personal decision. Let the people choose whether to do it.

Mr. Galloway: That is a legitimate point. I am not arguing for the abolition of the lottery; I voted against it and would do so again, but I must accept that it is here. If it were to be done, 'twere better that it be done well. The hon. Gentleman, however, has missed my essential point. He has spoken of the freedom of the individual, but there is a profound difference between people choosing to have a flutter and the state actively encouraging and organising gambling.

If, as I contend, gambling is a drug, the scratchcard could be described as the crack cocaine of the lottery business. Forty per cent. of the lottery yield comes from the card. Notwithstanding some of the statistics that were bandied about earlier, which I consider questionable, anecdotal evidence—backed up by many who have written about the subject—suggests that the scratchcard is bought by the poorest and most desperate people who engage in gambling. A good deal of evidence tells us that the poorest newsagents on the poorest housing estates in the poorest cities draw a huge proportion of their weekly take from the proceeds of scratchcards sold to the poorest people.

I confess that I do not know when the scratchcard provisions were passed by the House. I should, but I do not. They may have been part of the original Bill. In any event, I feel that the House should have paid more attention to the issue at the time, and should pay attention to it even at this late stage.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am enjoying my hon. Friend's speech, although I do not agree with part of his main premise. I am, however, inclined to agree with what he says about the scratchcard—not merely on the basis of anecdotal evidence. Scratchcards are normally purchased when people visit the newsagent or grocer, and the fact is that people visit the grocer more often when their incomes decrease. People who are buying small amounts every day are much more liable to buy the card every day, paying for it out of an income that is already low, than those who buy their groceries at the end of the week or month. To that extent, the scratchcard is a separate issue from the national lottery.

Mr. Galloway: As always, my hon. Friend has made a good point—better, I suspect, than I was making it myself. The scratchcard is indeed a separate issue, and I hope that the Government will listen to those who hold that view.

The scratchcard has, to a large extent, become a tax on the poor. Others have spoken of the use to which the "good causes" money is being put. It is easy to argue that the tax on the poor constituted by the daily purchase of a scratchcard by a poor person on a poor estate from a small newsagent in a poor city helps the contribution to, for instance, the Churchill papers and the Royal Opera house; but such a redistribution of wealth from the poor to the much better heeled should make even Conservative Members sit up and take notice.

I believe that the "crack cocaine" effect of the scratchcard—a quick hit, and the hope of an escape from what are probably dismal personal circumstances—marks a profound coarsening and brutalising of our national life.

As I have said, there is no going back; we are not going to abolish the lottery. I therefore think it important for people to argue constructively—as all hon. Members have today—about possible changes to the regime. I see no contradiction in that. It was suggested earlier that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) had contradicted himself by arguing about the distribution of proceeds, but I consider that a utopian point of view. I was against the lottery, but I think that I am entitled to have views about how the money is distributed.

The distribution of that money is now a matter of national debate. The amounts involved are badly skewed. I cannot imagine how a jackpot of £1 million is not enough for anyone: I do not believe that anyone needs more than £1 million to enjoy even my life style—although some Conservative Members have gone through their millions. A cap of £1 million on the top prize would be a popular move. For those of a gambling bent, £1 million would be a prize well worth winning; I do not think that people would stop buying lottery tickets because they could no longer win £7 million or £8 million.

Some would argue that the balance should be redistributed among smaller prizewinners, but I do not agree. Much more should be given to the charities that have suffered. There is much statistical evidence to prove that the total yield of charitable giving has fallen by £300 million. The reason for that is obvious. First, people have less spare cash to give, because they are spending it on the lottery; secondly, they have been seduced into believing that by buying lottery tickets they are discharging their charitable responsibilities.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does my hon. Friend think it appropriate for him to comment on how the funds are to be distributed? He will merely express his own feelings. Would it not be far better to let people who are spending their own money decide where that money is to go?

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) accepts his hon. Friend's suggestion, Glasgow may not receive so many lottery grants.

Mr. Galloway: There are many lottery grants in Glasgow—but not as many as there are in London, and not as many as were given to a single member of the Conservative party who, perhaps judiciously, is not present this evening. I do not consider the hon. Gentleman's intervention a serious one, and I do not consider myself to be disqualified from expressing an opinion about how the lottery—if we are to have it—should be organised.

I believe that far more of the total take should be given to charities. There is widespread agreement about that. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I do not think that the Government have any real right to take a tax yield from the proceeds: that strikes me as a contradiction in their position, especially as they are likely to use that yield to give tax cuts to rich people—as they have for the past 17 years—in a vulgar attempt to win votes and hold seats in the general election.

Mr. Jessel: Do the Government have the right to take a tax cut from the proceeds of football pools?

Mr. Galloway: They obviously do. I have already argued the difference, in principle, that exists between gambling per se and state-organised and state-encouraged gambling. However, I shall move on, because I have already detained the House, to some quick arguments.

I do not believe the Government should take a tax yield. The prizes should be capped at £1 million and the money should be given to the charities.

Obviously, there is something wrong with the decisions that are being made about the distribution of the money for good causes. I hope that hon. Members accept that I am by no means a Philistine, but I really do not think that Conservative Members have fully comprehended the national outrage at the many millions of pounds going to rarefied institutions in London which they will never travel to visit, whose portals they cannot afford to enter and which, in any case, often exude an ambience that they feel excludes them. Conservative Members are making a mistake if they do not comprehend people's feelings about that.

It is an extraordinary notion that Eton college can be described as a good cause worthy of the distribution of good cause money.

I shall close on a subject that I mentioned earlier. Most people are astounded by the very idea that £12 million should be given to an hon. Member of the House for papers. Most people in the country believed that they owned those papers already. There is also an overwhelming belief that the person whose papers they were, the most distinguished parliamentarian ever to sit in this building, is probably turning in his grave at the idea that his less distinguished grandson might have made off with such a bonanza.

Mr. Jenkin: The argument that the hon. Gentleman has just made emphasises his misunderstanding, not only of the national lottery but of the country's history. If there is one person who would be absolutely delighted that his own writings were making some money for his family, it is the former Member for Woodford, Winston Churchill. He spent his entire life scraping together his living by writing. He would have been delighted that his family had made something out of it at the end of it. There is no doubt that his family had the right to the copyright of those papers, and that they were entitled to sell them to the highest bidder.

Mr. Galloway: I have a very much higher opinion of the late Winston Churchill than does the hon. Gentleman. He was a man who spent his entire life working to earn his own living and certainly did not sit back, haggling over the papers of a grandfather in order to make off with the riches. Perhaps the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) is not in his place tonight because he is cruising in the Caribbean, or elsewhere, on the public money that was given to him for those papers.

To some extent that is a sidetrack, except that I should say that, despite what Conservative Members say, in their self-congratulatory back slapping this evening over what a great success this has all been, there is national unease

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about the notion in the first place, there is much greater national unease about the distribution of the cake and there is a great deal of unease—I believe in the House as well as in the country—about the way in which the lottery will go from here. I hope that Ministers and the Government will take note of many of the suggestions that have been made this evening.

7.3 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): May I begin by setting the record straight? Eton college was not a recipient of an award. It was a partner in a scheme to build an athletics track on land donated by the college. The main beneficiaries of the award that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) mentioned are Windsor, Slough and Eton Athletics club and members of the local community, including disabled people and children's voluntary groups. It is important to set the record straight.

The hon. Member for Hillhead referred to the national lottery as a "sad little" enterprise. I believe that I am right in saying that he comes from Glasgow. I wonder whether the Young Men's Christian Association in Glasgow resents the sad little enterprise that has just awarded it £37,000. I wonder whether the East End Leisure Centre in Glasgow regards the lottery as a sad little enterprise when it has awarded it £280,000. Glasgow Academical Club has received £15,000, Glasgow Museums has received about £83,000, the university of Glasgow has received about £900,000 and the Glasgow Film Theatre has received more than £750,000.

Mr. Galloway: Read your own speech.

Mr. Brandreth: I am correcting the hon. Gentleman's speech, in the pursuit of accuracy and information. Obviously he does not want his constituents to know what the national lottery is bringing to Glasgow, and they deserve to be told that he would have denied Glasgow the bounty that it is receiving.

Scotland, with 8.9 per cent. of the country's population, has received about 15 per cent. of the grants awarded to date. In addition to all the munificence that I have mentioned—and I have mentioned only a fraction of what is going to Glasgow for the arts, sports and heritage—there has been about £17.5 million from the charities board.

I am delighted to be making what will be quite a brief contribution to tonight's debate to salute the outstanding success of Britain's national lottery. Unlike my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), I was a little disappointed by the speech of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I felt that it was uncharacteristically sour and grudging. He gave the impression of having had a disappointing week, which surprised me because I should have thought that to be invited to speak on heritage matters is to have won the first prize in the lottery of life.

I certainly know that that is how my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State feels. She must be feeling good, not only because she is now in harness with the Minister of State, one of the finest members of any Government in the history of parliamentary democracy—*[Interruption.]*—there are times when nothing but hyperbole will do—but because she presides over what is a national and international triumph.

The national lottery provides an unprecedented boost to the quality of life in the United Kingdom and generates wonderful new funding for important good causes. Greatly in excess of £1 billion has been raised for those good causes in the lottery's first year.

It is the most efficient lottery in the world. No other lottery has raised so much for so many good causes from start-up in such a short time. That is a national success but, as always, all that Opposition Members can do is carp, complain and talk the nation down.

Mr. Tony Banks: Heaven forfend; I would never do anything like that.

Has the hon. Gentleman any idea why that should be so? The lottery is very much like other lotteries throughout the world. Why have we become so obsessed by the lottery? What does it tell us about the people of the country?

Mr. Brandreth: It tells us that they enjoy a good flutter and enjoy supporting good causes. It tells how well the national lottery has been managed and how successful it is. The distributing organisations have already made about 2,111 awards to the five good causes, totalling hundreds of millions of pounds. All we have heard today is carping about the way in which those distributor organisations have undertaken their work.

Those organisations have done rather a good job under trying circumstances and under close and critical scrutiny from the press. Believe it or not, the members of the distributing bodies are not paid. They are volunteers, some of whom receive expenses. They act out of the goodness of their heart to ensure that money is spread fairly across the country and is seen to support worthwhile causes. That is good news.

Following Opposition Members' carping criticism of those volunteers, I marvel that anyone is prepared to give public service in this country. Their criticism is very disappointing.

Every area in the United Kingdom has benefited from the lottery. Scotland, as I mentioned a moment ago, with 8.9 per cent. of the population has received nearly 15 per cent. of the awards.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman has said that already.

Mr. Brandreth: Indeed, because I can hardly believe it. Coming from the north-west, I am a little resentful. Wales, with 5 per cent. of the population, has received about 10 per cent. of the awards and Northern Ireland, with 2 per cent. of the population, has received more than 6.5 per cent. I welcome that, but I hope that in the fulness of time the distribution of awards will become more even—except in the north-west, which naturally deserves the most.

Mr. Jenkin: What about Essex?

Mr. Brandreth: Essex can look after itself.

More than 200 million individual prizes have been won—just think about that. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and other Opposition Members seemed to resent the idea of the big prizes. I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I like the idea.

"Who wants to be millionaire?" I do. Candidly, I believe that I could cope. When I win the big prize, I shall send you a post card from Hawaii, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to inform you of how well I am coping. You may come out and give me counselling to ease me through the difficult transition from my current position.

The approach of the Liberal Democrats was wonderfully patronising and sanctimonious. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] They are out eating humble pie. "Oh," they say, "the little people cannot cope with those big prizes". I am reminded of the fact that I number among my many marvellous constituents His Grace the Duke of Westminster, who has in many instances won first prize in the lottery of life. He is a young man who seems able to cope very well with his great wealth, and he is very generous with it. Opposition Members appear to feel that the toffs can be allowed to manage their money, but the little people cannot. I must say that I resent that patronising approach.

My other constituents include the parents of the deputy Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). I know these people, and many good things have come from Chester. That was why I backed the deputy leader so assiduously for the leadership of the Labour party and, given time, he may make it. When the party divides following the next election, the right hon. Gentleman may be able to run the rump. The point that I am trying to make is that Opposition Members would deny Mr. Prescott senior and Mrs. Prescott the opportunity to spend a large sum of money, while allowing my other constituent the Duke of Westminster to spend his money.

That attitude is patronising and sanctimonious, and it is not in the interests of the good causes. The roll-over means that if the main prize is not won in any given week, the prize is "rolled over" to make a significantly larger amount. The roll-over prize increases the number of lottery tickets sold by between 20 and 25 per cent. on average. Ultimately, with the roll-over and the bigger prizes, more money will be raised for the good causes. That is more good news, and it is no wonder that Opposition Members are so agin it.

The right hon. Member for Copeland made a number of charges and criticisms, and he clearly loathes the notion of profit. He cannot cope with success, but then he has not had the option this week. But it is sad and sorry, because the right hon. Gentleman is proposing a non-profit-making lottery. There were a couple of splutterings of policy from the Opposition—it has been a surprising debate in many ways—one of which was that Labour would make the lottery a non-profit-making operation. A less efficient lottery that raised less money for the good causes would be all right by the right hon. Gentleman, so long as it was non-profit-making.

I want the lottery to be a success, and I want it to raise money for the good causes. I think that a company that does well deserves its success and deserves its profit.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My hon. Friend and I served on the Committee that examined the National Lottery etc. Bill with other hon. Members present in the Chamber. He will recall that we went into great detail on the profitability of the company operating the lottery. Looking around the world—as the Department of National Heritage did—we saw that non-profitable or charitable lotteries simply did not work. People did not buy the tickets and there were no beneficiaries.

Mr. Brandreth: My hon. Friend speaks true from his experience.

The National Audit Office endorsed Camelot's selection, and considered it to be the operator that would retain the least in costs and would provide the most for the good causes. A recently published report by Oflot—the independent regulator—confirmed that the lottery is well run. The amount of revenue retained by Camelot to cover operating costs and profits—5 per cent. of gross revenue over a seven-year period—was the lowest of the eight applicants for the section 5 licence.

Camelot's application maximised the return for the good causes and, of course, as revenue rises, so does the percentage that goes to the good causes. To be fair, Camelot has also invested heavily in the lottery. It installed 10,000 retail terminals for the launch at operational centres in Rickmansworth and Aintree, and the company recruited 300 staff. The lottery is good news, and it deserves success. Long may it flourish.

The right hon. Member for Copeland expressed a lot of concern about charities, and he was right to do so, but research shows that charities increase their incomes when lotteries are in operation. An independent report by a group of consultants showed that most Irish charities have increased their incomes by around 19 per cent. in real terms since the inception of the Irish lottery, while the top 20 charities increased their incomes by 30 per cent. in real terms. Inevitably, the charities market is like any other market—it will change, develop and respond to new products.

A few years ago, fundraising through television began with events such as Live Aid, and charities thought that those events would do them infinite damage. But that did not prove to be so. As the charity world evolves, people will respond to the different challenges that face them. It is too early to make a realistic assessment of the effect of the national lottery on charities, but I am pleased that the Home Office intends to monitor the matter.

Recent research conducted by MORI for the Comic Relief charity showed that only 2 per cent. of those polled claimed to have reduced their charitable donations because of the national lottery. Most people know that when they buy a lottery ticket, they are having an enjoyable flutter while helping some worthwhile causes. Most people I know who give seriously to charity continue to do so, and it is a voluntary endeavour. Some people claim to have increased their donations since the advent of the lottery. That does not surprise me, because the oxygen of publicity that the good causes have been given will have increased public awareness of what they are doing and of the contributions they make to the infrastructure of the United Kingdom.

One or two hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), pointed out that a number of the caring charities—notably Cancer Research and the Red Cross—reported a substantial increase in income since the national lottery was launched.

This morning, we debated the contribution of volunteers to our society. I am pleased at the number of voluntary organisations that will benefit directly from the lottery—a lottery that Opposition Members said they

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would again vote against if they were given the opportunity. Opposition Front Benchers have carped at, criticised and poured cold water on the lottery, but a wonderful range of volunteer organisations in my part of the world have benefited from it. Age Concern is one of those, and has received a number of impressive grants totalling more than £100,000. Allerdale Disability Association received more than £44,000, Victim Support received £44,000, the citizens advice bureau received almost £100,000, and Campus Children's Holidays, a parents' support group, and Crewe Womens Aid received assistance also. That is very good news.

Mr. Tony Banks: Yes, but they are people in the hon. Gentleman's area and not in mine.

Mr. Brandreth: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I could have a job share arrangement and I could come and help him out. Perhaps the good news in Chester—the epicentre of all that is best in this country—could be sprinkled about in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, wherever that may be. I am sure that it is quite nice in its own way.

I shall list some recipient organisations, not simply because I want to celebrate the lottery, but because I want it known that, contrary to what we read in the press or what we hear from the rumour machine, worthwhile causes are being supported in the north-west. Liverpool Mencap has received £146,256—the hon. Member for Mossley Hill did not mention that—and the Liverpool Voluntary Society for the Blind received some £24,000. The list is impressive, but I shall not detain the House by continuing it tonight. A couple of million pounds has been allocated to the north-west: good money has gone to good causes and this great lottery has made it all possible.

The lottery aimed to provide additional investment in the nation's cultural, sporting, heritage and charitable infrastructure—and it is doing exactly that. I believe that in future we shall want to find ways of developing the lottery in order to achieve even broader aims. The Sports Council has explored interesting ways of using lottery funds to encourage excellence in sport.

I am reminded of the triumph of the Minister of State and the Prime Minister in releasing the publication entitled "Sport—Raising the Game". That will give British sport its biggest boost for decades. It sets out the broader framework for Government policy on sport and emphasises the ways in which we can maximise sporting opportunities for young people within and outside formal education. It also proposes the establishment of a British academy of sport for our top athletes, which would be funded by the national lottery.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will use that initiative as a model to be explored in the arts field as well. Just as our country's sporting infrastructure comprises our sports men and women as well as our sporting facilities, our cultural infrastructure comprises not only the range of theatres, opera houses and venues for ballet and the enjoyment of the arts, but also the artists themselves.

We must develop excellence in our young dancers, actors and musicians. There is no doubt that, if we wish to remain world competitive in the artistic sphere, we must give every opportunity to the brilliant young talent in this country. I look forward to exploring all sorts of initiatives, perhaps including the establishment of endowment funds using lottery money. Such funds could be developed over a number of years, and it is only one idea that I hope that the Secretary of State and her Minister will consider.

I was delighted to hear the Secretary of State give the lie to the claim that libraries are ineligible for lottery funds. It is interesting how that sort of rumour escapes into the ether and is believed by our constituents. I am a library enthusiast and, as such, I am among that half of the population who use libraries. Consumer surveys consistently show them to be among the most popular of all public services. United Kingdom public libraries issue more than 550 million books each year—that is almost 10 for every man, woman and child. It is estimated that 24 million men and women of all ages and backgrounds use public libraries each year.

The Department is undertaking a comprehensive review of the future role of public libraries in meeting community needs and in responding to new, exciting technological developments. That could have implications for the national lottery. I was delighted to hear the Secretary of State make such a firm commitment to the principle of a free core library service. That is very important, because our literary heritage is a vital component of our cultural heritage.

The national lottery is simply a triumph. It has enormous potential to assist good causes in my constituency, such as playing fields, sports clubs and youth groups. I am very excited when I think about what the Gateway theatre, the Chester in concert project and what our great cathedral may receive. Tonight I do not simply decry the whingeing, carping, negative and disappointing approach adopted by Opposition Members: I celebrate the success of our lottery and the success of the good causes. I also celebrate the success of the Minister of State.

Mr. Galloway: Stop crawling, for goodness sake. It is making me sick.

Mr. Brandreth: I will not. I celebrate also the sensational success of the Secretary of State. We have such good news that we cannot resist the temptation to celebrate; we are happy.

7.26 pm

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): The contribution by the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) was outrageous because of the way in which he addressed the issues that genuinely concern many of our constituents. Most Labour Members do not wish to condemn the national lottery: we simply want to review the working of the lottery in the light of experience. That is what the Labour party motion says.

We accept that the national lottery is established. We can understand why Conservative Members wish to shout from the rooftops about having one successful policy in 16 years—what a record. The stated objective of the national lottery is to benefit every man, woman and child in Britain by creating funds for good causes. The heart of the question today is whether the lottery is meeting its objective. Based on the evidence that has been presented in today's informed debate, I maintain that it is not.

Gameshow Government has been with us for many years. "Competition" is a key word in Tory ideology. Competitions in local government, such as city challenge and compulsory tendering procedures, have created winners and losers. Winning and losing should not form the basis of policies to improve the decaying structures and framework of our society. If something is in need of repair, it must be mended before it is damaged permanently—and the lottery is in urgent need of repair.

Our nation has always enjoyed a flutter. That is evident on big sporting occasions, such as the running of the Derby and the grand national, and nearly everyone has a dream of winning the pools. People will always cling to the dream of winning the big prize, so it does not surprise me that the lottery has taken off on that basis. But is it really in our national interest to develop a culture that relies on the "big win"?

In a letter to me dated 30 March, the sports Minister said that the Government believe that the national lottery is a harmless form of entertainment at the softest end of the gambling spectrum. Like other hon. Members, I am concerned that those people who buy weekly lottery tickets are now being encouraged to buy instant scratchcards also. The Home Office has described scratchcards as "hard gambling" because they allow people to chase their losses on the spot. We must pay attention and take great care to ensure that the vulnerable are not exploited. I think that we may live to regret the decision to increase the number of scratchcard licences.

I have often tried to find out where spending on weekly lottery tickets is concentrated on a geographical basis. I believe that in areas such as my constituency, people who cannot afford it are buying those tickets. They do it in the futile hope that somehow, miraculously, they will become winners. I am told that the figures are not available in detail because of commercial considerations.

I agree with the Council of Churches that there should be a gambling research centre to look at gambling trends and the impact of gambling on community life. Some 16 years of individualism has left its mark on our society. The get-rich-quick philosophy underlies the reality of the world in which people have to live and the Government cannot and should not be allowed to let the lottery develop in isolation. It has an effect on all aspects of community life.

Nobody forecast that the lottery would have been so financially successful. The profits alone are in real need of greater scrutiny. As we have heard, 30 million players take part in the lottery each week and there is an average spend of £2 a week on scratchcards. That has produced for Camelot profits of more than £300 million on an investment of only £50 million in the first year. That again shows how the regulators have got it wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) spoke about computer terminals. The operators told Oflot that, as part of the operation, 24,300 terminals would have to be in by the end of 1996. Camelot put them in within months of being awarded the contract. Profit should be related not to turnover but to the capital that is employed, because that is what is meant by risk.

The Government made a clear statement when they chose to award the contract to Camelot. Britain is the only country in Europe to have a private lottery run for profit and one that links profit to turnover as opposed to profit to capital employed. The lottery is a licence to print money. An efficient non-profit-making operator distributor would have raised more money for good causes. We have heard how charities have been affected by the lottery and, as the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) said, it would have been more sensible to compensate at local and national level those charities which could easily prove that they have been financially affected by the lottery. That would be fair and reasonable.

As the House has heard, many charities contribute effectively to the lives of our communities and they should not have to apply through a bidding process that means that they have to be re-evaluated. That is an insult to many of our leading charities. The charities board which distributes lottery funds has an advantage over the other four boards. It has the opportunity to consider capital and revenue projects and does not require matching funding. However, the disadvantage of all the boards is that there is no overall strategy for co-ordinating bids. There is no discussion: each board welcomes individual bids, each has its own application form and there is no requirement for local discussions with bodies such as local authorities on matters such as planning or community issues.

Unnecessary bureaucracy is developing in the analysis of the bids. That is regrettable because it means that money is not going where it should go. The Sports Council is presently considering the siting of a new national stadium. Bids were invited and came in from many areas, including Bradford. I understand that the rules of the game have been changed because those bodies have no accountability to Parliament or to anybody else. There have been regional variations in distribution which outrageously favour the south, to the detriment of the north.

There is no point in reading out lists of grants that have been received. While it is good in itself that individual bodies have received the grants, that must be seen not in isolation but in the context of what is available overall.

In my area of Bradford, we receive from the Arts Council board 33p per head compared with £2.66 nationally. That is grossly unfair and the public have been rightly annoyed by the sizeable and extreme grants that have been given to projects from which the majority of people do not always benefit. We have heard about the outrageous £14 million for the Churchill papers and the £55 million for the Royal Opera House. Such grants have incited people to oppose some of the happenings within the lottery.

Everybody wants the dispersal of funds from the lottery to be equitable and to be prioritised to meet real social need. In an area such as mine, which has high unemployment and social need, people want a fair distribution and do not want making bids left to those who know how to go round the circuit. If the boards are to continue, they must look at what is needed in particular areas and do so on a structured basis. It cannot be left to a system under which the regular winners continue to win and the losers continue to lose.

The lottery has been going for several months and we must try to look at it as it proceeds. When concerns are highlighted, we must do something about them and not merely review matters in seven years, at the end of the contract. *[Interruption.]* We are discussing the contract that has been given to Camelot and the problems surrounding that, and also the way in which the boards

[Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe]

distribute the funds. Bids from target-based areas should be considered. The Department of the Environment has an urban deprivation index. Perhaps some of those areas included in that should bid for lottery funds in the short term.

There needs to be an overall strategy, a district and a regional approach to the allocation of funds, and that should involve all agencies, both public and private, to make sure that the money is used efficiently. The list of good causes should include medical research. Many people feel that it is underfunded and that we need to try to find new ways to benefit the whole of society. The lottery could be used for that.

The lottery has had a dramatic impact on people's lives. In the light of the number of people who are prepared to play the game, it is here to stay. The money should be used wisely but the Government have not done so. Instead, they have left the lottery to run its own course without the accountability and sensibility that are needed to make sure that we address the issues of concern in society. Many people are playing the lottery to realise the dream of getting out of their everyday mundane problems, but the odds that are stacked against them are 14 million to one and the reality is that most people will never win such money.

The lottery has had an effect on the lives of people within the betting and gaming industry. The Henley study on bookmaking has shown that profits have fallen. The Government are against anti-competitive practices but they are protecting the lottery. We are told that the lottery has been very successful but perhaps we should look at the number of jobs that have been lost in the betting and gaming industry. Let us have a level playing field for those who compete with the lottery. It is important for the House to look at what is happening to national institutions, which is what the lottery has become. We must make sure that its administration and development are in line with the principle that everybody in the country benefits from it, and not just a few.

7.37 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I suppose that the action of which I am most proud in my twenty-one and a half years of selfless service in the House, to my constituents, my party and the country was my rejection of the pleading of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor to use my good fortune in the private Members' ballot in 1992 to present the Bills of Lading and Carriage of Goods (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. Instead, I presented the National Lottery Bill, on 17 January 1992. After the general election, it was followed by the Government's Bill, which established the national lottery. So, perhaps I may be permitted to deliver a simple message. It is, "For goodness sake stop knocking the national lottery."

The lottery was long overdue. Britain was the last of 117 countries in the western world to introduce a lottery. We were to be the country before Albania, but it got in ahead of us and I am not sure that we are all that proud of being beaten by Albania, however wonderful a country it might appear to its inhabitants.

The lottery promised enormous advantages for British society, not just for the winners of millions of prizes and the people who became millionaires and multi-millionaires, not just for the good causes that have benefited—through that, jobs in the construction and other industries have been created—and have had to spend the money that had been given to them, and not just in taxation, which the Government received directly or indirectly as they reaped the benefit of corporation tax from Camelot and taxation from the distributors, many of which were to be kept in business by the lottery. There is also the advantage of the reduction in crime that will result from the building of more sports and arts centres for our children, who can be deflected from mischievous behaviour and the evil deeds that might otherwise overwhelm them if they are bored. Those were all massive advantages that we foresaw when the issue was debated in 1992.

All those advantages and more have come, or are coming, about. We said that 72 per cent. of the adult population would play the lottery each week, and the number is up to 68 per cent. after only 10 months. We said that it would raise £3 billion a year and it has raised £4 billion. We said that that would mean £1 billion a year for good causes, which will have received well over that figure by the end of this year.

In my Bill, I suggested a three-way division: one third for prizes, one third for good causes and one third for operating costs and the taxman, yet the Government improved on that break-down. As a result, the lottery is much more generous to prize winners and good causes, and taxation and operating costs have been kept well below the level that was originally envisaged.

I am delighted that my right hon. and hon. Friends, many of whom were dubious about the national lottery when my Bill was first published—I recall that I received no support in the Lobby from the Government on the Friday when the matter was discussed—came around and, like all converts, became super-enthusiastic, and with good reason because the results have shown how much their confidence has been justified.

Mr. Tony Banks: When the hon. and learned Gentleman's Bill was presented, did he not have all-party support and did not a number of Labour Members enthusiastically support his Bill?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: There were indeed, and I was about to express my sadness that what had once been an all-party occasion has seemingly, this afternoon and this evening, shown divisions between the parties. That is bad but inevitable; I can understand it. Opposition Members cannot bear the fact that a Conservative Government have chosen something that is popular and successful with the British public. It must niggle deep in the gut of Opposition Members that the Conservative party should have chosen to introduce the lottery. I remember them saying that if the Government did not support my Bill the Labour party would bring in a national lottery in due course. Having listened to the speeches this afternoon, I think that it would have been difficult for it to have maintained a majority on such a measure, unless the whining and the whingeing that we have heard was caused just by bitterness because the Conservative party had introduced the lottery and were not a result of the merit of the case.

This has therefore become the most successful lottery of all time, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage has said, and that is mainly because it has been well marketed and brilliantly operated by Camelot. There can be no better example of how the profit

incentive generates success, and of how the free enterprise capitalist society benefits the whole of the social fabric of a nation. We should be proud of its success. We should not whine and whinge about it in the British way, by which we always modestly disclaim all our achievements, however considerable they are.

I feel sorry for Opposition Members, who have a problem. They know that the lottery is a runaway success and that it is popular with the country and, as I have said, it must hurt them to see that success redounding to the Conservative Government. It is true that, when he presented his case, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was struggling—although not as much as the Opposition Front-Bench Home Office spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) last Thursday. I do not make that sort of comparison—that really was struggling. The struggling today, however, involved a confusion between a feeling that this had been an outstanding success and that the Labour party had to make noises to discredit the Government's enthusiasm for the cause.

Of course I concede at once that there is a downside to the national lottery. As every cloud has a silver lining, so every golden cornucopia has some darker aspect. It is not popular with everyone. It is not popular with some Opposition Members or with the churches, which are ambivalent because, like the Labour party, they are caught on the horns of a dilemma that involves benefiting from the lottery and the appalling immorality of it all.

There are people who are jealous of Camelot's success so they decry its profit, and the people who have not so far benefited from the arts, sports, charities, heritage and the millennium output are impatient. Some charities have declined, and they are fearful, but we knew that that would happen, which was why the charities were part of the beneficiaries planned at all the stages. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) was wrong. My Bill, the White Paper and the Government's Bill provided for charities—we had long discussions about them.

One of the points that keeps being repeated is that some charities went to the Taoiseach in Eire and said that, since it had had its lottery, their income had fallen, and from that it was concluded that the lottery was bound to have an adverse effect on all charities. The answer to that was that the contribution to charities had fallen in Northern Ireland, where there was no state or national lottery, so that cannot have been the whole explanation. We have learnt today and over the past month that the position of a number of charities has improved and strengthened since we have had the national lottery, just as there have been some charities that have lost and are fearful.

Some individuals, it is true, have personal problems. We do not know whether that would have happened anyway, but there are obviously temptations in relation to the lottery and we must consider caringly those who may have fallen into misery and sadness as a result.

We in Burton—I cannot speak for everywhere else—have massive parking problems because of the lottery. When one is trying to buy one's ticket on a Friday or a Saturday, the cars are packed two and three to one side, which is a problem. All those problems, if one adds them up, whether they are personal or involve parking, fear, disappointment, jealousy or ambivalence, pale into insignificance beside the lottery's monumental success. Many of the fears that were originally uttered were unfounded and many of the potential benefits were underestimated.

I buy a weekly ticket in a newsagent in my constituency. There is always a queue for tickets. The people in that queue are always delighted to see me. The lottery has made people happier—perhaps they were happy before, and keeping it to themselves. People get fun out of the lottery, not just from watching the programme in the evening, but from putting their money in and even winning a tenner here or there.

Mr. Tony Banks: How much does the hon. and learned Gentleman spend?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I put on a fiver a week. I have won eight times, with a total of £80. I suppose that I have invested £140 or £150 in the lottery, and I hope that one day I will be able to entertain the hon. Gentleman, whom I have known for many years in the House, to a slap-up dinner as a result of the success of my lottery ticket—he can hold me to that. Perhaps I will be able to present the hon. Gentleman with some bottles of champagne in recognition of the support that he has always given. He could then stand up in the House and say that he was a champagne socialist.

I am not unhopeful about the success of the lottery. The newsagent from which I buy my ticket sells about £12,000 worth of lottery tickets a week. It means that its slice of the cake is £600 a week. I wonder how many small newsagents, corner shops and village shops have been able to keep going and remain profitable as a result of their distribution of lottery tickets. There must be tens of thousands of small businesses which would not exist without it. The small newsagents that I visit is located in the centre of urban Burton, which is where my working-class constituents live, and it has paid out £750,000 in prizes.

So far, we have not been such massive beneficiaries as Glasgow and other places. However, one of our parish cricket clubs was happy to receive £5,500 and this week the Burton Young Men's Christian Association received £80,000. Up the road in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), which draws support from Burton on Trent, the Gresley band and male voice choir has received £30,000 over the past year. We have put in bids about which we are optimistic for the Burton arts centre in the Brewhouse as well as countless other good causes, including health research projects—I agree with what has been said by many other hon. Members on both sides of the House about that.

I have every expectation that such juvenile delinquents as there may be, sadly even in Burton, will be encouraged off the streets by the arts, sports and charitable groups whose improved facilities will undoubtedly bring benefits in the months and years ahead.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will continue, as did his predecessor, to remind all the lottery benefactor groups that one of the contributions that they can make to the welfare of our society is to help to reduce crime. Many youngsters in our society today are engaged in crime and we are looking for ways in which we can deter them. We should realise how the benefits from the lottery could help to deflect them from crime.

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

It is true that some things could be improved, that there are imbalances between regions and that there may be hitches, delays and distortions. It is true that there have been public relations failures and that, to date, there has not been sufficient concentration upon medical research. I hope that we will move towards providing some running-cost funding as well as capital funding. It is also true that I have been disappointed at not being able to see Burton town hall as the venue at which the lottery performance takes place on a Saturday night. I hope that those who read or listen to my speech will see how important I believe that that would be to my local area.

The lottery has been going for less than a year. It is only just getting started. One does not decide after the first 10 yd whether my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) has got into his stride to win the race. It is ridiculous for us to be critical of the lottery at this stage. We should not say that this charity or that charity has not succeeded or that a certain part of the country has done better than another. It is too soon. There is plenty of time for it to go right for everybody.

The Labour party was premature and misjudged in tabling this motion. It is ill-timed. It is important to get the public relations right because the lottery's popularity is an important generator of its money. If there are imbalances, distortions or things going wrong, they should be looked into in due course when the lottery has been given a chance.

I believe that the public should be given some say. I hope that the Select Committee on National Heritage will have a say. For goodness sake, let us not have any more quangos. I would have thought that both sides of the House would be united on that. I have no idea what Opposition Members were doing by suggesting that a quango should look into this.

Give the people's lottery a chance. Stop knocking it and stop knocking Camelot, which is a wealth and happiness creator. What the national lottery is achieving for the quality of life in this nation has been, and will continue to be, nothing short of phenomenal.

7.55 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) has told us about the fun he gets from the national lottery. I am sure that I am not alone in having noticed that, whenever the Secretary of State talks about the lottery, she tells us what a lot of fun it is. Today was no exception. In fact, even she excelled herself when she referred to the lottery as a dream machine. I do not know how the Secretary of State gets her fun, nor do I have access to the content of her dreams—and nor would I want to.

I have never bought a lottery ticket and I should like to assure the House that my life is not devoid of pleasure—far from it. I join my hon. Friend for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) in expressing wonder at the state we are in, when such a large proportion of the nation's social life is centred around the national lottery.

I worry about the fact that so many people in our country today no longer feel that they can get on in life by their own efforts. They feel that they have to look to the national lottery to escape from poverty or unemployment. It could be said that the tax that the Chancellor takes from the lottery is a tax on hope. At the risk of being accused of being a whinger or even a killjoy, I must say that I am worried that the national lottery has brought about a change in the way in which we view gambling, and that that will lead to more people becoming addicted to gambling.

I am not saying that somebody who has a flutter on the lottery or on the pools, or who gambles on horses, is likely to become a customer of Gamblers Anonymous. That is no more true than somebody who has a glass of wine, as has already been mentioned, becoming an alcoholic—or even, dare I say it, that somebody who experiments with pot is likely to become a heroin addict. Having said that, it is strange that Conservative Members and some others have a completely different attitude to those matters. I think that we can all agree that we would not wish to see activities of that sort promoted in such a widespread way, or by the state.

The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) said that lottery signs are almost replacing pub signs. One sees those signs not just on street corners but virtually everywhere one goes. As a result, there has been a sea change in our attitude to gambling. Previously, there was public policy against the stimulation of demand for gambling. It was something to be tolerated, but not encouraged. Gaming legislation provided a framework for that.

I would not argue that we should ban gambling or do away with the national lottery. The widespread promotion worries me, together with the relaxation of restrictions on other forms of gambling which is now occurring. Hon. Members are being bombarded with mail from the Bingo Association of Great Britain, the British Casino Association and the pools to relax restrictions on the promotion of their form of gambling. They refer to the process as modernising British gaming laws.

Far from modernising our laws, we would be taking a step backwards to anarchy. I hope that no one in this place would suggest that some of the activities that the organisations to which I have referred represent should be promoted in the same way as the national lottery with television advertising, but that is what is happening elsewhere. A relaxation of restrictions would make it likely that other forms of gambling would be advertised.

My main concern is scratchcards and the very nature of the type of gambling that ensues. I am worried also at the ease with which adolescents are buying scratchcards. A recent survey undertaken by a children's charity, Children's Express, revealed that 62 per cent. of stores visited by young people sold scratchcards to the under-16s, even to some in school uniforms.

A similar campaign carried out by my local Sunday newspaper, the Birmingham *Sunday Mercury*, showed that in Birmingham about a third of outlets were willing to sell scratchcards to children who looked under 16 years of age. These children are growing up with the belief that gambling is socially acceptable. The link with good causes reinforces that perception.

The accessibility of lottery tickets, especially scratchcards, is so wide that it is difficult to avoid them in most shops, including corner shops, newsagents and supermarkets. Scratchcards are being sold everywhere we go. Before the introduction of the national lottery, we

spent about £1 million a week on scratchcards. We are now spending about £50 million a week on them. That is a massive amount of money on that form of gambling.

The distinction between scratchcards and the weekly national lottery must be emphasised. It is important that we take note of evidence that is accumulating about the addictive nature of the cards. I shall quote from an article written by Mark Griffiths, who is an expert on gambling, from Nottingham Trent university. It is useful to get information on the record. Mark Griffiths distinguishes between scratchcards as hard gaming, as opposed to soft forms of gambling such as the national lottery and football pools.

He states:

"Like fruit machines, scratch cards have a payout interval of a few seconds between the initial gamble and the winning payment. Three factors are inextricably linked with such a characteristic.

The first of these is the frequency of opportunities to gamble. Logistically, some gambling activities (e.g. the National Lottery or football pools) have a small event frequency—there is only one draw a week—making them soft forms of gambling. However, in the case of scratch cards there are few constraints on repeated gambling as limits are set only by how fast a person can scratch off the covering of the winning or losing symbols.

The frequency of playing, when linked with the two other factors—the result of the gamble and the actual time until winnings are received—exploit certain psychological principles of learning. This process, called operant conditioning, conditions habits by rewarding behaviour. Reinforcement occurs through presentation of a reward such as money. To produce high rates of response, those schedules which present rewards intermittently have been shown to be the most effective, and since scratch cards operate on such schedules it is not surprising that excessive gambling can occur."

We have read anecdotal evidence in newspapers of people, especially young people, spending large sums on scratchcards.

The paper continues:

"Promoters appear to acknowledge the need to pay out winnings as quickly as possible, thus indicating that receiving winnings is seen by the gaming industry to act as a reinforcement to winners to continue gambling. Rapid event frequency also means that the loss period is brief, with little time given over to financial considerations and, more importantly, winnings can be regambled almost immediately.

Another related aspect to operant conditioning is the psychology of the near miss, which can act as an intermediate reinforcer. A number of psychologists, including myself, have noted that near misses—that is failures that are close to being successful—appear to induce continued gambling and that some commercial gambling activities (particularly fruit machines and scratch card lotteries) are formulated to ensure a higher-than-chance frequency of near misses."

Mark Griffiths gives the example of the fruit machine-type paying-out line that is horizontally located in the middle of a three-by-three matrix. He states:

"When three winning symbols are displayed, the jackpot is won and thus reinforces play. However, a near miss—such as two winning symbols on the payline and the third one just above or below—is still strongly reinforcing at no extra expense to the machine's owner. Therefore the player is not constantly losing but constantly nearly winning."

With scratchcards, there is a 1:5.46 chance that a person will get his money back, whereas there is a 1:2.4 million chance of winning the £50,000 jackpot. Unfortunately, people tend to concentrate on the amount they think they will win, rather than on the chance that they might win.

When arguments about scratchcards were put to the Secretary of State this afternoon, she told hon. Members that they should take the matter up with the Director General of the National Lottery. It is outrageous that Ministers are constantly ducking their responsibilities for public policy by referring matters to quangos, such as how widespread should be the advertising of scratchcards and the type of game that should be permitted within the national lottery. Those matters should be determined by elected politicians. It worries me that the Government seem unwilling to take responsibility for such serious matters.

I am disappointed that we, the Opposition, have not taken up the issue. I am not entirely with the proposal for another quango. Decisions should be taken by those who are elected and publicly accountable. I wish that my right hon. and hon. Friends would join more forcefully me and others who have expressed great concern about the national lottery scratchcards. It may not be appropriate for the cards to be withdrawn completely, but it is appropriate that their sales should be restricted to licensed establishments. We should seriously consider restrictions on advertising of scratchcard gambling.

8.8 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I am grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I come to it from three different directions. I was vice-chairman of the Sports Council from 1986 to 1989, when, in sporting terms, the concept of a national lottery gathered considerable momentum. I was a member of the Committee that considered the Bill that eventually, when enacted, produced the national lottery. I was chairman of a campaign group in Cornwall called Cornwall First, which set about the difficult task of trying to gain for the county the headquarters of the national lottery.

The national lottery is not a new concept. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) who reminded the House that Westminster bridge, the Cinque ports and, I think, the British museum, were all recipients from a prototype lottery. The concept is therefore not alien to this country.

The speed with which the current national lottery has gained public praise and acceptance, with a few exceptions, is a tribute to the way in which the House as a whole and the Standing Committee debated the National Lottery etc. Bill, and the issues raised by the many interested organisations which would be the future recipients of national lottery money. It is also a tribute to the way in which hon. Members with specific interests debated the distributing bodies.

As a competing athlete a few years ago, it was with an envious eye that I travelled abroad, in competition or training, and used facilities that other countries had built with the support of state or national lotteries. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), a previous Minister for the Arts, said that he had visited Greece and met the then Minister for Culture, Melina Mercouri. She said that she had had no major funding problems since the Greek national lottery had been established. It was odd that, until Britain published the relevant legislation in 1992, we alone in western Europe did not have a recognisable national lottery.

The motion is a curious one. It stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy. It appears that their concern is that lottery money should not be used to replace existing Government funding, and certainly not for the arts. That idea has already been knocked down.

[Mr. Sebastian Coe]

The Department of National Heritage and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury have made it perfectly clear that lottery money will not replace Government funding. Lottery money is new funding, and that will remain the case.

In a sense, I am disappointed that this debate is taking place. Although it is probably fair to say that we should at some stage in the future be discussing the national lottery—indeed, it is perfectly legitimate and laudable for the House to monitor with some regularity something that plays and will continue to play such a profound role in the lives of our constituents—it is a little premature to do so now. I hope that today's debate has not been instigated in a chase led by the tabloids.

I have recently read much about the lottery with which I disagree. At his party conference in Brighton, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) threw out two vague thoughts about the national lottery. In fairness, I would not describe them as policies, and nor would his colleagues.

The first idea was that an expiry date of the year 2000 should be given to Camelot or any other successful bidder. It is very unlikely that any company would have been prepared to make the necessary investment for a contract that would barely have seen it through three or four years. In the real world, that was not very likely. Colleagues have already said that the National Audit Office gave Camelot a pretty clean bill of health.

With hindsight, it is far too easy to say that the company that won the bid knew that it was likely to have a licence to print money. It was never going to be a precise science. If the result had been so copper-bottomed, and if the guarantees were so clear, why did the other bidders not make more competitive bids? When the National Audit Office examined the bids, two points emerged. First, it was clear that Camelot planned to keep back the smallest amount for operating costs. One could not run a low-cost supermarket on an operating margin of 5 per cent.—

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): You can at an Aldi supermarket.

Mr. Coe: I do not think so.

Secondly, Camelot was identified as providing the greatest level of benefits to sport, the arts, good causes and heritage. I have noted with great interest the recent comments of Richard Branson. It was clear from the National Audit Office's report that the Virgin organisation was not making a tighter bid in as far as operating costs went, and would certainly not have produced the same benefits as Camelot. I am not an apologist for Camelot—I have no links with the organisation—but we must be clear that Camelot underwent close scrutiny, and came through it pretty well.

Mr. Maxton: We are not disputing whether Camelot set up the lottery to work efficiently—that was the National Audit Office's remit. We are concerned that Camelot knew that it would be able to set it up very much more quickly than it had said, and is now making excessive profits. The NAO is not interested in whether Camelot is making excessive profits.

Mr. Coe: My point is that Camelot will be producing its end-of-year accounts in a few weeks. Many Opposition Members have been saying that they are not anti-profit or anti-business, but, when Camelot announces its profits, I shall be interested to see whether Opposition Members still adopt that attitude. I rather fancy that they will not, but will use the results for political purposes. The point that I think the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is making is that Camelot will be making profits that it knew would be forthcoming, but I am not sure that that is so.

As chairman of the Cornwall First campaign, I sat down with every bidder to try to persuade them all to establish their headquarters in the county. I do not believe that any of them genuinely thought that the lottery was going to be the success that it has proved to be.

It is not a precise science; we are talking about human attitudes. With the best will in the world, I do not think that most of the bidders thought that they would be into the scene that the company that made the winning bid is now into. But I do not have any more insight into that than the hon. Member for Cathcart.

I also noted that, in his speech to the party conference, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield mentioned that it was not unreasonable to start directing or guiding some of the organisations responsible for distributing the funds on where the funds should be distributed. In fact, I was not quite sure whether he was suggesting that we should bypass those organisations entirely. Of course, that is the way in which many foreign-operated lotteries work.

I am a past vice-chairman of the Sports Council, and I happen to think that the Sports Council, for better rather than for worse, is by far the best organisation to distribute sports funding. The right hon. Member for Sedgefield might say that I would say that, but I do not want the money to be handed straight over to some Government organisation, and then to witness the kind of wrangles that would occur across the Floor of the House on where that funding should go. I like the idea of arm's-length organisations making these decisions.

I have worked with the Sports Council, and I am not going to stand here and say that there were not areas of its administrative processes and cost centres which could not have been tightened up. But it would be very dangerous to start suggesting that expert organisations out there in the field—autonomous, independent—should in any way be held back in choosing where they deem it fit to place lottery money.

On the discussion about the areas in which funding should be allocated, I speak as somebody who has sat on grant assessments panels and had the difficult job of deciding between many competing bids in a sporting context. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House have had to try to distribute funds, and know that, effectively, one is looking down the barrel of a gun.

One can never satisfy everybody. There will always be arguments about—in sporting terms—whether the funds should go to participation or excellence, and we have heard the same points applied to the arts in this debate. There is an argument that holds for the arts and sport. It is my experience that the best way in which to bring about an increase in participation in any activity is to ensure not only that we fund participation, but that we are not afraid properly to fund the excellence; the shop window.

If the Lawn Tennis Association were given a straight choice between a Wimbledon winner—man or woman—from this country or £10 million or £20 million for some

development programme at the grass roots, I think that I know what it would go for: the Wimbledon winner. We know, and the hon. Member for Cathcart knows, the result of excelling so obviously in the shop window. One would not be able to get on a tennis court for the following 10 years for youngsters wanting to play tennis. It happened in Sweden and in Germany; it is a well-travelled line.

Mr. Maxton: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but does he not agree that, if we want not to be able to get on to a tennis court for 10 years, those tennis courts have to worth being on—they have to be good tennis courts? Not only that, but coaches have to be available to coach those people, and they have to be able to spot the excellence and know how to move those people on to the next stage, so that there is a gradual build-up of such people coming through in tennis. There is no point in having one tennis champion if we cannot follow up the success with a whole list of others.

Mr. Coe: The hon. Gentleman pre-empts what I hope to be able to move on to in a few moments.

Dr. Reid: Lest this becomes a debate confined to the healthy minority of athletes, may I speak on behalf of the slothful millions of Britain? The hon. Gentleman has discussed the allocation of resources with reference to two bodies—the state and the institutions, such as the Sports Council and so on. There is one other body, however, that should perhaps have some say: the consumers, the people who pay their money into the lottery.

Given the support of the Conservative party for consumer choice, is the hon. Member opposed in principle to some mechanism whereby those who pay their money into the national lottery could exhibit a general preference for the areas into which they would like the profits to go?

Mr. Coe: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I, like other Conservative Members, of course believe that the consumer has inevitably to be sovereign. That is the basis of much of the Conservative philosophy. But what is the reality of what the hon. Gentleman said? Would everybody who contributed to a national lottery ticket somehow be provided with a mechanism by which they could specify where part of their £2 would go? I just do not think that that is workable or pragmatic.

Under the current structure of organisations with experience in the field and a proven track record, whether in the charities, arts, sport or heritage, the consumer's best interest is protected. I would not go much further, other than to say that the mechanism in place is certainly the best that we can summon at present.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend agree that one thing of which we could be pretty sure is that consumers would not vote to limit prize money? Indeed, the danger would be that, if they had the choice, they would probably vote to divert more of the money away from good causes to increase prize money. The opinions of the consumer are not necessarily the best guide to what would be the best product, not only for the consumer but for the nation as a whole.

Mr. Coe: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. I am not sure that I am qualified to trespass quite that far into human attitudes. I not sure, either, that I would want to put that to the test in my constituency—his may be a little different.

I come to a point which has already been discussed. I am certainly not in the mood to bash the Church of England or any of the other church organisations which put their name to the sentiments expressed yesterday, but I would find the situation a little easier to comprehend if the churches had not already received £1 million of national lottery money. I would find it a little easier to comprehend had the churches not already submitted bids for between £17 million and £18 million of lottery money. I will pull back from saying that it is hypocritical, but only a little way back.

The churches have fallen into the trap into which many of the tabloids and—I have to say—some of the more learned leader writers have fallen: assuming that all discussions about the national lottery take place around Islington dinner tables. The reality is that the national lottery has been a huge success. It has profoundly changed the outlook, the ambitions and the realisations of organisations the length and breadth of the country.

Sport is no different from any other area of the voluntary sector. Hundreds of people are prepared to give up hundreds of hours of their spare time every year to support talent, grass roots and excellence in sport, as they are in the arts and a myriad of other activities.

We are incredibly lucky in Britain to be the inheritors of one of the most successful and soundly based voluntary sectors anywhere in the world. If it were removed, vast areas of activity in this country would be unrecognisable. The voluntary sector underpins sport. It is not unreasonable, when we consider the future of the national lottery, to look hard at the balance between capital and revenue spending.

The hon. Member for Cathcart made the point earlier, in a speech that I thought was sane, that if we are to support excellence, it is not just about bricks and mortar. It is about making sure that there are coaches out there who can inspire and coach to the very highest level. I think that we can, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will, examine the balance between capital and revenue. I am heartened that I think he is mindful of that, and will try to move towards some change.

As we enter a key period, as we do in any Olympic year, we have to recognise that we are sending a lot of competitors to Olympic games next year, for whom a little revenue funding would be helpful. The capital funding that is available from the national lottery moneys will make a massive difference—hon. Members should not kid themselves about that.

Yet the Linford Christies, Daley Thompsons, Steve Ovetts, Steve Crams and Tessa Sandersons are the product not of some happy sporting accident but of sensitive, long-term coaching. If we are to maintain the pre-eminent position that Britain has enjoyed for a long time in sport—I do not wish to intrude on Friday's debate—we need coaching of the highest level. That will inevitably come from some form of revenue funding.

I do not think that a decision has ever been made in the House that has more profoundly affected the life and the quality of life of so many people. It is interesting that those who criticise the national lottery and debate it on occasions at the most esoteric level are often those who have never worked in any of the organisations out there in sport and the arts, many of which live from hand to mouth. It is interesting to me that much of the debate has

[Mr. Coe]

been concentrated on the mechanism, the distribution and profits, not the changes that lottery money has brought about.

Let me assure the House that hundreds of thousands of people out there do not share the current narrow perception of the national lottery. In my constituency, from art galleries through to sub-aqua clubs, people's dreams have—it sounds dreadfully clichéd—come true in the past few months and the past year. The contribution that the national lottery will make in future years is at a level that I did not fully comprehend a year or so ago, and few hon. Members on either side of the House were able to comprehend in the build-up to the legislation.

8.34 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am very pleased to follow such a distinguished Olympian and fellow Chelsea supporter. We all know that the hon. Gentleman has no need to win the lottery. We must have so much gold stashed away in his cupboards that if he is ever short of a few bob he could just melt it down. He made, in his usual exceedingly thoughtful way, some excellent points. I look forward to hearing him again on Friday in the sports debate.

I should like to make a few comments about the lottery and, first, to make it clear that I entirely support the lottery. I have heard a lot of Conservative Members saying that we do not. I was one of the sponsors of the original private Member's Bill and I have supported the lottery both by my actions in the House and by my activities in purchasing lottery tickets. I want to win. I desperately want to win because, apart from anything else, it would mean that I could escape from having my bottom bored into rigidity by having to listen to another interminable speech by the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). I do not think that I would have any difficulty in adjusting to being filthy rich. After all, enough Tories have managed it. I see no reason why I could not do the same. It would be pina coladas all round.

I am with those who believe that there should not be an upper limit on the top prize. Who are we to say that people cannot manage that amount of money? Of course, if one won a great big bucket of money—as I have already said, I hope that I do—one would seek some decent financial advice. It is not a normal, everyday event suddenly to find that one has 17 million quid in the bank, but it is something that I am sure I could manage and I sure that most people could. I do not see why we should say that there should be an upper limit.

I should prefer to see the £10 prize scrapped. I have won a few tenners, but I do not go into the lottery to win a few tenners and nor do most people. We should do away with those prizes and have a few more middle-ranking prizes so that the large rollover could be kept, but far more substantial prizes could be available rather than handing 10 quids out. People do not go into the lottery to win a tenner.

I agree with my hon. Friends who have said—I have not heard any Conservative Members say this—that they do not like scratchcards. I am assured by those who followed the legislation far more closely than me that instants were included in the Bill. I must confess that they were slipped through and escaped my attention. Scratchcards are different. They are not the national lottery. They seem to me just another way of milking the people who go into shops. After all, as several of my hon. Friends have said, the lottery is a weekly event. People do not go into the shop or outlet every day to buy yet another lottery ticket. The vast majority do it once a week. Every time people go into the newsagent's or grocer's, those scratchcards are there. I have watched people in my area go into a shop, buy a card, come out and, if they have won, go back and buy more cards. I have watched people in the Forest Gate area, which I know exceedingly well because I represent it and live in it, going backwards and forwards. Scratchcards are a curse and they were not part of the national lottery set-up. They show how greedy Camelot has become.

I have some criticisms of the national lottery. It is not the same as whingeing to want to see something improved. How can that be whingeing? The Secretary of State was asked—or, if she was not, she should have been—whether she would replicate exactly the set-up of the national lottery if she was designing it now. I do not believe that anyone would. I have heard even Conservative Members say that they would make adjustments and improvements. So when we criticise, we are not whingeing. We admit and accept that the lottery is a success. We supported it. But we can improve even on success. Therefore, the criticisms should not be dismissed as whingeing from embittered old Socialists on the Opposition Benches who cannot stand the possibility of success. Opportunity in electoral terms, of course, would be a fine thing for us.

There are two huge winners week in and week out. They do not need two fingers to come pointing in through their roof saying, "It's youhoo". They know that they will win every week. One is Camelot and the other is Her Majesty's Government. For Camelot, it must be like having Christmas every day of the year.

I refute absolutely that there was any risk involved. As we have heard said many times, the lottery really was a licence to print money. The matter was gone into carefully. Given the propensity of the British to gamble, there is no way that a national lottery would lose money, particularly given all the backing that would be available through the media, all the hype on the television and all the statutory support from the Government. It is, after all, a Government-sponsored lottery. Camelot knew that it could not lose. Unfortunately, the Government were not prepared to be rather more guarded in the setting up of the lottery.

Camelot misled the Director General of Oflot, Peter Davis. It said that it would make no profits until the fourth year of the lottery's operation. Camelot is either a fool or a liar. To suggest that means that it does not know what it is doing, except that it will make money. But it has made money hand over fist. In those four years, it is likely to make profits in the order of £300 million, from a £50 million investment in the first year. Instead of the Government congratulating themselves, they should be asking themselves where they went wrong on that point. How did Camelot pull the wool over their eyes so successfully? How come Camelot did not give accurate answers to Peter Davis at the time?

The Government have locked us into an absurd unfair arrangement with Camelot. The Secretary of State referred to the lottery as being a dream machine. For

Camelot, it is certainly a money machine. I accuse the Government of failing to look after the interests of the consumer in giving Camelot the deal that they did.

I am with those who say that the lottery should be administered by a non-profit-making organisation. Most charities are supposed to be non-profit-making organisations. They bring the money in and they spend it. They need a certain amount for their administrative costs, but they are not described as profit-making organisations. When we say a non-profit-making organisation, we mean in terms of those operating and administering it. It would get its administrative costs, but it would not be able to bank millions of pounds obtained through the sale of tickets in areas such as mine.

Mr. Jenkin: If the hon. Gentleman was running a charity, would he never use a private fund raiser who might be taking a cut himself; never use a professional fund raiser in order to gain extra funds despite their being widely used now? Does he not understand that incentive is the key to success in fund raising for charities just as much as in any other sphere of life?

Mr. Banks: The answer to that, as the hon. Gentleman must know, is yes, of course, one would use professional fund raisers. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked me a question and wants to answer it as well. The Labour party, as far as I am aware, uses professional fund raisers. The point that needs to be made is that they have to go out and work for their money. Camelot was given it on a plate. That is the difference between using professional fund raisers and handing over a milch cow to a professional organisation such as Camelot.

I have heard people say that they will wait to see what the profits are like. I give hon. Members a tip. Go out and buy shares in Cadbury Schweppes and De La Rue and the other companies involved in the Camelot consortium because the profits of those companies will receive a great boost when the money works its way through.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) is making a note to make sure that he does.

Mr. Banks: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is rich beyond the dreams of avarice, so he does not need to win large amounts of money. It is poor buggers like me who need to win large amounts of money, a point that I have already made to some effect.

The lottery should have been run by a non-profit-making set-up, whatever methods it used to inspire sales, although that has all been done for them. One need only consider the advertising that it gets on the Saturday draw. That is banal. I just want the numbers. I do not want all the twaddle beforehand with people bouncing around. People watch only to find out the numbers. If I want some cheap entertainment, there is plenty on television or in the House of Commons. All I want is to be given the numbers and to look at my ticket to see whether I have won the biggie. Unfortunately, as yet, I have not. In that respect, Richard Branson had a good idea and we should explore his proposals because that is the way for the lottery in future.

The other big winner, as we all know, are the Government. The Government receive 12 per cent.—about £400 million. The lottery was not supposed to be a fund-raising mechanism for the Government. That makes it simply another form of taxation. Why should people have to pay more taxes? They are already more taxed by the Government than they have ever been in recent years. In those circumstances, why give the Government another great big bucket of money? If one adds on to the Government's rake-off the additional money that they get from taxation on Camelot's profits—assuming Camelot ever gets round to paying any tax because as far as I can see corporation tax is paid only by idiots these days—one sees the lottery becoming nothing more than a tax-raising measure, and a regressive tax-raising measure, on behalf of the Government.

I come now to the distribution of the lottery money. That is decided by too many middle-class people, often hand picked by Ministers favouring their own pet interests. Who are those people? Why should they decide which organisations will be funded? There was a lot of anger about the £55 million that went to the Royal Opera house and the money that went to Sadler's Wells. I am not against them securing finance.

I was not much impressed by the former Minister for the Arts, the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). There was that sob story about how he went round the Victoria and Albert museum and saw the roof leaking, and how he went to the Royal Opera house and saw the creaking scenery. What on earth was he supposed to be doing? He was the Minister. He should have been getting the money out of the Treasury in order to make the necessary improvements to the fabric of those wonderful buildings, whose legacy we have been living off for so long. Why wait for the national lottery to turn up? All he was doing was admitting that he was derelict in his duty.

Mr. Jessel *rose—*

Mr. Banks: Of course I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jessel: As the former chairman of the Greater London council, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt remember that, despite the fact that the roof of the Victoria and Albert museum, a listed building, could be seen only from a helicopter, not from the street, first the GLC and, after its abolition, Kensington and Chelsea council and the Department of the Environment—so it was an all-party matter—all flatly refused to allow repairs to be carried out to the roof which would alter its appearance. Was that not ludicrous?

Mr. Banks: That was probably more to do with English Heritage or whatever conservation body was concerned at the time. The refusal of bodies such as the GLC or Kensington and Chelsea council to give any money to the museum for repairs to the roof was, I suspect, because it is a national institution, so national funds should have been provided for such work.

It is no good saying that the lottery has now galloped to the rescue of such institutions. Governments—not necessarily just Conservative Governments, although the hon. Gentleman would be the first to admit that we have had rather more Conservative than Labour Governments during the past 15 years or so—have failed in terms of their responsibility to the fabric of those buildings that we have inherited. It is our responsibility to pass on those great institutions in a more enhanced state than that in which we inherited them. We were derelict in our duty, but I specifically name the right hon. Member for

[Mr. Banks]

Mid-Sussex who gave us that terrible heart-wrenching story about the buckets of water that he witnessed in the Victoria and Albert museum.

I am not opposed to the Royal Opera house or Sadler's Wells getting finance, but that money will do nothing further to improve access for my constituents. Even at the concessionary levels that the Royal Opera house or Sadler's Wells charge, people in my area—where many live on basic state pensions, are unemployed or students—simply could not afford to go there anyway. So, the money that they are raising is going into a building that, admittedly, needs to be repaired and should have been many years ago, but they will still not be able to enjoy the benefits.

That is the cruelty of the thing. It is not that Opposition Members are anti-opera or dance, but that we simply cannot get that access because people do not have the income to get it. That is why I would like institutions to be able to get direct revenue funding from the lottery, if it would provide access for the people I have just been describing.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Is not my hon. Friend, like me, concerned about the grant to the Royal Opera house, bearing in mind the fact that the party giving the grant—the Arts Council—is a part owner of it? I thought the principle was that the distribution bodies gave the money to independent bodies, not to themselves.

Mr. Banks: That is a moot point at this stage because the grant has been challenged on precisely that basis. It might become a matter for the courts to decide, if anyone wants to push it to that extent.

If money was to be given to the arts, how on earth could it have been disbursed, other than through the Arts Council? That is one of the problems. The charities board has been criticised for being slow to set up and to hand the money out, but it had to start from scratch. The Sports Council and the Arts Council were already in existence and had the mechanisms and vetting arrangements that enabled them to process applications. So it is a little unfair to criticise the charities side for being slower than the more established bodies.

Mr. Jenkin: The motion does so.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps so, but I do not care what the motion says. I did not draft it. This is my speech, which I did draft and, under the circumstances, that fact does not impress me, although I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), the spokesman for the Opposition, that I will be supporting him in the Lobby—I am nothing if not fodder.

Frankly, I object to money being raised in areas such as mine, where people are very poor and spend a higher proportion of their income on the lottery than the wealthy. They see that money going into areas from which they will not directly benefit—indeed, from which they will not benefit at all.

Someone asked why the lottery has been such a success. We are a nation of gamblers—that is undoubtedly so—but the fact is that people are desperate. I make a bit of a joke about it, but I am scratching quite a reasonable living and I probably earn far more as a Member of Parliament than the majority of people in my constituency. Given the area that I represent, where more than 20 per cent. are unemployed, I am lucky to have a job.

I know why people play the lottery. It is not necessarily—perhaps not at all—to give money to good causes, but because they are desperate to get out of the situation that they are in. Scratchcards play on that desperation, which is why I particularly oppose them.

One must consider carefully the way in which money is being spent in areas such as mine. When one turns a switch, the Secretary of State comes out with all the statistics. I once likened her to a dalek on Prozac—it is difficult to stop her when she is in mid-flow. She goes on about averages, which are a curse because, by definition, one cannot find out what is really going on. Ask people in a meeting whether they are on the average wage. It is funny, but one can never find anyone who is and that is the point about averages.

We must look into areas such as mine—I specify my area because I know it well—and find out how much of their disposable income people are spending. It must logically follow that people on low incomes spend a greater proportion on the lottery than those with large incomes. One does not need a PhD in statistics to work that one out. I hope that, if the Government will not do it themselves, they will at least get some of the agencies to gather the statistics objectively—usually more than the Government are prepared to do—to find out what is truly going on in those poorer areas, especially in the inner cities.

Conservative Members are wrong if they do not believe that there was great anger over the way in which some of the money was spent. It is all very well for hon. Members to deceive themselves—do not try to deceive the people as well. There was great anger in my constituency when people found out that £14 million had gone on purchasing Churchill's scribblings. There was intense anger. They thought, "Are we are putting in money to get that sort of thing—to benefit some well-heeled Tory Member of Parliament?"

Mr. Coe: I never thought that the hon. Gentleman was a killjoy. Is he really suggesting that he would take innate pleasure away from generations of young children who are probably scrabbling around in their lofts at this very moment looking for letters from fond grandparents?

Mr. Banks: I have a few letters from my fond grandparents, but I doubt whether I will get £14 million for them. If the hon. Gentleman wants to buy them, he can have them.

Mr. Maxton: As someone who owns the papers of my late uncle Jimmy Maxton, although they are in a public library—they might not have the historical significance of Sir Winston Churchill's papers, but they certainly have historical significance and some value—I would never accept one penny for them. It is not that we should not have spent the £14 million. The disgrace is that anyone took the £14 million and then claimed to be a great patriot and that their grandfather was the greatest Englishman who ever lived.

Mr. Banks: I yield to no one in my admiration for Jimmy Maxton—an even more distinguished

parliamentarian than my hon. Friend, but then are not most? No, that is not fair. My hon. Friend takes the honourable position.

We hear this great story about the market and what would have happened had we not stepped in. We know why people bought the Churchill papers. They thought that they would touch the patriotic fervour because it was the anniversary of the end of the war. They thought that people would throw their sweaty hats in the air and say, "Hurrah for the Churchills. We have given another 14 million quid to an undeserving descendant of the great Winston." They did not. They were intensely angry.

Frankly, no one in Newham will spend much time consulting the Churchill scribblings. Those papers are for the benefit of academics, who travel almost as regularly as Members of Parliament on factfinding tours these days. If they had been sold to a Texan university or wherever, academics would still have had access.

What on earth were we doing? It was middle-class people saving other middle-class people, in the mistaken idea that they could touch the patriotic fervour of this country when we were commemorating the second world war.

There are other examples. I know what the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) said about Eton college. I cannot believe that there is no benefit at all to that pre-eminent public school. That grant sends all the wrong messages. Whatever the truth of the matter and whoever was saying that it was a wrong accusation, there was intense anger in my constituency.

A lot more anger is coming the way of those who are so reckless with other people's money, for example when they realise that a lot of public money is to be spent on putting the royal yacht Britannia in Portsmouth harbour without its engine as part of its millennium site. I noticed in the *Daily Mirror* today that the Duke of Edinburgh has somehow managed to negotiate a deal whereby the yacht will be towed, because the engine will have gone, to Cowes each year, so that he can have it there for Cowes week. Again, that does not send the right message.

We know that the Palace has been plying Ministers with letters, asking why more money is not being given to the national maritime museum. The whole thing looks like a rig as far as we are concerned and that is why people are intensely angry.

It is nonsense to try to second-guess the punters. Money from areas such as mine should go back to areas such as mine because that is where the money was originally raised. If money is not being raised somewhere else, that means that the people there are not spending money on the lottery so why the hell should they get anything out of it? It is as simple as that.

People play the lottery because they want to get a prize back; at least they would know when they spend their money that if they do not win a prize, their community will get the residue back to improve facilities, whether that involves sports or arts facilities or other good causes. That is the way to do it. The technology to provide that choice should not be beyond the wit of Camelot. It could be done. On the back of ticket there should be a series of suggestions so that people could specify where they want their money to go.

I am about to be dragged off by the Whip so I must conclude. The charities are losing out but it was logical that they would. The Arts Council and heritage and sports bodies were not relying on charitable handouts. They were already getting funds. The lottery provides additional funding for them. There is only a certain amount of money going round. It is therefore right for the Government to discover how much the charities have lost and compensate them accordingly.

Of course the lottery is here to stay but let no Conservative Member accuse the Opposition of whingeing when we say that something as successful as the lottery is not beyond improvement. Improvements should be made and when Labour is in Government, those improvements will be made.

9 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), as always, spoke with passion and sincerity on behalf of constituents. I congratulate him on the manner in which he did so.

The hon. Gentleman's speech contained a general criticism that, as he said, anybody might make about the national lottery. Anyone can have ideas about how the money is distributed. Indeed, I may have one or two of my own. It seems extraordinary that that has been the basis of all the hullabaloo surrounding the national lottery despite its fantastic success.

The Opposition have chosen to devote a whole day's debate to the subject. I am delighted that we are having this debate, because any extra publicity the national lottery gets, particularly if people are complaining that the prizes are too big, must be good for it; the more people who hear that the prizes are too big, the more people will buy tickets and the more money will be raised for good causes.

In the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West we again heard Labour's gut reaction vendetta against anything that makes a profit. We heard it about all the privatised industries. We heard the same story about handing them profits on a plate. It was not evident when we privatised those industries that they would be easy to run and as profitable as they have been. It is the same with the national lottery. It has been far more successful than anyone dared anticipate when it was launched. Of course there were risks, risks such as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. Goodness knows what subject he will blow up about next, and goodness knows what hare he might have started running that could have damaged the launch of the national lottery. Happily, it went extremely well and better than expected and so Camelot has been more profitable than expected.

The national lottery was a completely new product in the British market. It was a virgin, untested market and there was a risk involved in its launch. It could even have been a disaster. In the hon. Gentleman's speech we had a hint of what has motivated his politics throughout his political life when he said that it was a case of middle class people spending money on middle class people. I suppose that it would be exceptional if we got through a debate on the distribution of national lottery money without somebody trying to reopen the class war debate.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. Gentleman know anything about what has happened in other parts of the

[Mr. Bermingham]

world? Could he name one national lottery in Europe, America, the far east or anywhere else that has ever failed?

Mr. Jenkin: I am sure that the most successful national lotteries have been those that have been commercially operated by profitable companies where the incentive motive has been applied. The lottery launch might not have been as successful as planned, in which case Camelot might have made a loss far into the future. It planned to make its first profit in the fourth year on a lower turnover than has been achieved.

Mr. Tony Banks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Jenkin: If the hon. Gentleman was so confident that turnover was going to exceed what had been expected, why did he not raise the matter when the Bill was passed? Of course, he was not concerned about that then.

I shall briefly deal with comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones). She made a great many complaints about the national lottery. She did not explain to the House or her constituents what her constituency is receiving from the national lottery. I note two grants to Birmingham of £3.7 million, one for the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra and one for Birmingham's gallery, as well as grants to charities. That is a huge benefit for Birmingham and one for which the hon. Lady should be more grateful.

The lottery was initiated by the Government and it is a Government success that so much is now raised for good causes. I confess my own interests and prejudices in the matter. I am a concert and opera-goer. Two of my sisters are professional musicians who may well one day benefit from funds that have filtered through from the national lottery. I would have been a musician myself had not politics grabbed hold of me.

I am a member of the National Trust and look forward to it receiving funds from the lottery. I am a fan of English Heritage and look forward to it getting similar funds. There was always every expectation that the pinnacles of artistic achievement in this country were going to benefit from the national lottery. It ill befits even the Opposition to throw up their hands in horror because we have finally decided to give the Royal Opera house a decent amount of money to take it into the 21st century.

Every major opera centre in the world benefits considerably from public funds. It would be extraordinary if we did not devote considerable sums from the national lottery to such institutions. One may complain about elitists—and they are unashamedly elitist—getting money, but opera has become a very popular medium now that commercial radio stations such as Classic FM have made it even more popular.

The great pinnacles of artistic achievement used to be funded by private individuals before Labour Governments taxed them to death and destroyed the country's private wealth base. If we are going to tax heavily people who become wealthy, the state must take over the role of major patron of the arts. Haydn's patron may have been an Austrian prince with fantastic wealth; the Haydns of today have to depend on state funding to create their art.

In any event, funding is also going to other things such as the millennium fund, sport and the caring charities. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on an exceptional and thoughtful speech.

I add my thanks to the national lottery and to the Government for the grants that my constituency has received. We have had £15,000 for the Wivenhoe sailing club and £11,550 for Lexden Springs school for children with severe learning difficulties. The university of the Essex is getting a £45,000 grant for a rock climbing wall. There are not many cliffs in Essex and that grant will help to develop a good sport. Far the biggest grant, however, has gone to an exceptional charity, Colchester Homestart, which received £121,000 from the lottery. I do not complain about that success; it is a tremendous boost for Colchester. No doubt I am not receiving a fair share of the handouts, because so much is going to Scotland and Wales, but I do not begrudge them that. We are in the early stages of distribution: there is much more to be distributed in the years ahead.

Perhaps more Labour Members are present now, but, given that this is an Opposition day, Labour attendance has been pretty thin. In his conference speech, the Leader of the Opposition presented slight but damaging proposals to undermine the lottery's success by limiting the prize money and creating an extra tier of bureaucracy in the distribution of funds. Of course, we can all make our own points about how those funds should be distributed.

The desire to control, the desire to interfere—it has all come out in Labour speeches today. There is a feeling that the state should not promote a form of gambling—a prejudice that winning large sums is sometimes bad for people. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on putting that point in context. There is a feeling that it is wrong to want to win large sums—that it is the Government's job to decide what is and is not good for individuals, even if that damages the objective of the lottery, which is to raise money for good causes. I am grateful to the Government for not listening to that advice.

Today's debate is intended—needlessly and pointlessly—to tease away at the lottery's teething problems. Of course there will be teething problems; the lottery has been going for only a few months. Yet, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne pointed out, the whole debate has been constructed on the basis of chatter around Islington dinner tables and the complaints that we have seen in *The Guardian*.

Of course we have much to learn about how to distribute lottery funds. To decide that funds are to be distributed to elitist causes such as the Royal Opera house and that handouts to charities are to be delayed sometimes requires considerable political astuteness. That is a problem; but, in future years, we shall have money coming out of our ears to devote to good causes, because the lottery has been such a success.

The debate says a lot about the Labour party. Concerns have been raised by the chattering classes; a whole debate has been constructed on the basis of a few minor amendments and talk of room for improvement, but there has been little to say on that subject. The motion

"calls for reform of the distribution mechanisms for Lottery funds"

to ensure a fairer distribution, but Labour is not proposing anything concrete. It has damaging plans for a vendetta against profit. Why do Labour Members stand up to

defend Littlewoods pools—the Moores family has enjoyed a monopoly for many years and has made a great deal of money out of it—while saying that they do not want the lottery to make a profit?

Complaints about the delay in the establishment of a National Lottery Charities Board is hardly an adequate pretext for a whole day's debate. If this is the most pressing issue with which Her Majesty's official Opposition can occupy a whole day's debate, it is quite extraordinary. I wanted to speak in order to make my point about that useless lot over there.

9.12 pm

Mr. Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Small Heath): The speech of the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) spoke volumes about the Tory party's attitude. Our reasoned motion points out the success of the lottery; it also makes some suggestions for its improvement. I support the lottery. I think that its introduction in this country was long overdue, and I voted for it.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) reminded us that he introduced, in 1992, the private Member's Bill calling for a lottery to be set up, which had all-party support. He paid tribute to the support that he received at the time. During this debate, the Government have attempted to turn the lottery into not the people's but the Tories' lottery. Apparently, it somehow belongs to them: they thought of it, and they should take all the credit.

If Tories wish to make that claim, that is their business. All I can say is, it speaks volumes for the paucity of Tory success stories that they need to do that. Nevertheless, if they want to, they are welcome to it, because the lottery has been a great success.

What surprises me, however, is the fact that the Government cannot accept the reasonable and sensible motion, and I wonder why they cannot do so. Undoubtedly, out there in the real world, in the shops or supermarkets where people buy their lottery tickets, the overwhelming public perception is that the lottery is a good idea, but people have three great worries.

First, the public perception is that the operators of the lottery take too much profit. It does not matter what any Member of the House tries to say to dissuade them. The public perception is that Camelot makes a fortune from the lottery. We have heard certain hon. Members demonstrating why they believe that that is true but, whether or not it is true, the public perception is that Camelot is on to a good number and makes a fortune.

The second perception out there, among the wider public, the people who buy the lottery tickets, is that the money is not fairly distributed and that certain causes appear to have a fast-track approach, such as the Churchill papers. Perhaps that is unfair, but that is the public perception.

The third public perception is that, in spite of their vehement denials, the Government will try to use lottery money to substitute for public expenditure. Of course, no Minister will stand up and say that that is what they will do. No one will do that. However, I suggest that the Treasury will put pressure on the Department of National Heritage and the Department will freeze certain budgets and will not make additional moneys available to compensate for inflation in costs, wages and so on. Then it will say, if there is criticism, "But we have not cut the budget." It simply will not have provided for natural growth. That is when lottery money will begin to be diverted. The Department of National Heritage will say, "We have not cut the budget, but if you wish to top up existing programmes there is, of course, lottery money." That is the way in which it will be done.

The public are not daft. They know that it will be done. They know perfectly well what the game is about; it is about the Budget in November. It is about the tax cuts, the 1p or 2p off income tax and the other tax cuts—the tax bribes. The electorate are not daft. They play the lottery and they will take their chance of winning, but they realise exactly what it is.

What surprises me most of all is the fact that not only does the Tory party claim that it is its lottery but the party does not wish to improve it in response to some of those public worries. It would be an act of sheer stupidity for the Tory party to say, "The lottery as it stands is wonderful and could never be improved. If we could set it up again, we would set it up exactly as we have set it up now. We would allow Camelot to make the money that it makes. We would allow the money to be distributed in the way in which it has been done." Nevertheless, that is what the Government are saying—otherwise, they would accept the sensible suggestions made in the motion.

Mr. Bermingham: Is there not a fourth concept—jobs for the boys? Take, for example, the south bank project, which just happened to be designed, if I remember correctly, by the vice-chairman of the Arts Council. The acoustics of the building are not up to international standards and never can be, and it is only a facade. It is a classic example of jobs for the boys—and a mere £60 million is involved.

Mr. Godsiff: My hon. Friend gives an excellent example of the way in which the wider public perceive some of that money being distributed to those who have inside knowledge and the fast-track approach. There are many other examples.

The Churchill papers have been mentioned, and I make no apology for mentioning them again. The purchase of the Churchill papers was greeted with absolute derision and disgust by the wider public, and Conservative Members will know that from what they heard from their constituents.

I do not take a moral attitude towards gambling, and while I respect those people who argue against gambling on a moral basis, I do not agree with them. I find the attitude of the Church of England—which used to be known as the Tory party at prayer—if not hypocritical, then somewhat contradictory. The Church of England has pontificated about the lottery while encouraging its churches to put in applications for grants.

I want the lottery to be a success, but I want the people who contribute their money to the lottery to be the beneficiaries. There is no doubt that the public's perception is that Camelot has got a nice little earner. Reference has been made to a "licence to print money", a remark which goes back to the introduction of commercial television. Lord Thomson knew what commercial television was all about, and the same arguments advanced today about the lottery were advanced then—it is a new venture and a risk. Lord Thomson had no inhibitions about commercial television. He said that it was a licence to print money and that he could not lose, and he has been proved correct.

[Mr. Godsiff]

The lottery is exactly the same. There is no way in which Camelot could lose, and the idea that Camelot could muck up the whole thing, go into liquidation and have to be rescued by the Government to save the national lottery is nonsense. It was a licence to print money, and frankly the Government got taken for a ride. They did not drive a hard enough bargain with Camelot.

I would like to refer to a couple of by-products of the lottery. I am a supporter of the national lottery, but I am extremely concerned about two particular repercussions from it, one of which is the pools industry. I am not here to defend Littlewoods pools or any other firm, but I am here to express concern for our national game, which is football. Football is still the biggest participatory ball game in this country. Millions of people go to watch every week, and hundreds of thousands of people play football every week.

Professional football has had a huge influx of money at the highest levels following the deal with Sky, but public action has assisted in providing the money for the Football Trust to carry out much-needed improvement programmes at many grounds. The Government have helped by reducing betting tax. The Football Trust has been a huge beneficiary of money from the pools, but that money has been badly hit by the lottery.

I fear that, although the top clubs in this country—the Manchester Uniteds and Arsenals—have received Football Trust money and have carried out developments at their grounds, the smaller clubs, which are very much part of the fabric of their communities, will not have the money available to carry out much-needed improvements. That is a direct result of the impact of the lottery.

Reference has been made to the impact of scratchcards, and they have had an effect on the money that is coming into the Football Trust. They have also had an effect on the money coming into professional, part-time and amateur football clubs throughout the country, because many clubs relied on the income from their weekly scratchcards to make ends meet. I hope that the Government will accept that a by-product of the lottery will have a potentially enormous effect on our national game. I hope that the Government will take full note of that fact and that the Department of National Heritage, in discussions with the Chancellor, will seek to ensure that the enormous benefits that have accrued to football through the implementation of the Taylor report's recommendations do not disappear because money from the Football Trust—which is funded by the pools companies—is cut drastically as a result of the national lottery.

I have said that I support the national lottery. St. Peter's college in Saltley in my constituency applied for funds to build a new gymnasium, and the grant was awarded. The college is grateful for that award, and so am I. I hope that many more applications from my constituency will be equally well received by the various boards. I hope that Birmingham's bid for the millennium money that is needed to regenerate a desperately poor part of the city—which happens to be on the edge of my constituency in Digbeth—will also be received favourably by Government. I pay tribute to the benefits that have flowed from lottery money.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Is the bid not for Solihull?

Mr. Godsiff: Birmingham made its own bid for millennium money; perhaps the hon. Gentleman has other information.

I hope that the money raised by the lottery will flow to those areas from whence it came. My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) referred to the fact that it is the poorer people who play the lottery. Camelot has the figures to show exactly where the lottery money comes from. There is nothing to stop it producing figures that show that the largest amounts of money are raised in places such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Glasgow.

The Government could issue directions to the boards to ensure that those places from whence the money came will benefit most of all. That would be a fair and an enormously popular move. It would also head off the argument that lottery money goes only to prestigious, elitist projects.

I am surprised that the Government will not accept the very sensible and reasoned Opposition motion. I am sorry that Conservative Members have chosen to try to hijack the lottery as the Tory lottery. It is not; it belongs to the people and it originated in the House on an all-party initiative. I hope that Conservative Members will rethink on the matter. They must realise that there is bipartisan support for the lottery and that Labour Members' criticisms are not carping, but genuine and reasoned.

9.28 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I pay tribute to today's long and interesting debate and, in particular, to the excellent speeches of my hon. Friends, even though I disagreed with them on occasion. I recognise that they were constructive and sincere.

I wish to start with a confession: I like the lottery and I play the lottery. I regret that I have another confession to make: I have yet to win a brass farthing. If the lottery is, as Adam Smith described:

"A tax on all the fools in creation",

I plead guilty to being one of that number—if only in this instance. Illustrating the old maxim about remarriage—the triumph of hope over experience—there is no doubt that the hand in the sky has pointed at me from the advertisement. Unfortunately, it has used the wrong number of fingers—think about it.

There is also no doubt that the national lottery has caught the public's imagination. More than £4 billion has been wagered so far on the main lottery and its supplementary scratchcards. I think we all accept that that success is wildly beyond the expectations of the lottery's strongest supporters, among whom I happily number myself. In view of that success, it is important to get it right, to examine any shortcomings as they arise and to try to correct them.

Much disquiet has been voiced over the past few weeks, generally with some justification. The purpose of the debate has been to highlight the problems that we see as critical to the lottery's long-term success and to offer our

remedies for consideration by the House. My right hon. and hon. Friends have sought assurances from the Secretary of State on many points. Sadly, she has in the main failed to provide them. At one stage she resorted to the tactic that she used in the Department of Health of bombarding us with misleading statistics and bland assurances that all will be well. How foolish of us to expect anything else.

I shall recap on some of the most obvious areas of concern in the hope that the Minister of State can do better in his speech. I shall deal first with the Treasury and the attempt by the Chief Secretary to offset lottery income against Arts Council grants. The Secretary of State rightly took action against that to defend her corner through the letter that was leaked to *The Independent* a few weeks ago.

The Government's initial position was absolutely straightforward. The then Secretary of State said in 1993 that the proceeds would not be brought within the control total and that the Government would not make any case-by-case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of awards from lottery proceeds. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said, that was followed by the Prime Minister's statement to the English Heritage conference in 1994 that the Government would make no case-by-case reduction on conventional public spending programmes to take account of awards from the lottery.

Surely the position is clear enough, but the Government amendment makes absolutely no mention of it, although we have mentioned it in our motion. I have carefully read their amendment but, alas, it contains no reference to this robust defence of the arts or of any other sector covered by the lottery. However, I am quite prepared to take the Secretary of State's word that she is fighting her corner and to wait until the figures are before us at the end of November to see what transpires. I accept that with the Budget coming up she may be constrained in what she can say, but I suspect that we may find that the position is not nearly as rosy as she would like us to think.

It is not as though the Treasury has done badly out of the lottery over the past year. I reckon that by the time of the Budget the Government will have taken more than 500 million quid out of our pockets and put it into theirs. They have done well out of the lottery and I see no need for them to come back for more. Surely what they have had is enough.

The action of the Wales tourist board in refusing to fund a jazz festival showed that at least one Department had not adhered to the spirit of the original commitment. The position had to be clarified and clear guidelines issued, and I welcome the Secretary of State's assurances in the debate that she has confirmed the original position and that the Department has agreed that in future it will apply.

The next issue is the profit accruing to the operator. Conservative Members always salivate when Labour Members start to talk about profits—as if they would defend any level of profits in any circumstance at any time. As a generality, at least to those who have brains, that is not the case. It is clear that the profits are wildly in excess of the original predictions. I fully accept that they match the success of the lottery and I also accept that success deserves some reward, but I warn Conservative Members that as the profits ring up from £100 million to £200 million, £300 million, £400 million, £500 million they will have much more difficulty than the Opposition in defending their position before the public.

Mr. Jenkin: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Government chose the wrong lottery operator?

Dr. Moonie: No, I am saying that it is possible with hindsight to say that perhaps mistakes were made. I accept that it is always easy to argue in hindsight. We are arguing in hindsight. All modifications to schemes, after all, are carried out in hindsight. I am saying that the Government may have been taken for a ride by the lottery operator, which would not surprise me, and that the Government should, in turn, recognise that its profit is higher than a fair return on the risk that has been taken—effectively nil—and on the capital deployed, which is very much less. That is what profit and risk are based on: the capital deployed, not business turnover, as Conservative Members would like us to accept.

The return that the lottery operator will make on capital deployed in the next seven years will be indefensible, and Conservative Members know that just as well as Labour Members. Tonight's defence of that position is a sham.

Once again, a private monopoly is being allowed to take too great a share of the proceeds. We have said that, when we are in power and the contract comes up for renewal, we will ensure that a non-profit-making body will be set up to run the lottery. Meanwhile, I urge the Secretary of State to take what action she can to restrain Camelot's profit to as reasonable a return as possible, although, given the wording of the legislation, I accept that that may not be easy. It requires action and the involvement of the better nature of Camelot and, when it comes right down to it, I shall not place too much faith in its better nature,

We want transparency in decision-making. What is wrong with that? We want clear guidelines for the disbursement of money. Adequate accountability to the public is not unnecessary bureaucracy, but a necessary adjunct to the whole process. It is far superior to the use of whines and threats by Tory Members in the past week or two, and the disgraceful and covertly racist articles in some newspapers about some of the grants that have been awarded.

Those Conservative Members chose to criticise awards to the Somalia fund and the Vietnamese, but what two peoples in the world have experienced worse problems in the past two or three decades? In those circumstances, how could anyone possibly criticise the awards that have been given? It is a disgrace.

Let the public see that the process is fair. If suitable checks and balances are instituted, many of the misunderstandings that have arisen in the past couple of weeks will be avoided. That is all that we are asking for in the motion.

In the latest allocations, there have been winners and losers, which is inevitable in a lottery—trite but true. I am happy to say that my constituency has been a winner: the awards have included one substantial grant to the Cope centre of £159,000. I am proud and surprised to say that I was its referee. I should not be saying that as a great party of organisations will no doubt beat a path to my constituency surgery door next week to try to take advantage of my obvious skill in picking winners, at least on someone else's behalf, if not on my own. There have

[Dr. Moonie]

been other grants in my constituency, which I also welcome wholeheartedly because they will provide great benefit to communities there.

Other organisations, sadly, have not been so lucky, which again is inevitable. About 600 bids have been successful and 15,000 have either been unsuccessful or are yet to be processed.

Mr. Kirkhope: So far.

Dr. Moonie: So far. I recognise that more money is to come and that other organisations will be pleased in the coming months. The Minister must remember that he is no longer a Whip; he is not allowed to speak from a sedentary position.

Although I recognise the problems of maldistribution—all odd distributions may be ironed out in future allocations—it might be better if the Secretary of State considered having greater regional input in the selection process. I am not proposing how that could be done; I am merely suggesting that it might improve the overall allocation of money in regions. Many people and organisations have been disappointed in the present round. Let us hope that many of them will be satisfied in the rounds to come.

We need clear guidelines to ensure that the chance of success is maximised and applicants need a prompt explanation if their application has been rejected. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland explained why he would be unable to attend all the debate. He will return as soon as he can.

Several other problems require urgent action, but I recognise that since my time is drawing to a close I shall have to touch on them briefly. The system is inflexible and I can give two examples of that. At present, Scottish Opera is ineligible for funding. It desperately needs funding to keep going because it is impossible to keep a full opera company going in Scotland. It is trying to commission a new opera and project funding would go a long way towards meeting the shortfall that it is likely to face this year. I hope that the Minister will take cognisance of that and do something about it.

In the same way, the Festival theatre in Edinburgh is facing problems. It incurred huge capital costs before it was eligible for grant. It will have difficulty in keeping going.

I regret that in the time available I am unable to say what I would like to about the problems facing medical charities, the football pools—the Chancellor may well cast a friendly nod in that direction—what to do with the millennium fund after it has been wound up and, last but by no means least, what to do about the social effects of the lottery on its users and those with gambling problems. We cannot take £4 billion out of the economy without some noticeable effects and it is about time that we thought about how to investigate what they are.

Let us remember that without the lottery we would not be having this debate because there would not be any money to disburse to good causes. Let us accept that it has been a good thing and that the Government have learnt something from the debate, but that may be a bit too much to hope. Let us hope that even now they can learn from the mistakes and act promptly rather than risk the whole thing turning sour in the long term.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Department of National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I welcome the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) to the Dispatch Box for his first national heritage debate. I thank him for the extremely pleasant manner in which he made his speech and I hope that it will be ever thus. I can confirm that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) courteously explained why he would not be able to be here, and I accept that.

I want to answer one or two of the general points that arose several times during the debate and, if there is time, I shall answer some of the specific points raised by hon. Members.

One of the first things that struck me was how, so often, Opposition Members raised points to which I thought that the answer had been given clearly and irrefutably. For instance, they raised the question of whether jackpot prizes should be capped. Let me explain as calmly and clearly as I can that the whole point of not capping the jackpot is that if there is a roll-over, more people buy tickets in the lottery that week and that means more money for good causes. That is the simple and irrefutable reason for that. The hon. Members for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) mentioned that. I am not sure whether that is the Labour party's policy at the moment. That is why it would be wrong in simple arithmetical and financial terms to cap the jackpot.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy raised the question of additionality. Let me say beyond any doubt that the Government never had, and never will have, any intention of substituting lottery funding for what would otherwise be paid for by the Government. That is absolutely clear, and there was no need to put it in the motion.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): If there was no need to put it in the motion, why did the Wales tourist board withdraw the offer of grant to the Brecon jazz festival information centre in the first place? The decision was reversed only this afternoon.

Mr. Sproat: There is a simple reason for that. That grant had to be matched by private sector funding. That was stated specifically. The lottery funding was not private sector funding. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has considered the matter and agreed that the Wales tourist board should be in parallel with all the other tourist boards. The position has been changed. That has nothing to do with additionality. There are a number of Government schemes where there has to be private sector money. For example, Sportsmatch has to have private sector money levered in, as do environmental action grants. There was nothing dramatic about the matter to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State acted extremely swiftly in responding to what he thought was an anomaly. Opposition Members should be happy about that.

The Opposition state in their motion that they want the lottery to be run by a non-profit-making organisation. They fail to understand that it is precisely because Camelot is a private sector organisation that the lottery has been so successful. The more successful the lottery, the more successful the good causes, and the more successful are Camelot and its shareholders. It is exactly

right that the general good is benefited by the private sector good. I do not know whether Opposition Members realise that, despite the short time that the lottery has been operating, it is about to become the most successful national lottery in the world. That is because of the excellent way in which Camelot has managed it.

Camelot has not made the massive, unfair and unjustified profits that Opposition Members have chosen to portray. In fact, profits are less than 1 per cent. of the turnover of the lottery, and are likely to remain so. That is a small amount of profit. If Opposition Members study what I believe is known as the bible of the lottery world, "La Fleur's Lottery World", which records all that happens in all the lotteries round the world, they will find that Camelot has been judged by that bible as No. 1 in the world league of efficiently run operators. It is the slimmest and cleanest lottery operator in the world. Camelot has built up almost the largest national lottery in the world—it is now No. 2—by operating the most efficient lottery.

It is argued by Labour Members that there was no risk attached to the lottery and that Camelot was given a licence to print money. I remember that when the relevant legislation was passing through the House, all the estimates of the turnover of the lottery were a little over £1 billion. Camelot bid on the basis that the lottery would not be the huge success that it has become. It was thought that the turnover would be very much less. There were eight bidders and Camelot offered the most money to good causes. If it was such an obvious no-risk business, why did the seven other bidders not do as well? In fact, there was a serious risk and, as I have said, Camelot offered the best deal for good causes.

We have been reminded that Mr. Richard Branson submitted a bid. If Opposition Members take the trouble to read page 33 of the National Audit Office's account of the matter, they will find that Mr. Branson did not offer as much to good causes as did Camelot. He was not even second. Indeed, he was not even third. The bid, as the NAO stated, was conducted in a manner beyond reproach. It said how well the bid was done, as did La Fleur's, the bible of lotteries around the world, which also said that we have the most efficient lottery in the world. Not even a year after its establishment, our lottery is the second biggest national lottery in the world. I think that we should be extremely pleased and proud of what Camelot has managed to do.

I said that in the short time available I would try to go through some of the points raised today. I shall do it in order, as that is perhaps the fairest way. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) referred to what the churches have said about the national lottery in the past day or two. I shall not say too much about what I think about what the churches have said except that I believe it to be completely wrong. They are entitled to their view and I am entitled to mine, but it seems odd to say that the lottery should never have happened and that it is damaging society but then to take lottery money. I understand that the Church of Scotland said that it does not condone gambling and has refused to take the money, which seems the honourable thing to do.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who had so much to do with starting up the lottery in the first place, said that the purpose of the lottery was to

"make a fundamental difference to the sporting and artistic fabric of the nation."

That was the purpose and that is what has happened.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), a man whose credit in the sporting world none would venture to dispute, said that the difference made by the national lottery is incalculable. Hon. Members have only to look at the figures; they do not need to take my word for it. The Sports Council gets almost £50 million a year and will continue to get something of that order. However, the national lottery gives £200 million a year to sport and will provide more when it gets even better. The lottery is therefore giving four times as much to sport as the Sports Council was ever able to do and the Sports Council goes on giving. A similar thing is happening with the Arts Council. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney was right to say that the lottery has made a fundamental difference to the way in which the arts and sport are handled in this country, let alone the national heritage millennium fund and charities.

My right hon. and learned Friend also said that perhaps the National Lottery Charities Board should give more money to mainstream charities. I know that that view is widely held in the House. No doubt the NLCB, which is responsible for making such decisions, rather than the Government, will have heard what has been said and will act accordingly.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill made a moderate and interesting speech. He mentioned Richard Branson, to whom I have already referred. He said that the charities have lost out but I have two responses to make to that point. First, the research done so far into what has happened to charities since the lottery was established is extremely mixed. Money given to the Red Cross has increased, as has the money given to the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund. However, the Royal National Institute for the Blind said that its income has dropped considerably, although it turns out that the drop has been in legacies, which are not affected by the lottery.

The Irish lottery carried out some research into what had happened to Irish charities and found that the majority had seen an increase in their income since the lottery had been running. There is no proof in what has been said, and it is perfectly proper for the hon. Member for Mossley Hill to keep his viewpoint at this stage. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has instituted research into what exactly has happened since the lottery began.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): At last.

Mr. Sproat: One cannot undertake research into the lottery's effect on charities until the lottery has had an effect on them. Once the research has been done, we shall see whether the hon. Member for Mossley Hill was right.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), who had so much to do with promoting the lottery in the House, mentioned the tremendous change in the funding of the arts and sport and the fact that we are living with a success. How pleasant it is to debate something whose absolute success cannot be disputed. We thought that we would be turning over £1 billion a year—we find that we are turning over almost £5 billion a year. We thought that the arts, sports, national heritage and the charities would have some £80 million a year to spend

[Mr. Sproat]

among themselves—now we find that they have £200 million or perhaps £300 million a year. It is a marvellous success.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) made a very supportive speech, and one that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne said, was extremely interesting. The hon. Gentleman began by criticising the Scottish National party for saying that the money which went to the Royal Opera house in London somehow did Scotland out of money. Perhaps there could be agreement across the Floor of the House on how that shows appalling ignorance about the way in which the lottery is run, because of course Scotland has its own Arts Council with its own money from the lottery for it to distribute. The Royal Opera house lottery money, whatever anybody may think about it, came from the Arts Council of England and not the Arts Council of Scotland.

As to whether the Government would offer the same contract to Camelot again, a question asked fairly by the hon. Member for Cathcart, the answer is that the matter will be for the recommendation of the Director General of Oflot; but I do not dodge the question. Since the lottery has been running for less than a year, I would not say what my attitude would be when the franchise came to an end. Let us see what happens. At the moment, I think that Camelot has done an absolutely wonderful job, and with net profits as a percentage of turnover of less than 1 per cent., it is giving remarkably good value.

The hon. Member for Cathcart mentioned the important matter of capital versus revenue, and asked whether we should spend all the money on capital or allocate some for revenue. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne also mentioned that. I would like to find a way of funding revenue, but it is extremely difficult. It is almost a straight banking problem: if we fund revenue, if we fund the coaching which my hon. Friend says is so vital—I agree with him—to sportsmen at the highest level, that means that revenue funding has to be spread over at least three, and perhaps five, years for it to bite. Of course that means that we would be undertaking to spend in years one, two, three, four and five money that we do not have at the moment. That is the problem.

We shall try to find a way round the problem and we have already said that certain capital projects can have a revenue tail to them. That is a start. I promise the hon. Member for Cathcart and the House that we are trying to find a way to solve this important matter in a manner that is financially prudent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made his usual incisive speech—[*Laughter.*] It was a very good speech and it ill becomes hon. Members who were not even in the Chamber at the time to laugh at one of the outstanding contributions to the debate. My hon. Friend said that we should look again at the way in which the charities board is working. I shall draw that to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the charities board, to ensure that it understands that there is some feeling in the House that mainstream charities should be supported a little more, but it is for the board to make the decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), in an extremely amusing and powerful speech, made the essential point of which the House must not lose sight—already some 2,111 awards have been made. We are talking about a great success, and it really was a little dispiriting to see, on an Opposition Supply day, first that the Opposition Benches were almost empty for most of the afternoon, and, secondly—apart from one or two speeches such as that made by the hon. Member for Cathcart—that, without doubt, the general tone was of a rather whingeing, carping nature. I hope that that will stop when Opposition Members have it explained to them that Camelot is not making the excessive profit that they thought it was.

I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). As we all know, he was one of the great originators of the lottery. He deserves great credit and I am sure that in his speech he felt a great deal of pride knowing that what he helped to begin has become a great lottery.

With those few words at the end of a debate about one of the great successes of this country, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the Opposition motion, a motion that has shown clearly that the Opposition have no idea what the lottery is about. I invite the House to oppose the motion and to support the amendment in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 302.

Division No. 224] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Chris *(L'Boro & S'worth)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George

Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(L'pool Br'dg'n)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McCartney, Robert
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Clelland and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth *(M Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sir Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'hre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(South Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hamilton, Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Sir Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, Sir David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, The Reverend William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Monro, Rt Hon Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Sir Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the huge success of the National Lottery and the enormous sums of extra money it is raising for the Good Causes Fund to go to the arts, sport, the heritage, the caring charities and the celebration of the Millennium; believes that the operator, whose selection was endorsed by the NAO, is running the lottery efficiently and cost-effectively; congratulates the distributing bodies on making an excellent start in spreading the benefits of the Lottery throughout the land; and calls upon the Opposition to recognise this success and the opportunity it brings to improve the quality of life.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Streeter.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I welcome the opportunity of raising a problem concerning the port of Liverpool and its dock workers. I declare an interest as a member of the Transport and General Workers Union for 50 years, a record of which I am proud. I served on union committees at both district and national level in the docks and waterways section. Those are my credentials for understanding the history of the docks industry. I hope that the Minister accepts that.

The dispute was brought to a head by the conduct of the employer and the deterioration of industrial relations. The House will know that the Government, through the Dock Work Act 1989, abolished the national dock labour scheme. That was done on the basis that the industry had moved ahead. It was no longer labour intensive but moving towards being more capital intensive.

However reluctantly, the dockers accepted that situation. Nevertheless, they felt, and I think that their fears were well founded, that the result of the abolition of the scheme would be a return to casual labour.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): That is what they are worried about.

Mr. Loyden: As my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) says, that is what they are worried about. Everything that the dock company has done recently confirms that fear.

I and my hon. Friends the Members for Wallasey, for Bootle (Mr. Benton) and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry), met the dock company which said that it wanted casual labour. It referred to it as permanent casual labour. I do not know what that means; perhaps the Minister will be able to explain it. It must mean either permanently casual or casually permanent. I do not know which of those the company meant.

There is no doubt that the dock workers fear a return to the sort of days that I can remember. The Minister probably does not remember them. I can tell him that men in those days were treated worse than animals. They were herded into tightly packed pens. The selection of men was based on discrimination of all sorts; it could be based on religion, or on whether men had blue eyes or anything. The dignity of those men was taken from them; they were lowered to the status of animals. Men were hired, and the rest were sent home without work or wages. It was through the struggle of dock workers throughout the country that the conditions that they endured were recognised as inhuman and undeniably barbaric.

The campaign lasted throughout the century, up to and after the war. The campaigners wanted a scheme to end casualisation and give dockers the dignity enjoyed by other workers. The industry in Liverpool provided the life blood for the local economy—not only in Liverpool, but in the hinterland on both sides of the river. Liverpool's wealth grew out of that work force—dockers, seamen and others. As recently as pre-1989, that force consisted of 6,000 people; now it consists of only 500.

The Minister must understand that the events that brought the present situation to a head were not instantaneous; they had been building up as a result of poor labour relations. Let me also stress that massive support is coming from areas that no one would expect to give such support. Religious leaders have condemned the company; the *Liverpool Echo*—which I have never known to praise or support any striker, let alone dockers, at any time in its history—has made rousing comments about the way in which the company has handled the situation. Further support has been provided by the local community.

Recently, even the head of Radio Merseyside—*[Interruption.]*—I mean Radio City—said, at a dinner for business men, no less, that the company was acting like the mill owners of the 19th century. That shows the depth of feeling in Liverpool about the way in which the company has treated its dockers. These are decent men, who stayed in the docks rather than taking £35,000 and walking away. They wanted to continue to work in the docks, and they had a right to do so.

Those who have met the board and the dockers have gained the impression that the company set out to ensure a disturbance, so that the men would finally go through the gate. The company could then attempt to recruit outside, abandoning responsibility for the container base so that it would be taken over and scabs would be drafted in to take the jobs. I make no apology for calling them scabs: they would undermine dock workers by walking in and working for lower wages, under the conditions that prevailed before and even after the war.

The Minister may ask what that has to do with him. The Government, however, have shares in the company; they have a responsibility to tell it—as I hope that they will—that, in return for the tranches of money that they have given for its modernisation, the company must deal with this problem, and respond to the feelings expressed by local people.

Liverpool is a successful port. It is now turning over £35 million—the highest amount that it has turned over in its history.

That has happened because dock workers have accepted the change, no matter how bitterly it has taken place, and they are the people who have created the wealth for the company. They have created the success. It is not made in offices or boardrooms. It is made by the people who work on the coal face of industry—in the docks. They are the people who have made it possible for the port to be probably the most successful in the post-war period.

I say to the Government that that position will not go away. There is now a great deal of strong feeling about the way in which the dockers have been treated. I remind the House and the Minister that the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), who was the Secretary of State for Employment at the time when the Dock Work Bill was passing through the House—and I have played a part in every dock Bill that has been discussed in the House since I have been a Member of Parliament—said:

> "Dock work is now highly skilled specialist work that often requires the use of sophisticated machinery. It requires a permanent and well trained work force. The days when large numbers of unskilled workers assembled waiting to see if"

they were to work

> "have gone for good—and everyone is glad of that. To underline that point, the employers in the present scheme ports have given an assurance that after abolition there will be no return to casual employment."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 45.]

[Mr. Loyden]

We refer to ourselves in this place as honourable men.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): And women.

Mr. Loyden: And women. I thank my hon. Friend.

The Secretary of State has made statements of that type and the director of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has made a similar statement that there would be no return to casualisation. The incident that triggered off that position occurred at a company that was set up with the consent—or agreement—of both the company and the dock workers. That was Torside.

Among the workers at that company were young men—younger than the existing age range among the dock workers—and they formed part of the company in the port of Liverpool. Five of those young men, many of whom were dockers' sons, some not, who were keen to get into dock work, keen to obtain a job in the docks, were asked—or told, I should say—to work overtime. There was a dispute about the conditions of that overtime, which resulted in the men refusing to work overtime. They were summarily dismissed—or, as we say, sacked on the spot. That was what triggered off the present position.

For several days, reconciliation was tried, but it fell on deaf ears on the dock company's part. We, as Members of Parliament, met representatives of the company and tried to instil in them the importance of what was going on. The issue was a minor matter that could have been settled at a later date.

As a result of the strength of feeling among those men, they formed a picket of the dock gates the following week. Obviously, the rest of the container base men would not cross a picket line. Dockers do not know what it means to cross a picket line—they will not do it. As a consequence, the dock company sacked the lot.

It is 1995, and we are returning to the dark days of threatened casualisation. I believe that that is a serious threat. I believe that people are entitled to work with dignity under conditions that are human, and to be part of the process of developing the industry in the way that they have.

At one time, the dockers were the butt of the jokes of some poor comedians, but they themselves have a sense of humour that no one can match and they are men, in that sense, who are proud to be dockers. They are proud of the work they do and proud of the port in which they work, and so are their families and friends and their communities.

With the indulgence of the House, I shall read a letter sent by a docker's wife on the matter. The letter states:

"I am speaking as the wife of a man who has worked on the now booming and highly profitable Liverpool Docks for 28 years, through good times and bad. He has constantly refused severance pay because he wants to work.

I do not work, I look after my elderly parents, our children are still in the education system on inadequate grants, that we have to subsidise. We are totally dependent on my husband's income and I stand firmly beside him whatever the outcome.

I am not political. The only organisations I am a paid up member of are Amnesty International and the Christmas Hamper Club.

On Thursday, when the letter threatening dismissal arrived, I put it in the folder with the others. On Friday when he was sacked, I felt perversely relieved, because over the last 3-4 years, we have lived constantly under this threat. I have stood by and watched as MDHC have in my opinion, used and totally abused a loyal hardworking, co-operative workforce which is acknowledged as the best in the country.

I have watched my husband being bullied by threats and borne the knock-on effects this has on family and social life. It might be OK I said—you will know your rota in advance. It will only be changed occasionally. We can plan our lives around it. How wrong I was.

We have phone calls practically on a daily basis, altering his shift. 7am to 3pm will be changed to 7 to 7. 3pm to 11pm can become 11am to 11pm or nights. The day before a rota day off, they can ring and change your shift to 12 hour nights, then your day off becomes a sleep day.

We get calls on his day off, asking him to work or to change the next day's shift. Bank Holidays—you are expected to work 12 hours. But for your day in lieu you get 7 hours pay.

We have had a call when he has been in bed less than 4 hours after a 12 hour night shift, he was back at work—driving a straddler."

The Minister will be well aware of that docking implement. The letter continued:

"I wondered how human beings could treat their fellow men in such a cruel and insensitive way—without any apparent thought for the social and economic consequences.

Well Mr. Furlong and Mr. Cliff—when you climb into your beds tonight, spare a thought for me.

Doreen McNally—human being—wife and mother—red hair, blue eyes, flesh and blood and as much right to shelter and nourish my family as you have yours."

I ask the Minister to intervene in this case and to try to bring some sense into the minds of the people who have caused the situation. The Minister must give an undertaking that there will be no return to casual work, as promised by a Tory Secretary of State in the past.

10.33 pm

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I fully support the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), who explained to the House the problems facing dockers in Liverpool. I have been inundated with letters from dockers, and from the wives of dockers who are astounded and out of their minds at the idea of their husbands being unemployed.

As my hon. Friend said, dockers with up to 35 years' service are being thrown on the scrapheap without redundancy pay, while those under 55 will have their pensions frozen. That is inhuman, and it is a disgrace that the company can treat workers in that manner. We have met the dock company and—to be perfectly frank—I was disgusted with its attitude. The company's attitude was that it was too bad that these men were being thrown out of work, and Mr. Cliff was reported in the local press as saying that the men would be put out of work irrespective of interventions from Members of Parliament or from church leaders—Catholic, Anglican and Free church leaders—who have begged for the dockers' case to be considered again. Mr. Trevor Furlong said that casualisation would not follow the abolition of the dock labour scheme.

On 17 April 1989, I asked the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) to give an assurance that there would be no casualisation of jobs. He assured me that that was the case. I hope that in his wind-up speech tonight the Minister will confirm that the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Education and

Employment will meet dockers and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company around the table. I hope that the men will then be able to return to work and no jobs will be lost.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Jonathan Evans): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) on securing this debate. I am very much aware that both he and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) have a long record of service to the people of Liverpool. In my role as the Department of Trade and Industry Minister with specific responsibility for industrial issues in the north-west and Merseyside, I visited Liverpool on Friday of last week and again this morning when I attended a meeting with the American ambassador, representatives of local government, private business and the regional agencies, which are all working towards promoting urban regeneration in the area.

In replying to the debate, I think that it is necessary to examine some of the facts of the dispute. They have been touched on to a certain extent in the two previous speeches. The dispute at the port of Liverpool started at a cargo handling company, Torside Ltd. On 28 September, Torside dismissed two employees over a dispute about overtime payments and alleged casualisation. I have heard that described initially as a minor matter, and I have no evidence to challenge that assessment. However, what happened thereafter is of some concern.

Following the dismissals, the remainder of Torside's 80 dockers took strike action and were themselves subsequently dismissed. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company became involved in the dispute only when the dismissed Torside workers established a picket line outside the docks. I was brought up in the mining town of Tredegar in south Wales, and I understand the resonance of picket lines. A large number of Mersey Docks and Harbour Company employees refused to cross the picket line, and work at Seaforth's container and timber terminal stopped. After three days, the company held that the men had dismissed themselves and issued them with dismissal notices.

The company said that it dismissed 300 dockers out of its work force of 380 for breach of contract when the men refused to cross an unofficial picket line and report for work.

Ms Eagle *rose—*

Mr. Evans: I hope that the hon. Lady will excuse me, but I shall not give way. I have been allowed only 10 minutes in which to reply to the debate and I think that many people in Liverpool are anxious to hear the Government respond to the points that were put at some length by the hon. Member for Garston.

In order to ensure that the docks continued to operate, the company advertised the vacant posts. I understand that, in doing so, it made it clear that it would consider applications from the dismissed dockers if they chose to apply.

Let us turn to the actions of the union involved: the Transport and General Workers Union. I note that it sponsors the hon. Members for Garston and for Riverside and they have declared that interest. I also declare the fact that I often acted for the Transport and General Workers Union in my legal practice. The union has not authorised or endorsed—I stress that point—the action at either Torside or at the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. Therefore, the action is unofficial. However, both local and national union officers have made statements criticising the company, calling for the reinstatement of those who have been dismissed and for an end to the use of casual labour.

As the Minister responsible for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, I wish to comment on potential ACAS involvement. I understand that it has been in touch with both parties and that discussions between the company and the union are continuing. ACAS will continue to monitor the situation and it will become involved as and when both parties wish it to do so. However, it must be recognised that—I reinforce this point—ACAS is an independent body and the Government do not have the power to instruct either party to make use of its services.

We heard much in the debate about the law and how it has inhibited dockers in their alleged fight for justice. It will be helpful to examine the facts. It has always been the law, even under legislation by the last Labour Government, that workers who break their contracts of employment can be dismissed and may not be able to claim for unfair dismissal. The law does not provide for immunity from court proceedings for anyone who takes industrial action against an employer who is not a party to the trade dispute to which the action relates. I re-emphasise that point.

The law also requires a union to hold a properly conducted ballot of its members before organising industrial action. It must provide notice of the ballot and details of the result to the employer. It must give seven days' notice of industrial action to the employer and describe those whom it intends should take part. If there is a failure to do that—which is not what happened in this case—the union will not be protected from the possibility of legal action for inducing breaches of contract.

The law protects strikers against discrimination when their strike is official, which means that it is authorised or endorsed by a trade union. Dismissed strikers may be able to claim unfair dismissal if their employer has sacked only some of those who are on strike or if he has reinstated or offered new contracts to some of those who were sacked—*[Interruption.]* I am explaining the position of those who are on strike and have then been dismissed. I said at the beginning of my speech that that is the situation we are dealing with, although some Opposition Members do not appear to recognise that.

In this case, workers were breaking their contracts of employment without making any attempt to use the proper channels for redress in an industrial dispute. The employees of Torside simply chose to walk off the job without a ballot. The employees of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company had no dispute with their employer before they went on strike themselves, and the action of those men was unofficial and unlawful. It was inevitable that consequences would flow from that.

There can be no protection under the law for employees who take unofficial and, in the case of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company employees, secondary and illegal action. As we know, that is precisely the sort of disruptive behaviour that caused so much damage in the past.

[Mr. Evans]

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, in its capacity as the operator of the port of Liverpool, is one of the most significant contributors to the region's economy, and that is good news throughout the north-west. Liverpool university's study entitled "The Employment Impact of the Port of Liverpool in the 1990s" estimates that between 49,000 and 105,000 jobs on Merseyside, which are held by many of the people who are represented by many Opposition Members, depend on the trading activities of the port. That is one of the reasons why it is particularly important that the port should continue to operate.

In the debate we have heard a great deal about casualisation and it is important to explain that casualisation carries particular meaning in the context of dock work. The hon. Member for Garston spoke graphically about that and will have noted that I agreed with his assessment. The term reminds one of bygone days when men were literally fighting one another for the odd day's work. Those brutish practices are long gone and in that sense casualisation no longer exists. That is not surprising, because the nature of dock work has changed radically over the years. New technologies have transformed the way in which the work is undertaken, and our docks no longer teem with gangs of workers manually heaving loads on and off ships. The work today requires skill and adaptability, and one does not obtain a work force with those attributes by returning to the arcane and unsatisfactory recruitment practices of the 1930s.

I have said that the term "casualisation" has a special meaning for the docks. It is an emotive term that rekindles old animosities and can stoke up groundless fears and discontent. It is not to be bandied about in a carefree manner as it has sometimes been in the context of this dispute, especially at a time when the dispute is running with all the resonances that we have heard about in the debate. According to the labour force survey, approximately 85 per cent. of stevedores and dockers are permanently employed.

The port of Liverpool has a proud history. It used to deal with transatlantic liners and sustained a healthy trade until the technical developments of the late 1960s and chronic overmanning imposed by the dock labour scheme caught up with it. Following abolition of that scheme, the port took on a new lease of life. Cargo volumes are at record levels—29 million tonnes in 1994, which is treble the amount for 1987. Many additional shipping lines have been attracted to the port whose Seaforth container terminal and the freeport continue to attract additional traffic. Staff levels are set at realistic levels which are appropriate to the business needs of the docks as opposed to the overmanning—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 26 October 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [26 June].

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 2 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Interviews (Tape Recording)

1. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to require that all interviews between police and suspects should be tape recorded; and if he will make a statement. [36899]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): All interviews in police stations in Northern Ireland designated in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 are tape-recorded where the facility is available. Electronic recording of interviews with terrorist suspects is currently being considered following my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement on 12 June in the debate on the renewal of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Mr. Mullin: I am glad to hear that some progress is being made. I know that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is not keen on tape recording, but it is about time the Minister stood up to it. If he is looking for some sort of concession that shows a return to normality in Northern Ireland and that would enjoy the support of all reasonable people of all political persuasions, is not the tape recording of interviews with suspects, whether terrorist or otherwise, an obvious one?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has pursued that issue consistently for some time. I fully understand the nature of his concern. There is much merit in proceeding with that development. As I have said, it is being considered, and I hope that good progress will be made in due course.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister will agree that it is very important to keep up the momentum of the peace process. The lack of progress on all-party talks is frustrating, but there are other tracks that we should be pursuing, including the justice system. Before the recess, the Minister announced a review of the emergency legislation, but we still do not know who is to head it or the terms of reference. There was also a statement about a White Paper on the police. On both those points, could the Minister tell us what progress is being made and what time scales are involved?

Sir John Wheeler: I am glad to be able to tell the House that the Government are aiming to start the independent review of the continuing need for anti-terrorist legislation in the United Kingdom, including the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, as soon as possible. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is taking the lead in this, but I hope that it will be possible to announce the name of the reviewer and the commencement date in the very near future.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I very much hope that the White Paper on the tripartite structure of the policing system in Northern Ireland will be published before Christmas.

Inward Investment and Tourism

2. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of investment inquiries and tourist statistics since the ceasefire. [36900]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): The statistics are most encouraging. They show a threefold increase in the number of United States investors visiting Northern Ireland since the ceasefires. Tourism figures are even better now than we estimated at the end of June: the first eight months of 1995 saw a 68 per cent. increase in holiday visitors compared with the same period in 1994.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I am delighted to welcome those agreeable trends, which are clearly the direct result of the brave initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Relative tranquillity has now been restored, a tranquillity that those of us who served in Northern Ireland in the early part of the 1970s, the bad old days, doubted would ever come about. Although the House will recognise that it is a sensitive issue, does my hon. Friend agree that any significant dilution of the pre-conditions for the next stage of peace talks could put these marvellous achievements at risk?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and very much take his points, given his experience in Northern Ireland. I certainly agree that prosperity, and increases in prosperity, both in terms of inward investment and tourism, will greatly depend on stability in the Province. At the end of the day, that stability can be underpinned only by confidence. Of course we will take seriously any areas where confidence has to be created or could be diminished by other actions.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: The Minister is aware that all visitors to Northern Ireland are given a warm welcome. Does he agree that it would be a good idea for the Department of Economic Development, the tourist board and others, including the planning service, to co-operate with one another to provide more accommodation? Will he investigate allegations that Department of the

Environment plants are discharging pollution into rivers, which is certainly discouraging fishermen from visiting Northern Ireland as tourists?

Mr. Ancram: On the last point, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary responsible for the Department of the Environment is sitting on the Front Bench and I am sure that he will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. Talking about the need to look at providing further accommodation in Northern Ireland is indeed a problem of success. It is also indicative that the tourist board estimates a doubling of holiday visits by 1997, possibly creating as many as 8,000 additional jobs by 1997-98. Some 30 projects to do with accommodation are currently being assisted by the Northern Ireland tourist board and another 24 are in an advanced state of negotiation, totalling £62 million of investment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will see that, while the problems of success are hard, they are meetable.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend support the ambitious targets set by the Northern Ireland Growth Challenge of achieving a 10 per cent. growth in exports, a 5 per cent. growth in gross domestic product and 60,000 new jobs in Northern Ireland by 2000? If so, will the Government work with the private sector to achieve those objectives?

Mr. Ancram: Certainly, the Government will work closely with the private sector to try to achieve not only those objectives but the best objectives possible. It is interesting to note that the Coopers and Lybrand review published on Tuesday showed that the Northern Ireland economy had out-performed most other regions in the United Kingdom, and predicted that if the ceasefires hold, the potential for Northern Ireland's economy will be higher than it has been for three decades.

Mr. McGrady: We all share the Minister's delight at the tourist boom with the first summer season of the ceasefire. He is possibly well aware that a gross under-provision of beds and accommodation requires urgent attention. What specific action do the Minister and the Department intend to take to eradicate the enormous amount of red tape and raise the low level of bed and breakfast provision? Will he provide some additional resources—human and financial—to the Northern Ireland tourist board in order to expedite the other projects that he has mentioned, which very often in my experience are bogged down in negotiation? Could he in some way streamline the process? Next summer we hope to have twice as many visitors, and where will they sleep?

Mr. Ancram: As the hon. Gentleman has heard, we are very much aware of the nature of the problem, which is caused by success. One of the problems that has arisen as a result of growth in Northern Ireland is pressure of applications on Departments and agencies, which has increased commensurately. Obviously, steps are being taken to try to ensure that applications are dealt with as speedily as possible. Wherever possible, the Northern Ireland tourist board is trying to help facilitate such developments.

Mr. Viggers: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the increased investment intention of Montupet, which intends to expand its factory in west Belfast? Does he agree that that is a justification of a brave decision and that in the calmer climate in Northern Ireland, there are now excellent investment opportunities throughout the Province?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and would certainly give the same words of encouragement. Indeed, in March the Secretary of State visited Montupet in France. Montupet and others, such as Daewoo Seagate, Dae Ryung industries, from Korea, and Fruit of the Loom have between them created an enormous amount of inward investment over the past nine years, totalling more than £1,678 million in Northern Ireland alone. I certainly support and encourage such investment—the more the better.

Mr. Dowd: I, too, welcome the improvements suggested by the figures that the Minister has given. It is common ground that economic development is a parallel strand of the peace process and is critical if we are to ensure that any settlement will endure. As the role of the Government is vital in sustaining and promoting that development, will the Minister assure the House that he and his colleagues will do all that they can to protect their departmental budgets from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's frantic attempts to find spending cuts, in the vain hope of bribing people with their own money in advance of the next election, and that Northern Ireland Ministers will continue to support that essential investment in peace?

Mr. Ancram: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his elevation to the Front Bench, and welcome him on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box. We look forward to many more such appearances. On behalf of both myself and my colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office, I can assure him that we are always anxious to ensure not only that we secure adequate resources but that we use them in the best practical way for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland.

Paramilitary Groups

3. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on disarming the paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. [36902]

Mr. Ancram: No arms or equipment in the hands of paramilitary groups have been decommissioned to date. There is, however, no place for unlawfully held arms in a democratic society. In order to create the necessary trust and confidence for all-party talks to proceed, the Government believe that progress on the issue is essential. I believe that that progress can and will be made.

Mr. Townsend: Can the Minister assure the House that the sensible suggestions about decommissioning made by the Secretary of State in his Washington speech earlier this year have not been watered down in any way by the events of the summer? Will he tell us what international support he expects for the decommissioning process at present?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can certainly assure him that the so-called three Washington criteria not only remain in place but represent the only way that the Government can see of creating the confidence to enable all-party talks to proceed. That, after all, is the bottom line. We are now considering, with the

Irish Government in what is known as a twin-track initiative, the setting up of an international body to examine the ways in which decommissioning might take place. International influence would, of course, be present there.

Mr. Maginnis: Is it not a major hindrance that the IRA approaches disarmament merely in terms of its guns and explosives, totally failing to address the moral and ethical aspects of the issue? Can the Minister reassure us that his approach clearly reflects society's justifiable expectations, or is there a danger that he is restrained within the parameters that dictate IRA-Sinn Fein's approach?

Mr. Ancram: We are talking not only about the IRA arms but about unlawfully held weapons in the hands of all paramilitaries, from whichever part of the spectrum they come. The hon. Gentleman will have heard me say in my original answer that there is no place for unlawfully held arms in a democratic society. The security forces continue to search out, and where possible recover, such weapons. If the hon. Gentleman needs what he said about the morality of the position to be underlined, I can tell him that the vast majority of people not only in Northern Ireland but in the Republic of Ireland, have expressed in survey after survey their desire to see the arms taken out of the equation.

Rev. William McCrea: Bearing in mind the terrorist credentials of Adams, McGuinness and McLoughlin and their refusal to condemn IRA violence, does the Minister have any firm foundation for believing that the IRA ever intends to surrender its arsenal of weapons of murder and destruction? Far from disarming, is it not true that the IRA is regrouping, recruiting, and restocking, and that it is training its forces? Surely such actions speak volumes about IRA intentions—much more than their propaganda soundbites for American consumption. Who is being fooled by the whole exercise?

Mr. Ancram: I fully appreciate the hon. Gentleman's personal experience of IRA violence—the whole House is conscious of it. The bottom line is that we must have a situation in which all parties can come together to discuss and negotiate the future of Northern Ireland. To achieve that, we must create an environment of confidence that will allow all parties to come to the table. We have made it clear that we do not believe that those circumstances of confidence will exist until the question of decommissioning arms has been addressed in the way set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in Washington.

Dr. Hendron: An integral part of the problem of disarming paramilitaries is the question of prisoners. The Secretary of State will understand that there cannot be meaningful discussion of the peace process while the plight of prisoners is ignored—whether they be loyalist or republican, in Belmarsh, the Maze or Magilligan. I therefore ask him, and the Home Secretary, to give urgent consideration to the plight of prisoners. I can assure him that thousands of people in west Belfast, in the Catholic Falls road and in the Unionist Shankill road, would be very grateful for such action.

Mr. Ancram: I hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say. As he knows, I do not have responsibility for prisoners, but my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will have heard the hon. Gentleman's remarks. He must accept, however, as we have said many times, that there are no such things as political prisoners in any part of the United Kingdom. Those in prison are serving terms of imprisonment for committing crimes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In addition to the issue of arms, will the Minister confirm that it is about time that the paramilitary groups dealt with the question of beatings and bodies? They should stop going in for vigilante justice and say where the bodies of people whom they have murdered are, so that the victims' families can know where to find them.

Mr. Ancram: I very much support what my hon. Friend has said. There is genuine resentment and grievance about the fact that relatives and friends have disappeared with no account of where their bodies are—that must certainly be dealt with. A question that we may reach later today relates to punishment beatings, so I shall leave it to the Minister of State to respond in due course.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the purchasing of decommissioned equipment from the paramilitary forces ever been considered? I understand that there has been a great deal of experience of that in various parts of the world.

Mr. Ancram: What is important is not how weapons are disposed of but the fact that they are disposed of. The British Government have made it clear that we want those weapons taken out of commission in a way that will prevent their being used for political ends in future. In the course of that process, all ways of disposing of the weapons which can achieve that objective can be considered.

Peace Process

4. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the peace process in Northern Ireland. [36903]

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his intentions for the next stage of the peace process. [36904]

9. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest assessment of the prospects for peace. [36908]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Northern Ireland continues its welcome return towards normality. There is still a long way to go before a true peace and a democratic settlement are reached. The Government intend, however, to develop the substantial progress already made by steadfastly pursuing their policies, which are already well known to this House.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my right hon. and learned Friend now take further steps to reassure the Unionist parties of the integrity of the Government's intentions?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I hope that no further reassurance on that is necessary. The Government's position has been made consistently and abundantly clear over a long time. I have just given an undertaking of our steadfast determination to pursue it.

Mr. Hughes: On a specific point, given the good reputation of the five education and library boards for

promoting co-operation across the community boundaries, can the Secretary of State assure the House that consideration has been given to whether the proposal to reduce the number of boards to four—for financial reasons, as I understand it—will not have the disadvantage of making the boards far more segregated and far less able to do the very good job that they have done in the past?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The proposal is under discussion with the parties. That is the first way in which the matter should be examined, and that is what has happened.

Mr. Hain: Does the Secretary of State agree that prison issues are important in building the trust and confidence needed to carry forward the peace process? Given the new arrangements from 1 November, will he specifically urge the Home Secretary to expedite prison transfer requests so that they go through without unnecessary bureaucratic delay? Will the Secretary of State examine, on compassionate grounds, the case of Patrick Kelly, who is in Whitemoor? He is seriously ill with cancer and wishes to transfer to the Irish Republic, where he can be near his family.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The offender whose name has just been mentioned is within the jurisdiction of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, as the hon. Gentleman knows. My right hon. and learned Friend will have heard what the hon. Gentleman says. It is worth reminding the House that ratification by the Irish Government of the European convention will take effect only from 1 November. Our own country ratified it several years ago—I think in 1984. Thereafter, it has to be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to consider, in the light of individual circumstances, whether it is appropriate to repatriate, if that is requested, a prisoner to the Republic of Ireland, where he or she is domiciled. I am certain that those matters will be examined by the two relevant Ministers in Dublin and London.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the peace process is not helped by crimes such as the one that took place today, in which a 16-year-old girl was dragged out of her house by paramilitaries in Twinbrook, beaten up and covered in paint? Will he condemn that crime and make every effort to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I condemn that, as everyone in the House will condemn similar brutal beatings. There is no need for the Royal Ulster Constabulary to be encouraged to try to bring those people to justice and to prevent similar crimes from taking place. I agree with the words with which my hon. Friend began his question.

Mr. Trimble: Is it not the case that, following the action by the Irish Republic last month in giving way to the threats of violence from Sinn Fein-IRA, it is extremely unlikely that the necessary confidence can be created for talks in the near future? In the light of that, is not the best way forward to take up the suggestion made by Unionist parties that there be an elected body so that parties to any future negotiations can obtain a mandate and, in the interval, debate and investigate issues relevant to future negotiations?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his accession to the leadership of his party. This is the first time that we have had the occasion to do that and to say that his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), was held in great affection by all in the House. We do not doubt that the hon. Gentleman's tenure will be just as distinguished.

I do not accept the words with which the hon. Gentleman began his question. I do not accept the conclusion that he drew from them. I should like to assure him that the Government are committed, with the Irish Government, to promoting the concept of a twin track or parallel approach. We believe that it is important that all relevant parties and future participants in the negotiations to which we all look forward should have the opportunity to sit down and talk. One of the solutions that the hon. Gentleman and his party hold to is a form of assembly. It is an interesting solution and one which we hope could usefully be discussed in the talks which form the political track. So I hope that that may be a means by which that interesting and possibly fruitful suggestion may be ventilated and explored.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it is Government policy shortly to introduce remission of 50 per cent. on prison sentences for terrorist offences? If that is so, how can he square it with the life sentences that are served on grieving relatives, for whom there can never be any remission?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the continuing effects of such serious crimes. I thought it right to point that out when I made a speech at Queen's university Belfast on 25 August, setting out the Government's policy on restoring to pre-1989 levels the point in sentence at which an offender is released, if he or she is convicted of a scheduled—that is to say a terrorist—offence and sentenced to five years' imprisonment or more. In 1989, that category of prisoner had entitlement to remission reduced from 50 per cent. to one third, by reason of the need at that time for a greater deterrent factor. As I said in August, the Government believe that current circumstances warrant a restoration of that pre-1989 position. I believe that to be the case and I shall be recommending it to the House. We shall have to see what it has to say.

Mr. Mallon: I also congratulate the new leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and wish him well, as I wish his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), a happy retirement.

Does the Secretary of State agree when I say that I hope that the semantic phase of the peace process will soon be over, and we will stop worrying to death words such as clarification, permanence and decommissioning, as they have clouded the issue and the two central problems? The first is how we rid Northern Ireland politics of arms for ever and the second is how we set up the type of political arrangements and structures upon which to build a peaceful future.

Will the Secretary of State accept from me that most people who share those objectives fully support the twin-track approach as being the only viable way to deal with those two objectives? Will he also tell the House what alternatives have been presented to him by others who might disagree with that twin-track approach?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for the twin-track approach, which represents

perhaps not the only but the best way forward in this difficult position. I very much agree with what my hon. Friend the Minister of State said about the overriding necessity of confidence being established. There is no point in calling a conference to negotiate the political future of Northern Ireland, when it is certain that a number of chairs will be empty. That would destroy the very process on which all future progress depends.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend understand that he enjoys massive support on the Conservative Benches for the firm line that he and his team have taken on the decommissioning of arms? Is he aware that that sends messages to all those throughout the United Kingdom who may be tempted into that kind of activity, particularly the lunatic fringe of the narrow nationalists in Scotland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's expression of support. It is necessary to hold to a proper analysis of a very difficult problem and to hold steadfastly to a properly formulated policy for dealing with it. That is what the Government intend to do and I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

Ms Mowlam: As the House has shown, we are at a delicate time in the peace process. The Secretary of State has just argued that building trust and confidence is central to the process, which is why we support the remission legislation on Monday as timely and why paramilitary decommissioning must be addressed. However, can the Secretary of State do all that he can to encourage the implementation of Government policy on prisoner transfers and will he consider expanding the twin-track approach to add a track on reconciliation, focusing on a bill of rights?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think I should rather leave the question of a Bill of Rights until later: there are interesting arguments to be advanced on both sides.

Prisoners who commit serious offences in a particular jurisdiction must normally expect to serve their sentences within that jurisdiction according to law. Where there is an international conference or a European convention, it depends on the individual circumstances whether a prisoner will be transferred in accordance with that convention. I have already said that the jurisdiction over a number of prisoners whose names are in the news at the moment rests with the Home Secretary.

Sir Patrick Cormack: Further to the remarks of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the vast majority of those of us who believe in the historic integrity of the United Kingdom have enormous admiration for the courageous initiative and persistence of the Prime Minister and for the diligence and patience that my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have been showing over many months?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We are all grateful for anything of that character passed our way.

Mr. McNamara: I join the House in welcoming the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) to his new position. He has a difficult act to follow. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) is no longer leading his party.

Will the Secretary of State give the House the terms of reference of the new international commission that is to police the problem of decommissioning, and has he now secured the full agreement of all the main parties to the twin-track approach?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Both Governments consider that there is a lot of promise in the idea of an international commission, comprised as it has been suggested, as forming the first of the two twin tracks that have been mentioned several times today. The terms of reference are not yet formulated. I believe that there is a wide body of support for this approach.

Paramilitary Groups

6. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what actions are being taken to stop paramilitary groups acting in a policing role in the communities of Northern Ireland. [36905]

Sir John Wheeler: Savage assaults, expulsions and intimidation by terrorist thugs have nothing to do with policing, or justice or democracy. Such actions are against the law and are wholly unacceptable to the Government and to the community at large. The Royal Ulster Constabulary will investigate all such cases, and when evidence is available place offenders before the courts.

Mr. Connarty: I thank the Minister for that partial reply. Does he accept there have been at least 200 beatings by the IRA and the Ulster Volunteer Force in Northern Ireland since the ceasefire? Is he aware that last Wednesday the Northern Ireland youth parliament voted that men of peace should be prepared to discuss and negotiate with the men of violence? Many people gave the impression that rather than decommissioning being the problem, paramilitary beatings were the symbol of the lack of peace in their communities.

Will the Government point out to the paramilitaries that the beatings go on in contravention of paragraph 10 of the Downing street declaration? Will the Minister demand from the IRA and the Progressive Unionist Party a condemnation of such beatings before any further progress is made in talks with those groups? Will he take seriously the suggestions for curtailing beatings made by Families Against Intimidation and Terror in Northern Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: Between 1 September 1994 and 15 October 1995, 218 so-called punishment beatings have taken place, attributed on the basis of 85 to the so-called loyalist gangs and 133 to Republican groups. I endorse what the hon. Gentleman said. There is no case for this tide of violence in Northern Ireland. It robs the community of confidence in the peace process and it stops the political development of the process. I use this opportunity once again to call on all who have influence over those matters to condemn it and to see that it is stopped.

Mr. Illsley: Labour, too, condemns the so-called punishment beatings, particularly the most recent action, which has already been referred to. Does the Minister agree that, if the responsible organisations were to put a stop to those beatings, it would reinforce their democratic credentials? Does he believe that he is doing all that he can to stop these appalling attacks?

Sir John Wheeler: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment to the Labour Front Bench as a

shadow Northern Ireland Office spokesman. I endorse what he says: there is no excuse for expulsions, punishment beatings, racketeering and intimidation. They are against the rule of law and I assure the House that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will do its utmost to investigate such crime and bring offenders before the courts. Arrests are being made but the hon. Gentleman is right to say that those who have influence must bring that influence to bear if that evil tide is to end.

Security Situation

7. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland. [36906]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall continue to be advised by the Chief Constable on the security response warranted by a reduced but continuing threat of violence, and I shall act on that advice. Proscribed paramilitary organisations continue in active existence. Brutal beatings and arson attacks remain a cause of particular concern.

Mr. Molyneaux: As Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary concluded this week that the Royal Ulster Constabulary "is efficient and effective", will the Secretary of State assure us that resources will be made available to counter general serious crime, which can be expected to increase following the reduction in terrorist crime?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have always made it clear, as has my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, that appropriate resources must be made available to the RUC. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, a fundamental review is in progress and it is important that sufficient resources should be made available to counter non-terrorist crime, which, in some categories, is rising.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, given the markedly improved security situation, it would be ironic, to say the least, if Queen's university air squadron, Belfast, the town headquarters of which were destroyed at the height of the troubles, should now be closed? In considering representations, will he bear in mind that it would be wrong for that university air squadron and the Air Experience Flight to be closed uniquely among such institutions in the country?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I know my hon. Friend's association with the Royal Air Force and the regard in which those units are held, but this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who must take some harsh decisions in difficult economic circumstances.

Marches and Parades

8. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps routinely to reroute marches and parades where these are to go through areas where the residents do not wish them. [36907]

Sir John Wheeler: The routing of parades is an operational matter for the police, who are best placed to make decisions. They do so in consultation with parade organisers and local people, and significant progress has been made over recent years in eliminating the problems arising from certain controversial parades. Of more than 3,000 parades so far this year, only 11—0.3 per cent.—were classified by the RUC as having resulted in disorder, while just over 20 have been subject to rerouting requirements or had other conditions imposed by the police.

Mr. Prentice: The Minister admits that at least some marches are provocative, triumphalist and put communities under siege. What happened in July at Portadown was an absolute disgrace. How can the peace process survive such atavism, blood-curdling speeches and calls to arms by the Ulster Unionists?

Sir John Wheeler: Some parades—very few—result in controversy and difficulty. It must be said that some of those difficulties arise because of the activities of Provisional Sinn Fein and others. It is the duty of the police to keep the peace and the function of the police to negotiate with the local community to ensure that the peace prevails.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that a degree of ignorance was manifested in that question? Does he recognise and agree that the troubles come from those people who sought to turn Northern Ireland upside-down this year, beginning with the attacks during the Prime Minister's visit to Londonderry? Will he acknowledge that there was no parade on the Ormeau road when Mrs. Hughes and others were intimidated disastrously as a result of the actions of elements in that community?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. There is no excuse whatsoever for any violence or criminal wrongdoing, as the House agreed earlier regarding the so-called punishment beatings. It is also true, as the hon. Gentleman says, that some people have a vested interest in trouble.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 October. [36929]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Lidington: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to reaffirm his opposition to terrorism and, in doing so, make it his policy to condemn unreservedly the selection by the Labour party in Exeter of a self-confessed terrorist as its candidate? Does not that action illustrate most clearly that the Labour party is utterly unfit for government?

The Prime Minister: I am wholly opposed to any act of terrorism, and I have no doubt that the majority of people in Exeter will feel the same.

Mr. Blair: Will the Prime Minister confirm that the changes in housing benefit revealed today will mean that thousands of vulnerable people—pensioners, disabled people and families with young children—will lose help

and be confronted with poverty or eviction? How can that possibly be fair? Is it not the clearest evidence of the Conservative party's lurch to the right and the death of one nation conservatism?

The Prime Minister: Indeed it is not. My party remains in the centre of politics, and that is where it will always be. The right hon. Gentleman's outrage is rather artificial because he obviously believes that this morning's story was a leaked document: in fact, it relates to measures approved by the House last July.

Mr. Blair: The question is whether the measures are right. If the problem is the soaring housing benefit bill, does the Prime Minister accept that that bill has increased under his Government as a result of Government policy? Housing benefit has increased as housing investment has been slashed.

If the problem, as was suggested by the Secretary of State for Social Security, is private landlords charging excessive rent, is not it sensible to tackle that problem head-on instead of using vulnerable and innocent tenants as pawns to clear up a mess of the Government's own making?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. If he had spent one single day in government, he would know that the Government have to take difficult decisions to control expenditure throughout the budget. This is the Labour leader who said that he was in favour of hand-ups, not handouts; this is the party that has said that it wants to take a very radical look at the whole system of social security to try to ensure that money is spent in the best possible way; yet, whatever Labour Members may say about fiscal control, whenever there is a difficult decision to be taken they will oppose it. That is why they will spend on every occasion and tax on every occasion. If they had had their way, public spending would be half national income and tax would be where it was when they left office.

Mr. Blair: If we had had our way, we would not have slashed housing investment, which has produced the rise in housing benefit. The Prime Minister is perfectly justified in saying that, if there is a problem, it should be tackled. I have given him a specific way of tackling it. Why does not he tackle directly the excessive rents being charged by private landlords rather than make tenants the victims?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to see the right hon. Gentleman commit himself—I hope that the whole country heard it—to rent control. That is what the right hon. Gentleman has done—

Mr. Blair *indicated dissent.*

The Prime Minister: Yes, he has—he cannot shake his head. What he has just said is a Labour commitment to rent control—presumably in the private sector, which would mean no more available lettings. Presumably, in the public sector he would hold down rents artificially and push up the amount of borrowing and tax. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to know how to deal with housing and matters of that sort he should look at some of his own boroughs such as Hackney, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Southwark and Islington, which among them have 6,000 empty council houses. They are all in good repair and ready to be let out, but none is available because of the chronic inefficiency and stupidity of Labour local authorities.

Mr. Viggers: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to see the report of the chief inspector of constabulary which, for the first time, includes some national indicators of the performance of the local, county police establishments? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the report contains some useful ideas, including the use of advanced technology, the increased use of community resources and better targeting of resources? Does he agree that that is a matter on which we can assist the police to be more efficient?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have no doubt about that. I have not yet seen that report in detail, but I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to study it and report to me on its contents.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that the number of primary school pupils in classes of more than 40 has risen by 30 per cent. in the past year? Does he understand why parents and governors are deeply concerned about that? Does he still believe that class sizes do not matter?

The Prime Minister: Of course every aspect of education matters, but what matters most is the quality of teaching, which we are seeking to improve. We have introduced a series of measures to do that in recent years, most of which have been visibly and volubly opposed by the right hon. Gentleman and his party.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the assisted places scheme and grammar schools are immensely popular with parents? What conclusions does he think parents should draw from the fact that, although the Labour party is committed to the abolition of the assisted places scheme and grammar schools, 19 out of 24 members of the shadow Cabinet attended grammar schools or exclusive fee-paying schools?

The Prime Minister: Extending choice and opportunity is central to our education policy—it is what we believe parents want and we are delivering it. The Labour party's policies are yet another case of double-think: Labour Members go to good schools, but want to abolish them; they send their children to good schools, but want to abolish them. I read that the shadow Cabinet is now going to Templeton college for the weekend—it had better watch out for its future.

Q2. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 October. [36930]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gerrard: How can the Prime Minister justify his earlier answers, which defended housing benefit cuts that will attack some of the most vulnerable and poorest people? Does he believe that they should be forced to make up the short-fall in their rent from money that they need to survive—even using money such as their war pensions? Does it not show the Government's complete abandonment of any sense of social justice or priority?

The Prime Minister today attacks poor people, but only two weeks ago he stood at the Tory party conference promising to abolish inheritance tax and capital gains tax.

The Prime Minister: The cheap insults from the Labour party are becoming increasingly silly. I shall tell the hon. Gentleman something about protecting the vulnerable: low-income families with children have received extra help—now worth more than £1 billion a year—since 1988. Extra help for poor pensioners has increased to £1.2 billion since 1988. In the past two years we have introduced help with child care worth up to £38 per week for the least well-off in work. We have introduced jobseeker's agreements that are tailored to individual needs and a package of work incentives worth £700 million. All those initiatives are targeted to the people who are most in need in this country. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman saw what is really being done to help those in need and recognised that that sort of help is possible only if Governments resist some other elements of expenditure.

Mr. David Evans: May I tell my right hon. Friend that, unlike Labour Members, we on this side are totally united behind our leader? Will my right hon. Friend confirm whether in five years at the Dispatch Box he has ever had to bail out one of his Front Bench spokesmen for total incompetence? Is he aware that last Thursday Bambi, the leader of the Labour party, showed the nation on live television what Conservative Members have known for years: Labour Members are all totally incompetent? In other words, they are men of straw.

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that I do not have the same gift for understatement as my hon. Friend. We all noticed the Leader of the Opposition trying to rescue the shadow Home Secretary last Thursday—and we all noticed that he failed.

Q3. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 October. [36931]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Watson: The Prime Minister will be aware of the recent announcement by the Secretaries of State for Health and for Scotland of the ban on general practitioners prescribing the drug Temazepam in gel-filled capsules. Contrary to the advice of almost all statutory and non-statutory agencies, including the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse and the Scottish drugs forum, the drug remains available in other forms simply to save about £15 million in public expenditure—the cost of prescribing alternatives.

Does the Prime Minister believe that the loss of young lives, which will continue to occur—particularly in Glasgow, but also in every other major city in the country—as a result of the availability of Temazepam, is a price worth paying for the short-term advantage of the Government's desperate search for pre-election tax cuts?

The Prime Minister: The depths to which some Labour Members sometimes sink in their questions helps me to understand why the public have such a low opinion of politicians generally. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland acted on the medical advice that he received and he will continue to do so in the future.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proportion of asylum seekers who come to Britain is rising, whereas the number is falling in other European countries? Is that not precisely because this country is not the clapped-out, impoverished nation that the Labour party pretends it is? Is it not time to strengthen our protection against those who have no right to be in this country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. and learned Friend is right about the proportion of asylum seekers in this country. Other countries have tightened their asylum procedures and we think that we should re-examine them as well. However, some of the stories that I have seen in the last 24 hours and some of the comments that I have heard from Opposition Front Bench spokesmen are entirely absurd. They are inaccurate and misleading and they would better not have been made.

There is no doubt that we will honour our United Nations convention obligations and there is no doubt that claims will be considered individually. I hope that the activities of the shadow Home Secretary have not raised too many fears.

Q4. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 October. [36933]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Can the Prime Minister explain the purpose of setting up the Nolan committee if one of its main recommendations—the disclosure of outside financial interests—is rubbished and rejected by Tory Members of Parliament? Does not the Prime Minister understand that the general public will contrast the rejection of the Nolan committee's very important recommendation with the way in which Tory Members of Parliament vote time and again to undermine the position of the poorest people in our society?

The Prime Minister: As I told the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), we set out innumerable ways—and I will give the hon. Gentleman a much longer list if he wishes—of helping people in great need in this country, and that will continue to be the case.

The Nolan committee was established to report to the House and did so. A Select Committee is considering its report, and we will consider and vote on the Select Committee's report shortly.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Having known Sir John Templeton well for many years, and having attended the launch of the Templeton college in Oxford, I share my right hon. Friend's sentiments about the dangers of a visit by Labour Members to that college. Does not my right hon. Friend think it extraordinary that the Labour party should accuse the Conservative party of being uncaring when, with unemployment dropping in this country—

unlike in most other countries in Europe—we are increasing our social security year by year? Is that the sign of an uncaring Government?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point most forcefully. Unemployment has dropped more dramatically here than in any other major country of western Europe. Unemployment is also below the level of other countries and our degree of social security protection is above it. As my hon. Friend said, Templeton college is a centre of excellence. Therefore, with this Labour party, it must be in danger.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I will take points of order after we have taken the business statement and questions on it.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House the details of future business?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week and until prorogation will be as follows. I should make it clear that the business for Monday 30 October is different from that which I announced last week.

MONDAY 30 OCTOBER—Proceedings on the Northern Ireland (Remission of Sentences) Bill.

TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Disability Discrimination Bill.

Proceedings on the following Bills, which are consolidation measures: Proceeds of Crime (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* Criminal Procedure (Consequential Provisions) (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* Statute Law (Repeals) Bill *[Lords]*

Remaining stages of the Law Reform (Succession) Bill *[Lords]*, the Private International Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Civil Evidence Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 1 NOVEMBER—Until 2.30 pm, there will be debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Gas Bill.

Motion to suspend further proceedings on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill until the next Session of Parliament.

Motion to provide an instruction to the Select Committee on the consideration of additional provisions to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill.

THURSDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Motions on parliamentary procedure.

Debate on the Government response to the first report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER—Debate on fundholding in a primary care-led national health service on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER—Debate on the second report which is expected to be received from the Select Committee on Standards in Public Life.

TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER—Consideration of any Lords amendments that may be received to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill, followed by consideration of any Lords amendments that may be received to the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill.

Motions relating to Select Committees.

The House may be asked to consider any Lords messages that may be received.

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER—Subject to the progress of business, the House is expected to be prorogued.

The House will also wish to know that the following European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

[Tuesday 31 October:

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community Document: 7942/95, Television. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC 70-xxv (1994-95).

Wednesday 1 November:

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community Documents: (a) 9532/95, Reform of Regime, (b) 9379/95, Reform of the Rice Regime: Standard Quality of Rice. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 70-xxv (1994-95), HC 70-xxv (1994-95).

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community Documents: (a) 5663/95, Promotion of Employment, (b) 6827/95, Social Action Programme 1995-1997. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 70-xiii (1994-95) and HC 70-xviii (1994-95).]

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I thank the Leader of the House for that information. Is he aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), the promoter of the Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill, has now agreed a set of amendments with the Bill's opponents? In the light of the support that the amended Bill now commands in all quarters—both in this House and in the other place—will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the very small amount of time that is needed will be found to allow a Bill that has widespread public support to become law?

Let me now ask about Government business. Will the Leader of the House clarify the position of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill? Will he confirm that the Bill was introduced by a Minister—the Lord Chancellor—under the "fast track" Jellicoe procedure, as non-contentious legislation, and has completed nearly all its stages in both Houses? Is a long-overdue measure to tackle domestic violence being destroyed by the extreme wing of the Conservative party?

Will the Leader of the House find time, in the very near future, for a debate on nursery vouchers? Does he recall that, in July, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment undertook to consult and to report back in the autumn? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, so far, public opinion has been almost universally opposed to the voucher scheme; that there is widespread support for properly funded quality nursery education; and that even the few remaining Tory local education authorities are against the scheme? May we have a debate very soon to discuss who is correct—Conservative councillors in Solihull, or the Secretary of State?

Finally, will the Leader of the House take up the points that were raised earlier in Prime Minister's Question Time, and ensure that we have an opportunity to debate the serious public concern about the changes to housing benefits payments, which Opposition Members voted against? They constitute a miserable attack on a very vulnerable group, which is alarming many people in the House and the country.

Are all those developments—the handling of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill, the nursery voucher scheme and the cuts in housing benefit—simply more signals of the Government's dangerous lurch to the right?

Mr. Newton: There seems to be a common script for the periods before and after 3.30 pm nowadays.

Let me take the hon. Lady's points in reverse order. Her question appeared to confirm what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in response to her right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition—that, far from having been leaked, the proposals were discussed openly and agreed by the House.

I need hardly say that I do not recognise the hon. Lady's description of the position relating to nursery vouchers. Last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment announced the names of three authorities that will participate in the pilot schemes in phase 1, and others are still considering whether to participate.

A number of points have been made to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor about the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill, which he has undertaken to consider. I think that entirely appropriate.

It is, I think, well known in the House that the amount of time for private Members' Bills is clearly established at the beginning of each Session, and that is the position in the current Session.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I remind my right hon. Friend that the very important air service agreement negotiations between the United Kingdom and the United States of America failed at the end of last week and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport was not able to come to the House to make a statement about that matter? Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that at an early date Her Majesty's Government will introduce a full debate on civil air transport, which is of particular importance to the Heathrow area and many other areas in this country?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend that complete undertaking, but I will bear his request in mind. He well knows, and by implication acknowledged, the importance that the British Government attach to these matters.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Recognising that the Leader of the House has had quite a lot of his time tied up in the Nolan Committee, for which we are grateful, does he expect that he will be able to make an announcement about the disposition of the new Select Committees before the new Session starts? I refer him briefly to the two statutory instruments standing in my name and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends,on probation and optical charges regulations. If it is possible before the end of the Session, it would certainly benefit the House if we could have Committee stage debates on both.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's latter point. In answer to the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, amidst the profusion of business that I announced, which perhaps indicates the difficulties of fitting in further business, was a reference to the fact that I hoped to be debating motions relating to Select Committees on Tuesday 7 November.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): In view of the fact that President Yeltsin has died, would it be possible for us to have a debate, or at least a statement, next week if there are any ramifications for this country's foreign policy?

Mr. Newton: I have myself only just heard what I am sure will be news greeted with sadness and shock in the House. Although I note and understand why my hon. Friend raised the matter, he will understand that I would not wish to comment in quite the way in which he invites me to.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House read column 713 of *Hansard* of 23 October, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) raised a point of order with Madam Speaker regarding Asda and its decision to stop paying enhanced payments for Sunday work in its shops? Will the Leader of the House find time next week, or between now and prorogation, to debate not only Asda but a number of other retailers who promised the House, when we were discussing the Sunday Trading Bill, that they would agree to pay double time on Sunday and that they would enhance payments? Only 18 months have passed since the Act was introduced, but they are reneging on promises that they made to a number of hon. Members, who would not have gone into the Lobby and voted as they did if they had known that this would happen. Some of us took a principled stand and did not vote. We might have lost jobs in the Whips Office as a result, but nevertheless we took that principled stand.

I think that the Leader of the House should find time for this matter, which is urgent, because in addition to that—I am on my last point, Madam Speaker—Burger King is paying young workers £5 for five hours' work. It is time that the whole question of shopworkers' employment in this country was given time in the House for a full debate.

Mr. Newton: I do not immediately recall the exchanges to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I am sure that his remarks will be examined carefully by those at whom they are directed.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the quality and the price in defence contracts are roughly equal they should go to the home industry rather than abroad? Will there be an opportunity before the House rises to debate that policy, when some of us will be able to point out that the 700 military ambulances that are required by the Ministry of Defence can be supplied in excellent quality by the firm of Marshalls of Cambridge, in conjunction with Landrover, and costing £10.5 million less than the Austrian competition?

Mr. Newton: Subject to the rules—national and international—about public procurement, I hope that I may be allowed to wish my hon. Friend's constituents well.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I wish to raise the fact that Post Office Counters Ltd. has decreed that it will downgrade Cambuslang Crown post office in my constituency to the status of an agency post office. It has said that it will not consult on the matter and that the public are to have no say. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week by a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry to explain why a public service, under the control of the Government, can act unilaterally and refuse to consult the public on a change that will have a grave effect on the public?

Mr. Newton: I should point out that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be answering questions on Wednesday 1 November. I shall bring that putative question to his attention.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Did my right hon. Friend notice that when the shadow Leader of the House raised the matter of nursery education, she did not say a word about the families whose children have not gained a local government nursery place, nor about the families

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

whose children attend private nurseries, nor about the families whose children are at playgroups, all of whom will be helped by nursery vouchers? Does not that prove yet again that the Labour party is concerned only with producer interests, especially in local government?

Mr. Newton: I did indeed notice that omission from the hon. Lady's remarks, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has been able to rectify it.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): You may recall, Madam Speaker, that on 13 March this year I requested a statement from the Secretary of State for Health about the little girl formerly known as Child B who is now publicly known as Jaymee. Will he grant time for a debate on who gets treated under the national health service? Has not this gutsy little girl shown that she deserves treatment? Her chances of survival are now much better. Should she and her family be going around with a begging bowl? Should not we have a debate and give hon. Members the opportunity to vote on whether she should get treatment under the NHS?

Mr. Newton: Everyone will understand why the hon. Lady has raised this matter and will want to wish the little girl well. The hon. Lady may have the opportunity to raise the matter again during Health Questions next week, but I must emphasise that it is always for clinicians to decide on appropriate treatment in individual cases. Had the doctors treating Jaymee at Addenbrooke's and the Royal Marsden recommended treatment, it would have been given.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): May I join the calls for an urgent debate on Britain's relations with Russia in view of the news of President Yeltsin's death and the fact that there is now a power vacuum at the heart of one of the world's super-powers? May I ask my right hon. Friend to take this opportunity to express the House's condolences to those members of the Russian Duma who were visiting the House and were in the Gallery when news of his death came through?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly accede to my hon. Friend's latter question. As for my hon. Friend's first question, I would not wish to add anything to what I said earlier.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the appropriate Minister to make a statement on the barbaric killing of one of my constituents and the fact that the two killers received only a three-year sentence? Will he do so as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and, I suppose, that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and, indeed, that of my right hon. Friend the Attorney-General. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear his question in mind when the House comes to consider the recently announced proposals on sentencing policy.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate on membership of the House so that we have some idea of who is acceptable as a candidate for the various parties and who is not? Perhaps we would then have an explanation of why someone implicated in the murder of a 77-year-old woman in Johannesburg is acceptable as a Labour candidate but someone who holds the views of many Labour Members, especially those below the Gangway, is not.

Mr. Newton: I am left to answer a fair number of questions on behalf of the Government, but that appears to be a question directed at the Opposition. I am not even sure that the hon. Member for Dewsbury heard it, but I shall ensure that it is brought to her attention.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1486:

[*That this House demands that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry refers the impending merger of North West Water and Norweb to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.*]

Many hon. Members who represent the north-west are concerned that a takeover will have major implications such as job losses, service reductions and increasing prices. It is confirmation of a botched privatisation. Will he find Government time to debate this important issue so that we can ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to refer the takeover bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Quite straightforwardly, electricity and water are a lethal combination.

Mr. Newton: The proposed merger is of course subject to the usual procedures: the Director General of Fair Trading advises my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who then decides whether to make a reference to the MMC. In those circumstances, it would be quite difficult for my right hon. Friend to make further comment, but, as I have already said, he will be answering questions in the House next week.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on local government in London? Is he aware that Hackney council has now been forced to reinstate its corruption-busting director of housing, who should never have been suspended? Does he not agree that Hackney, Lambeth and Islington are a good advertisement for what new Labour stands for?

Mr. Newton: They are certainly not a good advertisement for the Labour party.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I bite your hand, Madam Speaker, which has fed me on Wednesday mornings in the past in relation to Libyan sanctions, Iraq sanctions and Lockerbie? I refer to Thursday's business. Could we have a statement on the gradual erosion of Back Benchers' rights? What has happened to those Friday debates? The Minister with responsibility for science said rightly on Friday that we had had an excellent and useful debate, yet there are now very few Back-Bench debates. How by some alchemy do we no longer get second Adjournment debates? Frankly, on Wednesday mornings, the debates have become Speaker's choice rather than any pretence of balloting. The balloting motion is something of the past. Although often it could be very inconvenient. Everything now seems to be run for the convenience of the Front-Bench teams. Some Back Benchers think that the inconveniences of balloting ought to come back to us and we will be voting against the Jopling arrangements and all the works of the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling).

Mr. Newton: There appear to be one or two points that might be thought to be directed at you, Madam Speaker,

rather than me. I have no doubt that you too will reflect on them. I would make three points. First, the changes have been made in response to recommendations from Select Committees, agreed by large majorities in the House. Secondly, in my judgment at least, the Wednesday morning debates have provided a welcome opportunity for many hon. Members to raise more subjects than they used to have the opportunity to do. Thirdly, elaborating on the second point, if the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will find that infinitely more people have had a chance to raise subjects as a result of the changes than were ever able to under the previous arrangements.

Madam Speaker: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is so nice to hear you speak, Madam Speaker. Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate or a statement early next week on the projected strike on London Underground—which will so exacerbate the problems that my constituents have in getting to and from work and, indeed, cause the whole of London to suffer greatly—noting that the people concerned are asking for twice the pay increase which has already been accepted by two unions? Is not that a disgrace and very unfair to the people of London?

Mr. Newton: I very much share the hope that my hon. Friend by implication expressed—that the action will be reconsidered. I shall bring his request for a statement to the attention of my right hon. Friend. Perhaps I might also take the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to thank you warmly for giving me your support, just as I always seek to give you mine.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I thank the Leader of the House for giving us a forewarning of when the House may rise. I also thank him for the progress that has been made this year on dealing with Northern Ireland business in the House. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that further progress will be made in the forthcoming Session, and that we shall legislate more through Bills and less through Orders in Council?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging the progress made this year, and I hope that he will accept that, although I make no further specific commitments, what has happened this year is an earnest of my good faith in hoping to make further progress next Session.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Patrick Jenkin—*[Interruption.]* Sorry, Mr. Bernard Jenkin.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): He is the ugly one.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend provide time for a debate that would graphically demonstrate that the Labour party is, always has been and always will be the party that it always was? I ask for a debate on the way in which the Labour party has handled social services in Essex. First it promised the earth, then it made a complete hash of the policy, and finally the Labour chairman is resigning his post because he wants nothing to do with the measures now needed to bring the policy back on course.

Mr. Newton: No debate is required to establish the truth of my hon. Friend's propositions, which is clearly proved by almost every utterance from the Opposition Benches. As for my hon. Friend's second point, as his immediate constituency neighbour I am myself conscious of the problems. A most unhappy situation has arisen concerning Essex social services, and I hope that it will be properly and quickly dealt with. Finally, Madam Speaker, may I add that my hon. Friend's right honourable father might be rather disturbed by my hon. Friend's having been mistaken for him.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has raised the idea of vetting parliamentary candidates, will the Leader of the House extend that idea and make a statement along those lines, so that every parliamentary candidate, from every party, will be vetted by a kind of toughened-up Nolan committee? In that case, no future candidates would be allowed to enter Parliament with conflicts of interest, or if they were making money on the side and had directorships coming out of their earholes, like the 200 current Tory Members of Parliament who have 550 directorships between them. If candidates were vetted in that way, the House of Commons would be a lot cleaner, and there would be no more conflicts of interest. The people outside would support that.

Mr. Newton: That sounds like a plea for a House of Commons consisting of 651 Bolsovers. The mind boggles.

Sir Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): As one who is not, I believe, an extreme right-winger, may I say how glad I was to hear what my right hon. Friend said about the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill? Will he confirm that it has been dropped for this Session? And if that is the case, and we therefore have a little spare time, may we at least have a statement from the Foreign Secretary on Monday about our relations with Russia?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's second suggestion and shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend. As for his first question, I confirm what I said. I do not have a script in front of me, but I think that that was to the effect that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor was considering the arguments that have been put to him.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When can we have a debate on the need for electoral reform to control the total sums spent by political parties at national level during general elections? I have introduced two Bills that sought to make that change, and I argued that there was a grave danger that a malign millionaire could spend huge sums in support of an extremist cause. That has now happened. A millionaire is threatening to spend more than all the parties at the previous general election, in support of an extremist right-wing cause. Although the Government previously failed to support my two Bills, will they do so now to save their own skin, and for the sake of the integrity and good reputation of our electoral system?

Mr. Newton: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I do not really think that we need the help of his Bills to make sure that our sensible policies are put across to, and accepted by, the electorate.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Representing, as I do, Macclesfield in the county of Cheshire may I tell the Leader of the House that there is concern in all political parties in that county about the resources for

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

education allocated under our standard spending assessment? We are not criticising the Government for singling out Cheshire as an example; we are, however, worried about the area cost adjustment, which does not properly take into account the costs incurred by Cheshire in providing a good quality of education.

Will my right hon. Friend find time, if not before we prorogue then perhaps early in the next Session, for a debate on this matter? In it, Members of Parliament who share the concerns of all political parties in Cheshire about the way the county is treated under the standard spending assessment formula can express their views.

Mr. Newton: There may be an opportunity for that point to be made in the debates on the Address which we would expect to follow the Queen's Speech on 15 November, or in the Budget debate that will come shortly afterwards. In any event I would anticipate a statement on local authority finance in the couple of days after the Budget.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a statement on the responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister, who has defined them as: deregulation, the civil service, and market testing? While the Leader of the House is making up his mind on that debate, will he look at columns 15 to 18 in the *Official Report* of 16 October and at the nature of the questions that the Deputy Prime Minister was asked in Question Time that day? Will he go on to consider how he answered those questions, when he clearly took responsibility for our defence obligations under various treaties, the Labour party conference, the issue of social democracy and the European Community budget?

I believe that the Deputy Prime Minister is answering questions in the House which go wider than his brief, yet we are not allowed to table questions in the Table Office on those very matters—hence the need for a debate.

Mr. Newton: That is a pretty funny question from an hon. Member who displays an above average ability—I pay tribute to it—to use parliamentary procedures intended sometimes for one purpose to achieve other ends, and to ask supplementaries that do not always appear to be directly related to the principal question.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on the control of pollution? Does he realise that the surprising acquittal of Vitalscheme yesterday in Oxford Crown court means that that company's irresponsible pollution of the rivers of Shropshire and Worcestershire will go unpunished—pollution that caused such concern to my constituents last year? Do not water companies such as Severn-Trent deserve to be supported when they bring such prosecutions to protect our rivers?

Mr. Newton: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is looking into the pollution of the River Tern as a matter of urgency, and is considering what lessons can be learnt for the regulatory regime and what action needs to be taken in this particular case. I shall of course bring my hon. Friend's further question to his attention.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): May I add to the remarks by the shadow Leader of the House about my Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill? The right hon. Gentleman is aware of the unanimous support for the Bill in this House. May I further advise him that this morning I held negotiations with the British Field Sports Society and others so that an agreed set of amendments can be tabled in the House of Lords and the Bill will have unanimous agreement there?

Given that we are just a whisker away from passing the Bill, may I ask the Leader of the House to meet me so that we can explore this issue and arrive at a constructive end for a Bill that has massive support in the country and in both Houses of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: I think I am right in saying that the proceedings on the Bill are continuing in another place. Therefore, I am not sure that it would be appropriate for me to undertake to have a meeting on the basis of speculation about what might happen. I must repeat the point that I made. It has been established over many years that the time available for private Members' Bills is set at the beginning of the parliamentary Session by a decision of the House. That remains the position. However, if only as a matter of courtesy and because I understand the hon. Gentleman's objectives, if he feels that it would be helpful for me to meet him against that background, I would be willing to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Patience is rewarded. May we have a debate very shortly on the future use of county hall on the other side of the river? At the back we have Galliard Homes selling flats by means of misleading advertisements to potential purchasers in the far east. At the front, in the riverside block, we have the Shiriyama hotel—which has now given up the possibility of building a hotel—constructing a large aquarium and trying to sell on the shell of county hall to another organisation. Is that not a scandalous situation, brought about by the Government's ideological fixation with making sure that that building on a prime site opposite Parliament should be used for anything except that for which any decent Government would have ensured that it was used. No European Government would have treated such a prestigious building in the way that this shabby Government have treated it.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to accept, nor do I, his language, which I regard as overheated. I will bring the points that he has made, as far as they can be gleaned within the hyperbole, to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise a matter of which I have given you notice. A document has been passed to me headed "Parliamentary Question by Max Madden MP", signed by an entry clearance officer in the British high commission in Nigeria, dated 17 February 1995. On the second page, under the heading:

"Not for inclusion in draft reply",

considerable concern is expressed by the entry clearance officer that

"we may face criticism on the handling of this application."

It goes on to catalogue unacceptable delays and inexplicable failures of routine procedures. It speculates about action that I might take and that which may be taken by solicitors.

I shall certainly suggest to my constituent that he consider making a complaint of maladministration to the Parliamentary Commissioner, but I wonder whether you, Madam Speaker, would be prepared—clearly, you have not had the opportunity to consider the detail—to deprecate in general terms any actions that are taken by officials or Ministers which are clearly designed to conceal maladministration and to treat Members of Parliament, our constituents and the general public with clear and obvious contempt.

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me, but the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to give me just a little indication of what he might raise. He tells me that he was concerned about the advice given by officials to Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in drafting the reply to a parliamentary question. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Chair has no responsibility for ministerial answers to questions, still less for officials' advice to Ministers. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will pursue the matter with the Minister involved. As I said, it is barely a point of order, but the point that he has brought to the attention of the House today is very revealing.

Sir Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have just been out to check the tape, following the exchanges that took place earlier. It would appear from the tape that at 4 pm President Yeltsin was alive.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the House is pleased to have that news. We are always too much interested in bad news. It is nice to have a little good news for a change.

BILL PRESENTED

NORTHERN IRELAND (REMISSION OF SENTENCES)

Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Forsyth and Sir John Wheeler, presented a Bill to provide for the release on licence of persons serving sentences to which section 14 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 applies; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 183.]

Orders of the Day

Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

PATIENTS DISCHARGED AFTER SENTENCES OF IMPRISONMENT

'After section 49 of the Mental Health Act 1983 there shall be inserted the following section—

"Patients discharged after sentences of imprisonment

49A. Where a patient has been admitted to a hospital under the provisions of sections 47 or 49 above, discharge shall only take place on the signed assent of the responsible medical officer after consultation with persons nominated by each statutory body responsible for after-care.".'.—*[Mr. Timms.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.9 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause arises from an appalling incident in Newham on 27 July 1994, when Mr. Bryan Bennett, a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—who is unable to be in the Chamber this afternoon—and a user of a social services day centre was tragically killed by another user, Mr. Stephen Laudat, just a few months after the latter's discharge from psychiatric treatment at Kneesworth hospital.

Mr. Laudat pleaded guilty on the ground of diminished responsibility and was committed by the central criminal court to an indefinite period of treatment in Rampton hospital in December 1994.

The district health authority and the local council jointly commissioned an independent review of the circumstances surrounding the tragedy in January 1995, under the chairmanship of Mr. Len Woodley QC. That inquiry reported last month. The Minister will be aware that the Woodley report is sharply critical of the Bill. It states:

"it is difficult to imagine how the proposed legislation would have enhanced Stephen Laudat's care or prevented the death of Mr. Bennett."

It says that its findings do not support the enactment of the Bill and that the key lies in better resourcing of community care—a point to which I shall return if I am able to on Third Reading later today.

The new clause relates to one aspect of the Laudat case with which the Bill does not deal. There is immense concern in Newham, especially among the relatives of the man who died, naturally, about how Mr. Laudat came to be released from Kneesworth hospital in December 1993, just seven months before the killing. The Woodley report shows that the hospital had great concerns about him immediately before he was released. There was a series of difficult incidents in October and November 1993 and the ward manager wrote, prior to an after-care planning meeting on 25 November, that Mr. Laudat was subject to the

"potential and threat of violence to both males and females",

[Mr. Stephen Timms]

and that he was

"vulnerable and a threat to himself and others".

Mr. Laudat's prison sentence—the reason for his detention in the first place—meant that he could be released on 6 December 1993. At the meeting on 25 November, it was noted that there were insufficient grounds to warrant his detention beyond the end of the restriction order on 6 December and that he had, therefore, to be released.

That is the matter that has so deeply concerned myself and my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and which lead to the drafting of the new clause. Mr. Laudat was released because his prison sentence expired and not because anyone had positively concluded that he was ready to re-enter the community. The limited grounds in the Mental Health Act 1983 under which it would have been possible to detain Mr. Laudat further were felt not to have been complied with, so it was felt that there was no alternative but to release him, despite the severe misgivings of those responsible for his care. The truth is that he should not have been released.

The new clause shifts the onus, so that in such circumstances discharge could take place only on the explicit authority of a medical officer and not merely because the prison sentence had expired, as in the case described in the Woodley report. The length of the sentence clearly bore no relation to the state of Mr. Laudat's health.

Under the new clause, the patient would be released only if his doctor was positively satisfied that he was not a danger to himself or others. If it had been enacted prior to December 1993, it is likely that my hon. Friend's constituent would be alive today. I hope that the Minister will be able to accept it, to prevent similar tragic incidents.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I commend my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for tabling the new clause. We believe that it should be supported.

Although such patients will be entitled, when discharged, to after-care under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, there is no legal requirement in that section to consult prior to discharge and on many occasions, as my hon. Friend made clear, discharge is poorly, if at all, planned and co-ordinated. We believe that new clause 1 is a practical way of addressing those concerns.

4.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) for bringing the matter forward. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) did me the courtesy of writing to explain that he could not be here, but that his hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) would be here to support new clause 1.

I understand well the concern that lies behind new clause 1 following the Woodley inquiry into the care of Stephen Laudat. However, the present wording of the Mental Health Act 1983 already meets the aims of the new clause, while the introduction of supervised discharge will of course strengthen the provisions.

The Home Secretary may direct that a patient be transferred from prison to hospital; he may also direct that a patient should be subject to special restrictions. The patient may not then be discharged, given leave of absence or transferred to another hospital without the consent of the Home Secretary. The issue that the new clause seeks to address arises at the point when the prison sentence of a patient in hospital expires. At that point, the restrictions exercised by the Home Secretary also expire. That does not mean that the patient must then be discharged immediately. The patient remains liable to be detained for a further six months unless a positive decision is taken to discharge him or her.

At the end of the six months, the responsible medical officer must review the case and the detention may then continue if the renewal conditions in section 20 of the Mental Health Act 1983 are met. When the patient is eventually discharged, he or she is subject to section 117 in the same way as anyone else who has been detained for treatment under the Act; that is, the relevant health and local authorities are obliged to provide after-care services for as long as the patient needs them.

Under the terms of the Bill, as soon as the restriction direction has lapsed, it is open to the responsible medical officer to make a supervision application if, and only if, he or she is satisfied that the after-care arrangements are agreed and in place. New clause 1 would treat transferred prisoners differently from those admitted directly under hospital orders made by the courts. I do not think that that is desirable or necessary and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel able to withdraw the new clause.

Mr. Timms: I am disappointed that the Minister has not accepted the new clause, but I am encouraged by what he said. I hope that he is right that the arrangements will ensure that such incidents do not take place in future. In the light of what the Minister said, I shall not seek to press the new clause to a vote and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

AFTER-CARE UNDER SUPERVISION

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 25, at end insert—

'(7A) If, on the date when a patient ceases to be liable to be detained in a hospital under this Part of this Act, a supervision application has been made in respect of him but the Health Authority have not yet accepted the application, his liability to be so detained shall continue—

(a) until the end of the period of three months commencing with that date, or

(b) until the Authority either accept or refuse the application whichever is the earlier.'.

The amendment aims to press the Government to reconsider the issue with which it deals, which has run through the proceedings on the Bill all the way through from the House of Lords.

As a Scottish Member, I am entitled to ask the Government to reconsider because clause 4(1), which inserts a section 35A(6) into the Mental Health (Scotland)

Act 1984, makes Scottish provisions precisely like those in the amendment. Briefly stated, the objective of the amendment is to prevent patients from being able to walk straight out of hospital just when attempts are being made to arrange their supervised discharge. That is balanced by providing that patients can be detained for only three months so that they cannot be detained for an indeterminate or excessive period.

The amendment is supported by experience especially in respect of the treatment of schizophrenics. I fully understand the Government's problem in getting the legislative balance right in dealing with schizophrenia, which can cause people to be so ill that they act completely irrationally, as opposed to what I might call normal mental illness. It is difficult to legislate for both sets of patients.

I understand, too, that there are potential civil liberties arguments, as there always are when we deny people their liberty, even for a determined period of three months. I am not persuaded by the Government's position as stated by the Minister in the other place at the beginning of the Bill's passage, when it was suggested that there would be a gap in the procedure. The Government seemed to accept that there would be a gap and took the view that the patient would be much more likely to stay as a voluntary patient in those circumstances. I wish that I had that confidence. Some schizophrenic patients—perhaps only a small number—might simply go walkabout, which would disrupt the after-care package being put in place.

I hate to be superior, but we tend to do things better in Scotland. If the provision is good enough for Scotland, why should not it be in the English part of the Bill?

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond positively to the amendment because the Bill presupposes that all the appropriate accommodation and after-care arrangements for the patient will have been put in place by the time his or her detention period is over and that, if they have not, the patient will accept a continuation of his detention voluntarily until they have. As the National Schizophrenia Fellowship has repeatedly pointed out, that flies in the face of experience and reality. Appropriate accommodation is not always in place, sometimes for the best of reasons.

Nevertheless, patients can walk out, claiming their rights under the Bill, and then disappear through the safety net. That is of great concern to us. The National Schizophrenia Fellowship has suggested that it is better to keep the stable door bolted until we can be assured that proper after-care and accommodation are in place before the release of patients. I hope that my hon. Friend will respond positively to the amendment.

Mr. Bowis: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for raising this issue and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) for bringing the expertise of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship to bear on this point. I hope that I can fill the gap for the hon. Gentleman and, in so doing, reply positively to my hon. Friend.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the amendment was tabled in the light of the Scottish provisions, under which the sheriff may defer the making of a community care order until he is satisfied about the after-care and medical services to be provided. That reflects the concern, which has been expressed on both sides of the House, about what might happen if the authority to detain a patient were about to expire for whatever reason—possibly because the after-care services that the patient needed were not yet in place—and the health authority had not yet accepted the supervision application.

However, the way in which the provisions for supervised discharge have been framed for England and Wales makes the amendment unnecessary. First, the detailed requirements for consultation by the responsible medical officer with all those concerned are designed to ensure that a supervision application is made only once all necessary preparations are in place. The requirement for the health authority to consult the local authority before it accepts the application provides a double check on that, and there should be no reason to delay acceptance of the application once consultation has been completed.

However, in the unlikely event of a delay for some unforeseen reason, I commend to the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend section 20 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The renewal provisions of that section would remain available to enable a patient's detention in hospital to be renewed for as long as necessary. The existing provision is therefore adequate for that purpose without requiring a new procedure for renewing detention to be included in the Bill. The current measures add to that provision. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts the existence of that basic assurance and I invite him to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I think that I am reassured by that reply. I know the Minister well enough to know that he will monitor this matter carefully. If there are experiences like those that have been raised as genuine and legitimate concerns, particularly at the hands of schizophrenic patients, I hope that he will make it his business to ensure that any gaps that remain despite what he has said are closed at some stage in the future.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Bowis: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 3, line 29, leave out

'unless the patient has otherwise requested,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 14 to 24.

Mr. Bowis: The amendments relate to the rights of a patient's nearest relative to be consulted and the position that arises when a patient objects. They fulfil the commitment that I gave in Committee to my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) to table amendments to provide for that objection to be overridden in certain circumstances.

The amendments define two tests that must be satisfied if a patient's objection is to be overridden. First, he or she must have a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour towards others. Secondly, the responsible medical officer must believe that it is appropriate for the nearest relative to be consulted.

[Mr. Bowis]

I am sure that all hon. Members on both sides of the House will understand that, in those amendments, we have found it necessary to walk a tightrope in maintaining a balance between all the different interests. I believe that the balance that we have struck is the right one.

I commend those amendments to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Minister is right; he is walking a tightrope. Despite his build—and perhaps my build as well—he appears to have made a successful job of it.

The amendments were a Government response to requests from my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and Conservative Members to reconsider that aspect. The Government have tabled amendments relating to the rights of patients to object to their responsible medical officer consulting a nearest relative about placing the patient on a supervision order. As the Bill stands, the patient has the right to object to such consultations.

I believe that we all understand why, in normal circumstances—inasmuch as any of those circumstances may be described as normal—the patient should have the right to object to such consultations. However, the amendments mean that the patient loses his right to object to the consultation if he has a history of violence or threatening behaviour—and that is where the Minister says that he is walking a tightrope.

The purpose of the amendments is to strike a balance between the reasonable rights of the patient and the rights of relatives and close family. The amendments are intended to serve as protection for the families of violent patients. They make it less likely that a potentially violent patient can be discharged under supervision without his family being consulted and warned.

The Government probably have achieved the right balance, and I support the amendments.

Mr. David Atkinson: I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for responding so positively to the anxieties of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship about the amendments, and I thank our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland for the amendments that are the equivalent for Scotland in those respects. I welcome the amendments wholeheartedly, and once again thank my hon. Friend for his positive response in listening to us.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 3, line 36, at end insert—

'(2A) Where the patient has requested that paragraph (b) of subsection (2) above should not apply, that paragraph shall not apply unless—

(a) the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour towards others, and

(b) the responsible medical officer considers that it is appropriate for steps such as are mentioned in that paragraph to be taken.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Ms Jowell: I beg to move amendment No. 45, in page 7, line 12, leave out lines 12 to 16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 46, in page 7, line 12, leave out

'A patient subject to after-care under supervision may'

and insert

'An application for a patient subject to after-care under supervision to be taken and conveyed (in this Act referred to as a "conveyance application") duly completed in accordance with subsection (4A) below, shall be sufficient authority for the patient to'.

No. 47, in page 7, line 16, at end insert—

'(4A) A conveyance application may be made by the supervisor in respect of a patient subject to after-care under supervision, on the grounds that—

(a) he continues to suffer from a mental disorder, being mental illness, severe mental impairment, psychopathic disorder, or mental impairment, and

(b) it is necessary for the health and safety of the patient or for the protection of others that he should be taken and conveyed in accordance with subsection (4) above.

(4B) A conveyance application shall be made to the Health Authority which accepted the supervision application in respect of the patient.'.

Ms Jowell: These amendments deal with the take and convey powers that the Bill will give to those responsible for supervision or anyone who is nominated by the supervisor. In our opinion, they are the changes in the law that are most likely to create serious difficulties.

Amendment No. 45 removes the new powers altogether from the Bill. The aftercare organisations responsible for supervision and care would still be able to formulate and impose requirements on the person subject to supervision and would have to conduct a review if the person failed or neglected to comply with them. However, the supervisor would not be able to exercise physical force in seeking compliance. That is not to say that community psychiatric nurses, social workers and other people who will be involved in supervision would be left without legal powers to tackle problems when they occur.

One can imagine the circumstances in which the new power may have to be used. For example, the person under supervision may be behaving in such a way that the supervisor believes that an urgent assessment is required; or the person may be preventing access to their home, one of the most common difficulties in offering support to seriously mentally ill people in the community.

Very occasionally, the person's behaviour may be so disturbed as to pose an immediate threat to their own safety or to that of other people or property.

In each of those situations, ample legal powers already exist and are routinely used by those who are allowed to do so in order to deal with the matter. Assessments are undertaken, if necessary, after a social worker has obtained a warrant requiring a person to give him and the doctor access. The Mental Health Act 1983 and other laws clearly allow professionals to intervene when behaviour is so disturbed as to justify the need for further assessment or to restrain violent or threatening behaviour.

High-quality supervision and support for mentally ill people in the community depends for their effectiveness not on new coercive legal powers, but on the appropriate use of existing powers and the more effective deployment of professional resources and services for people needing intensive support and help. If the essential success of after-care plans relies on the agreement and consent of the patient and his or her partnership with the professional team, the Minister must tell us how he justifies the creation of new powers that are so controversial with

those who will be called on to implement them and so potentially damaging to the relationships that professionals are to have with those in their care.

4.30 pm

Let us consider what the Minister is proposing in the Bill. He has not drafted the power so that the supervisor can compel the patient to submit to treatment, occupation, education or training—if one could even contemplate the last two options being possible in practice. The power does not give the supervisor the right to use force to enter premises, nor can the supervisor detain the patient after he or she has been conveyed. Even doctors who have called for new powers find that difficult to understand.

Professor Chris Thomson, registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, has written:

"To many psychiatrists and others this is the worst of both worlds. The mentally ill would be subject to the power of 'arrest' to no apparent purpose. Psychiatrists remain deeply sceptical and believe that the Bill will not provide the extra public safety which the Government is hoping for."

We would not support moves to compel treatment on patients in the community and we believe that the measure may do harm even if it remains largely unused. That harm will be greater than any benefit that may accrue from having this power on the statute book.

One of the most harmful effects may be to encourage poor professional practice. As I think we all accept, good community care depends on high quality relationships, built on trust, confidence and sensitivity to a person's individual needs and circumstances. The threat or use of force can offer the short cut of gaining a person's compliance with a plan or programme. In place of the careful and diligent development of an effective relationship with the patient, a supervisor can merely call in aid his or her power to take and convey or threaten to get the police in order to use it. We are sure that that will damage community care—driving people from services rather than encouraging them to use them, especially if, as will be likely, supervisors try to get the police involved in using coercion rather than use it themselves. Many professionals are unhappy about the prospect of having these powers. Therefore, the provision may be irrelevant because, as I have said, it may simply not be used.

We recognise that the House may not be persuaded that the powers should be removed from the Bill. The House may consider it possible to regulate their use in order to deal with the concerns that I have outlined. We have also tabled a compromise amendment. Amendments Nos. 46 and 47 preserve the powers, but require those who wish to use them, first, to submit to the health authority which accepted the supervision a written application setting out the grounds.

Those grounds require the supervisor to confirm that the person is still suffering from a mental disorder within the meaning of the Act and that the use of the power to take and convey is necessary, not just beneficial or convenient, for the sake of the patient's health and safety and for the protection of others. The amendment therefore links the use of the power to some threat to patients' health or risk to their or other's safety.

We believe that the power can be justified only when it is subjected to such clear and explicit regulation. It is only in those circumstances that professionals and patients will be able to see the reason for using the power and any justification there may be for it.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I shall be brief in my remarks today as the points were explored in great depth on Second Reading and in Committee. I welcome the fact that the Government have decided to put the issues regarding the provision of care for the mentally ill on the agenda. However, I must also voice my concerns about the legislation that is now before Parliament.

The Government claim that the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill is "uncontroversial", but my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) has pointed out that that is certainly not so. The Government have failed completely to listen to the widespread opposition to their proposals. We know that leading health professionals and patient organisations are united in their opposition to the Bill. They are particularly concerned about the proposed power to take and convey people with mental illness to places of treatment. Therefore, I support the amendments moved by my hon. Friend that would remove that power from the Bill.

First, the proposal is an affront to civil liberties and we covered that ground in Committee. The Bill provides no restrictions on who can exercise the power to take and convey and there is no requirement to inform the patient of the reasons for its use. The Bill allows the patient's supervisor to nominate any other person or agency to take and convey the patient. The supervisor does not have to obtain any additional authority before delegating that power and there are no safeguards to protect the person being conveyed or the person effecting the conveyance.

Secondly, I question the workability of the proposal. The Bill proposes that patients be taken and conveyed to a specified place, but it does not suggest what should happen to patients once they have been taken and conveyed. It is difficult to see how an unwilling patient could be forced to take part in activities such as education and training, even if that patient has been successfully taken and conveyed to a specified place.

The proposal seeks to compel patients to use services but, amazingly, it provides no guarantee that those services will be provided. The proposal threatens to damage the relationship of trust between patient and supervisor and there are concerns that, as a result of the Bill, patients in the community will be discouraged from remaining in contact with the mental health services.

Many social workers and community psychiatric nurses are not keen to take on the new power as they believe that it could put them at risk from potentially violent patients. Some professionals have said that they would not use any of the Bill's provisions—which they regard as unnecessary—as they believe that the Mental Health Act 1983 is adequate. Leading mental health professionals have expressed strong reservations about the proposals on take and convey. My hon. Friend has quoted the remarks of Professor Chris Thomson, registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. It is worth repeating, and I hope that the Minister will listen:

"To many psychiatrists and others this is the worst of both worlds. The mentally ill would be subject to the power of 'arrest' to no apparent purpose."

[Mr. Kevin Hughes]

That concern is shared by many people who work daily with the mentally ill. It is ridiculous for the Government to seek to improve the provision of care for the mentally ill without heeding the advice of the professionals who daily provide that care.

The Bill fails to address the concerns of the caring professions, who are anxious that treatment for the mentally ill should be properly addressed and funded. The Bill's provisions do not address long-term issues but are a quick fix aimed at mending public opinion rather than mending an outmoded and underfunded system.

I hope that the Government have noted past debates and those today, will listen to health professions, and will accept the amendments, so that we may all be united in getting behind better services for the mentally ill.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I hope that I have the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) in asking my hon. Friend the Minister to resist the amendments. It is important that this difficult and sensitive subject should be explored at this stage of the Bill and the speeches have been helpful, but my hon. Friend will be aware that the National Schizophrenia Fellowship has briefed us to resist the amendments. The fellowship is not concerned about this particular power. In fact, the NSF thinks that it is sometimes necessary to use that power. Patients found wandering in the streets need to be returned to their accommodation. When offered transport by authorised staff, they are willing to accept it.

In addition to the NSF's representations, I and other hon. Members are aware of individual episodes in our constituencies. Such a safeguard is necessary for people to accept and support the care in the community measures that the Government have introduced, with widespread support, in recent years. I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend that he resists the amendments.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) invited me to join him on the high wire. Although we paled at the thought of the impact on the Chamber, that summed up the balance that we are seeking to achieve. That was evident even on the other side of the House. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) said that the 1983 Act was adequate, while the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) said that the system was outmoded. Somewhere in the middle is the need to improve the system all the time, for the benefit of patients and the whole community.

When the Law Commission's report on mentally incapacitated adults was published, it looked to extend the power to convey to guardianship, which the commission said was the unanimous view of everyone that it consulted. We heard a quote from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, but I could quote another report that states exactly the opposite—that the Government are not going far enough. That message has also come from the British Medical Association, and the view of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship suggested that the amendment should be resisted.

The Labour party must look at its own policy. In the other place, Labour thought that the power to convey was so good that it should be extended to guardianship, yet Labour Members here believe that that power should not apply to anyone. They must explain to the public why that strengthening of care and support for severely mentally ill people and protection for the community is not something that they are prepared to accept. I believe that the public support our proposal, which is in the interests of patients.

4.45 pm

I will seek to reunite the hon. Members for Doncaster, North and for Dulwich. We have made it clear that supervised discharge will work largely on the basis of co-operation between all concerned. We therefore see the power to convey a patient being used only rarely—for example, when he or she is temporarily unco-operative, which point was forcefully made by my hon. Friend and the NSF.

The principle of a power to convey is already present in the Mental Health Act 1983 when a patient has to be taken to hospital for treatment or assessment. That may be valuable in helping to resolve a temporary crisis. It is limited in nature and provides a halfway house before return to hospital is considered. If there were no power to convey, the care team would be in the position of needing to consider readmission to hospital on every occasion that a patient was unwilling to co-operate with the arrangements for his or her aftercare.

The starting point for the Bill is that for this particular group of patients, the care programme approach is not enough and needs a degree of legal underpinning to make it effective. It is a matter of balance, and I believe that the Bill has the overall balance right.

The argument that the power to convey in some way contravenes basic human rights ignores the point that in the absence of supervised discharge, the patient might have had to continue being detained in hospital. In that case, the overall effect of supervised discharge is to enable someone to enjoy a greater measure of freedom—even though subject to some constraints—than would have been possible in its absence.

Amendments 46 and 47 would require the supervisor to make a "conveyance application" to the health authority before the power was used but the whole point about the provision is that it is likely to be needed in an emergency, to enable a patient to be removed urgently from a situation that may present a danger to him or herself or to other people—for example, as a result of drinking. The supervisor, or someone that he or she has authorised, needs the power to ensure that effective action can be taken in such a case. Requiring the supervisor to apply to the health authority would defeat the purpose of the provision.

This reserve power is designed to help ensure that the patient will receive and participate in the aftercare services that he or she needs. As the NSF said, it could defuse a crisis and persuade previously resisting patients that it would make sense if they agreed to go back home or to see a doctor or psychiatric nurse. It clearly involves less restriction of a patient than the alternative of considering readmission to hospital when the patient ceases to co-operate in the delivery of aftercare services. In that spirit, I hope that the hon. Member for Dulwich will withdraw her amendment.

Ms Jowell: I want to make it clear that there is no dispute between myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes). My point was that existing powers are adequate to cover take-and-convey as the Minister intends. I was not making the point that

existing legislation is adequate. There is increasingly urgent need for a review of the 1983 Act, to address properly the dramatic and correct shift in the last 12 years in the care and treatment of people suffering from mental illness, from hospitals to the community.

The Minister attempted to confuse events in the other place. My noble Friends were seeking to draw out the distinction between the power to take and convey and the power of guardianship. They appear almost identical, apart from the use of coercion—guardianship is not a coercive power.

The Minister described the provision as a reserve power that will be used only rarely. The power might be helpful where a seriously ill individual has stopped taking his or her medication and begins to deteriorate—becoming disturbed and disruptive and causing concern to their family, people around them and professionals. If the Minister envisages take-and-convey being used in such circumstances, I would insist that adequate powers are already available in the 1983 Act. Indeed, the circumstances in which the reserve power is likely to be needed are precisely those in which the individual is likely to need to be taken to hospital for assessment and, possibly, treatment. We are not talking about a draconian and coercive power to take someone to a day centre, simply because they choose not to go; at any rate, I sincerely hope that that is not what is being proposed.

Although I am naturally disappointed that the Minister is not prepared to accept even the compromise proposals, we shall not press the amendment to a vote. We believe that the House will wish to return to these matters at a future date, when a Labour Government will conduct a thoroughgoing review of the Mental Health Act 1983.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 8, line 7, after 'patient' insert

'who is (or is to be)'.

No. 16, in page 8, line 21, leave out

'unless the patient has otherwise requested,'.

No. 17, in page 8, line 27, at end insert—

'(6A) Where the patient has requested that paragraph (c) of subsection (6) above should not apply, that paragraph shall not apply unless—

(a) the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour towards others, and

(b) the community responsible medical officer (or the person who is to be the community responsible medical officer) considers that it is appropriate for steps such as are mentioned in that paragraph to be taken.'.

No. 18, in page 8, line 28, leave out ', after such consultation,'.

No. 19, in page 11, line 12, leave out

'except where the patient has otherwise requested,'.

No. 20, in page 11, line 18, at end insert—

'(5A) Where the patient has requested that paragraph (b) of subsection (5) above should not apply, that paragraph shall not apply unless—

(a) the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour towards others, and

(b) the community responsible medical officer considers that it is appropriate for steps such as are mentioned in that paragraph to be taken.'.

No. 21, in page 12, line 22, leave out

'unless the patient has otherwise requested,'.

No. 22, in page 12, line 29, at end insert—

'(3A) Where the patient has requested that paragraph (b) of subsection (3) above should not apply, that paragraph shall not apply unless—

(a) the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour towards others, and

(b) the community responsible medical officer considers that it is appropriate for steps such as are mentioned in that paragraph to be taken.'.

No. 23, in page 12, line 44, leave out

'unless the patient otherwise requests,'.

No. 24, in page 12, line 48, at end insert—

'(6) Where the patient has requested that paragraph (c) of subsection (5) above should not apply, that paragraph shall not apply unless subsection (3)(b) above applied in his case by virtue of subsection (3A) above.'.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Clause 4

COMMUNITY CARE ORDERS

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 18, line 26, leave out from '35A.—(1)' to 'the' in line 28 and insert

'Where a patient has attained the age of 16 years'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 3, in page 18, line 39, at end insert 'and

(c) a community care assessment under section 12A of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (in this Act referred to as a "community care assessment").'.

No. 4, in page 19, line 2, after 'appropriate', insert

'to ensure that a patient receives such medical treatment, after-care services and a community care assessment'.

No. 5, in page 19, line 22, after 'until', insert

'a community care assessment of the patient has been carried out and'.

No. 8, in page 21, line 7, at end add ';and

(c) the community care assessment of the patient.'.

No. 11, in page 22, line 14, after 'circumstances', insert

'and his community care assessment'.

Mr. McAllion: The amendments were inspired by the Law Society of Scotland and cover a range of issues connected with the Bill's Scottish clauses.

Amendment No. 2 would ensure that only people over the age of 16 could be subject to community care orders. Let me explain why we consider that limitation necessary. The English and Welsh clauses limit supervised discharge to young people who have attained the age of 16, because it is felt that young people would be more appropriately dealt with under the Children Act 1989. If that is the Government's view in respect of young people in England and Wales, surely they should take the same attitude to young people in Scotland.

The Minister will know that a young person can be subject to compulsory detention under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, which does not set an age limit. Although it is fairly rare for a young person to be compulsorily detained in hospital, it does occasionally happen in Scotland. The amendment simply covers circumstances in which a young person is discharged from hospital to live in the community.

[Mr. McAllion]

It is suggested that, if further powers are to be taken to control the young person's life in the community, doctors should involve the expertise of the reporter and the children's panel in Scotland, as they would more appropriately control and supervise the lives of such young people. They certainly have the experience and the procedures to consider young people's needs. Surely it is better to involve them than to use the sheriff court procedure.

As the Minister will know, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 provides that those responsible for a young person's welfare may apply to the sheriff for a supervision order for a child in need of extra care. Among the conditions that can then be imposed are conditions relating to residence and medical treatment. Those are precisely the kind of matters that might be included in a community care order; however, it would be preferable to use a supervision order, because that too involves the expertise of the reporter and the children's panel.

On an allied matter, may I remind the Minister of an incident that took place in Glasgow in 1994 and led to the death of a police constable? Philip McFadden was subsequently committed to the State hospital in Carstairs. The Minister will be aware that the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland had conducted an inquiry into the care and treatment of Philip McFadden before the incident took place. Has there been any progress with that inquiry?

Amendment No. 3 is intended to provide for a person who is subject to a community care order to have a full community care assessment under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. It would ensure that such a person received the benefits of the new community care system of assessment and care management under the care programme approach, and would make it clear that such an assessment should be carried out before the granting of the community care order. We believe that the sheriff should have the benefit of seeing the full assessment before granting such an order.

Amendment No. 4 attempts to ensure that the sheriff does not impose conditions on the community care order that are not relevant to the main aims of that order. The Minister will be aware that the provisions in clause 4 which apply to Scotland are very different from those that apply to the supervised discharge procedures proposed for England. Under the English procedures, the special medical officer has the power to say where the patient should reside, what day facilities he or she should use and whether access to medical and social work personnel will be necessary. Those procedures also include the controversial power to convey the patient to treatment, which was mentioned when we discussed the earlier group of amendments.

We cannot conceive that the sheriff would have it in mind to include in the order any additional powers, but we consider it essential for the legislation to make very clear what the Government have in mind. Is it proposed, for example, that the controversial power to convey could be introduced in Scotland under the sheriff court procedure? Could patients in Scotland be conveyed against their will to day-care and medical facilities? Those who work in the field in Scotland are interested to know exactly what the Government intend.

Amendment No. 5 is designed to ensure that the sheriff has the power to defer making an order until he is satisfied that the patient's community care needs have been assessed. Again, we believe that the sheriff should have the benefit of seeing a full community care assessment of the patient before making an order.

Amendment No. 8 is linked to, and consequential on, amendment No. 2. It is simply an attempt to bring the proposed new system into line with community care procedures now current in Scotland. It would ensure that the person considering whether to make a community care order would consider the information about the patient's needs as set out in his formal community care assessment. Amendment No. 11 is simply consequential on amendment No. 2.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak, particularly because the report mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion)—the report of the inquiry conducted by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland into the care and treatment of Philip McFadden—was published by the Scottish Office today. I am grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for sending me a copy of the report earlier this week: I have now had time to read it in some detail.

With the permission of the Scottish Office, I sent a copy of the report to the parents of the late Police Constable Lewis Fulton. Lewis and Gette Fulton, who are constituents of mine, bore their tragic and unnecessary loss with great fortitude and dignity. I am happy to place that on record.

As I am sure the Minister would admit, the report is quite worrying. I shall deal with two issues arising from it which relate to today's debate. First, there is the question of media coverage of such incidents. Section 7 of the report, on page 23, is very critical of the coverage by the *Daily Record*, which featured the headline

"Schizo can't be tried for cop killing",

and an article that described Philip McFadden as a madman. The same issue contained the headline

"Teenage schizo can't face trial, but judge orders 'Keep this madman in Carstairs'".

I entirely agree with the comment of the Mental Welfare Commission:

"Press coverage is very important, because it forms a basis for the public perception of events. The sort of pejorative language used by the *Daily Record* is deplorable and does not assist an intelligent debate about the problems of community care."

We need, above all, an intelligent debate. This is a very difficult issue, and if newspapers—particularly tabloid newspapers—employ such expressions, we shall not have that intelligent debate.

I shall deal with another section of the report at slightly more length—although not in extenso, hon. Members will be pleased to hear. It relates to the position when Philip McFadden was discharged from the psychiatric hospital. When he was in the hospital, he had the support and help of a very experienced consultant psychiatrist, Dr. McCabe—who comes out of the report very well—and a range of specialist support. That support was expensive—rightly so—but it was immediately available, and provided excellent support for a very disturbed young man at a very difficult time. When Mr. McFadden moved out into the community—this point relates to community care—the general practitioner was his first line of support.

We all accept that GPs should be the first line of support. GPs are anxious to remind us that people cannot be referred to consultants, that people cannot get any other kind of medical treatment and that they must go to their GP. They demand the right to be the primary support in medical care, but in so being they have some responsibilities to society and, above all, to their patients.

When Philip McFadden's mother was in desperate need of urgent support and assistance she rightly called her GP. The Minister will confirm, however, that for a substantial period that distraught lady could not get past the GP's receptionist. I have heard of many instances where anxious and desperate patients or their relatives have been fobbed off by receptionists. That is what happened in this case.

Eventually, after persisting, and with the help of Rosemary Fitch—a psychiatric nurse who comes out very well in the report—she got through but found that not one GP was available in the practice. It is astonishing that this big, busy practice in Glasgow had not one GP available to deal with the mother of a psychiatric patient. By this time, Philip McFadden was wielding a knife and threatening people in the family.

5 pm

When Philip McFadden's mother eventually got through to the doctor some time later, he refused to attend. I know of incidents in Scotland where GPs have been assaulted, and we have to take account of that, but this was a difficult situation, and the report says that the doctor should have contacted the police and gone with them so that there was medical and police assistance simultaneously. That was not done in this case. Instead, a young police constable went along on his own and was stabbed to death. In my view, it happened because the system, under which GPs give immediate support to people like Philip McFadden's mother, broke down.

That is why I am asking the Minister to review the role and responsibilities of GPs. That is important. More young people will be discharged into the community, which is absolutely right in principle, but the necessary support must be available to ensure their protection and the safety of the general public—in this case, a young policeman.

I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that he will contact the Royal College of General Practitioners and the British Medical Association, both of which provided experts to give evidence to the commission. Dr. Jim Rodger of the Scottish Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners and Dr. John Garner of the Scottish committee of the BMA suggested that there should be some improvements, that GPs need to be available 24 hours a day for such emergencies, for which they need clear rules such as how and when to bring in the police to work alongside them.

This was a tragic death that should never have occurred. In my view, the system broke down. I am not pointing the finger at any individuals, although some are criticised in the report. I hope that the Minister will deal with those criticisms and say how he will respond to them. The Mental Welfare Commission has pointed the finger at certain individuals, but I am more concerned about the system and to ensure that, as far as is humanly possible—it can never be guaranteed—the kind of situation in which Lewis Fulton met his death does not occur again. I know that I am speaking on behalf of his parents and his widow when I say that they are anxious to ensure that such a situation does not occur again, and that no other young policeman has to face the same difficulties.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I share the sympathy of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for the family of police officer Lewis Fulton, and I shall make a full statement on that in a moment.

I shall deal first with the amendments, which seek to achieve two things. First, they would have the effect of making available community care orders to patients who are over 16, whether detained or otherwise. Although the question of detaining a child under 16 in a psychiatric hospital is a disturbing thought—children can become mentally ill—the existing provision recognises that it may be necessary for a child to be detained in hospital. If there is a possibility of a person under 16 being detained in hospital, it is only fair that that person should have the same rehabilitation opportunities as all others so detained, including access to community care orders. For that reason, an age limit of 16 years, in our view, should not be imposed.

The amendments also seek to introduce a statutory requirement that the patient should receive a needs assessment, and propose an associated change to the Bill. We do not need to legislate to do that, as local authorities already have the duty, under section 12(a) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, to assess people's social care needs. We believe that the duties on authorities to provide aftercare, under section 8 of the 1984 Act, are quite clear, and include, through the Bill, duties to provide aftercare for persons subject to a community care order. We shall also underline in guidance the circumstances in which that duty applies to community care order patients. If there are problems in meeting these duties, they should be addressed administratively, not by primary legislation.

With that explanation, I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will not press the amendments. If there are matters that require the Children Act provision to apply in a case, they can definitely be used, but it is still preferable to have the opportunity to use a community care order if that would help to support a young person on discharge from hospital.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley raised the very tragic case of police officer Fulton and inquired into the care and treatment of Mr. Philip McFadden prior to the incident on 17 June 1994. I am grateful to the commission for the comprehensive way in which it has carried out its inquiry. Because of the possibility that Mr. McFadden may yet stand trial, if considered fit to do so in future, the inquiry has necessarily concentrated on the care and treatment that he received before the death of police officer Fulton, to whose family we extend our deepest sympathy.

The commission's report recommended: first, that the Secretary of State and the Royal College of General Practitioners and other appropriate GP organisations consider the need for further guidance for GPs in dealing with potentially violent, mentally disturbed patients in community care. Secondly, it recommended further discussions between the police and doctors to address the issue of collaboration in respect of crisis situations involving people with mental illness who are potentially violent. Local arrangements should be agreed between GPs, psychiatric services, mental health officers and the

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

police to deal with such emergency situations. Thirdly, police training should be appraised to ensure that there is adequate preparation for recognising mental illness and dealing with members of the public who are mentally ill.

I am glad to confirm that the Government have accepted those recommendations. As a first step, we have written to the national general practitioner and police organisations, enclosing a copy of the commission's report and asking them to agree with us the action necessary to address the commission's recommendations. I shall also refer the report to the Greater Glasgow health board to consider whether any separate action, bearing on the board's responsibilities, is necessary to address the commission's comments and conclusions in relation either to primary care or hospital settings. As I mentioned to the hon. Gentleman, in relation to GPs' responsibilities, the report has been sent to the Royal College of General Practitioners and the BMA, and we will follow up with them how they can address the commission's recommendations.

I am also sympathetic to the point that it is undesirable for the press to leap to conclusions in cases of this nature. Indeed, the commission's report emphasised that Mr. McFadden received appropriate treatment from the adolescent psychiatry service in Glasgow and dispels any suggestion that he had been inappropriately discharged into the community. It also criticises misleading aspects of the press coverage given to the case, including the suggestion, which was irrelevant, that a shortage of psychiatric admission beds had contributed to the incident.

Mr. Foulkes: Before the Minister concludes, I should like to thank him. The Government have acted properly in all that they have done and I sincerely welcome the Minister's announcement. It shows that when dealing with such sensitive matters party politics need not play a part and that we can sometimes move forward with agreement. I am especially grateful to the Minister.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for these measures and our actions on the recommendations.

I can now respond specifically to a point made by the hon. Member for Dundee, East. Under the Bill, there is a much more specific provision than a power to convey in Scotland, which requires the return of the person to hospital for reassessment if his mental condition has deteriorated. That can be done by a member of the care team. The direction to attend hospital for reassessment in such cases constitutes sufficient authority to convey a person to hospital, and an additional power to convey as proposed in England and Wales is not considered necessary. In other words, the technicalities may be different but the purpose is the same, and I thought it necessary to mention that.

Of course, the decision to detain a person must be made on the basis of clinical diagnosis and has to be of a nature or degree that warrants detention. Detention can be for a period of six months and can then be renewed at 12-month intervals depending on the mental condition of the patient involved.

Mr. McAllion: I thank the Minister for his prior notification of the publication of the report by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland and I associate myself with the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to the effect that the Government have handled the matter properly.

I should also like to add my support from the Front Bench to my hon. Friend's criticism of the tabloid coverage of the tragic incident. The use of words such as "schizo" and "madman" was disgraceful and wholly unacceptable. It strikes me that the tabloids in particular increasingly exercise considerable power in our society, but with power should go responsibility. In this case, they have shown no responsibility whatsoever.

I also accept to a certain extent the Minister's explanation about ensuring that people under 16 should have the same rehabilitation opportunities as everyone else. The point is not that they should be denied those rehabilitation opportunities but that their rehabilitation opportunities should be under the supervision of the reporter on the children's panel service. That is the most appropriate way to handle them, as opposed to the sheriff court system in Scotland.

I thank the Minister for his remarks about improvements that the Government are suggesting for better collaboration between the police and general practitioners and for police training, and for referring the report to the Greater Glasgow health board.

Finally, I hope that there is to be no scapegoating in this affair. If there are any lessons to be learnt about weaknesses in the system, I hope that we try to deal with them rather than hold an individual responsible. However, I am grateful to the Minister and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 19, line 45, after '(3)(a)' insert 'or (f) or (3A)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 26 to 44.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments provide for communication with an intimation to informal carers and, in certain circumstances, the nearest relative. They are proposed in response to representations made in Committee.

The amendments provide that those who give informal care to the patient are informed of the various stages of the community care order—its making, renewal or revocation, variation of its conditions, a change of special medical officer or aftercare officer or a reassessment in hospital. That is a direct response to an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Dundee, East.

The amendments also enable the responsible medical officer, the special medical officer or the aftercare officer, as appropriate, to consult at the various stages with the patient's nearest relative when a patient has a history of violence despite the patient's objections. The right to override the patient's wish would allow those caring for the patient to obtain information from the nearest relative, which might be essential to an assessment of the risk that the patient poses to himself or others. This is in the light of an amendment to the English provisions sponsored by

the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and proposed by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe). I am glad to incorporate them in the Bill.

Mr. McAllion: I am grateful to the Minister for tabling the amendments—I wish only that he would be as responsive and flexible in dealing with other matters that we raise with him.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 20, line 13, after '(3)(a)' insert 'or (3A)'.

No. 27, in page 20, line 48, at end insert—

'(3A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the responsible medical officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (3)(a) above.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

5.15 pm

Mr. McAllion: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 22, line 21, after 'force;', insert—

'(iv) the views of the patient and his or her carers as to such matters, as disclosed to the person making the application for the community care order during consultation;'.

The amendment would ensure that the person making the report under an application for a community care order must inform the sheriff about the discussions that he or she has had with the patient and with his or her carers. We believe that it is important that the sheriff should understand any problems with the community care order that either the patient or his carers may have. The responsible medical officer will have consulted both before making the application, and the amendment requires him merely to report on those discussions.

Although the patient has the right to attend the hearing, there is a real possibility that in many cases he or she may be too ill to attend or may be intimidated by the process. The amendment would be an additional safeguard to ensure that his or her views are taken into account.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendment would introduce a requirement that the aftercare officer's report accompanying the application should include the views of the patient and his carers about the proposed order. As drafted, it would be the patient's views, as disclosed to the responsible medical officer.

I must point out that the Bill requires that patient and carers are consulted by the responsible medical officer before the application is made. The application should reflect the views of those consulted, and guidance will be issued by us. As I am sure the House is also aware, the proposed new clause 35A(2) attracts the provision of section 113 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 to the application of a community care order. That means that the patient must be given the opportunity to be heard by the sheriff, either in person or through a representative.

I hope that the House will agree that an interested and vociferous patient probably will wish to attend the hearing, and that is the best safeguard. We take the view that a patient who is so ill as to be unable to attend the court hearing should probably not be considered for a community care order. In such circumstances, the patient should be cared for in hospital.

I accept that a patient may choose not to attend the hearing, and we shall use guidance to underline the importance to the application of the views of those consulted and to make it clear to the various professionals involved that patients should be encouraged to attend or be represented at such hearings. Given those assurances, I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. McAllion: In view of the Minister's assurances about guidance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 22, line 33, at end insert 'or (3A)'.

No. 29, in page 23, line 18, at end insert—

'(3A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the responsible medical officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (3)(b)(i) above.'.

No. 30, in page 23, line 20, after 'above' insert

'and any consultation under subsection (3A) above'.

No. 31, in page 23, line 29, after '(3)(b)(i)' insert 'or (iv) or (3A)'.

No. 32, in page 23, line 36, leave out from 'of' to 'of' in line 38 and insert

'references to subsections (3)(b)(i) and (3A) of this section for the references to subsections (3)(a) and (3A)'.

No. 33, in page 24, line 7, at end insert—

'(1A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the special medical officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (1)(a) above.'.

No. 34, in page 24, line 13, after '(1)(a)' insert 'or (1A)'.

No. 35, in page 24, line 31, after '(1)(a)' insert 'or (e) or (1A)'.

No. 36, in page 24, line 37, leave out from 'of' to 'of' in line 39 and insert

'references to subsections (1)(a) and (1A) of this section for the references to subsections (3)(a) and (3A)'.

No. 37, in page 25, line 43, at end insert—

'(4A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the special medical officer or, as the case may be, the after-care officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (3)(a) or, as the case may be, (4)(a) above.'.

No. 38, in page 25, line 51, after '(a)' insert 'or (e)'.

No. 39, in page 25, line 52, at end insert 'or subsection (4A) above'.

No. 40, in page 27, line 16, at end insert—

'(2A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the special medical officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (2)(a) above.'.

No. 41, in page 27, line 45, after '(2)(a)' insert 'or (e) or (2A)'.

No. 42, in page 29, line 28, after 'officer' insert

', any person falling within subsection (2)(e) below'.

No. 43, in page 29, line 43, at end insert—

'(2A) If the patient has a propensity to violent or dangerous behaviour the special medical officer may consult the patient's nearest relative notwithstanding any objection by the patient to such consultation under subsection (2)(a) above.'.

No. 44, in page 30, line 4, leave out from second 'the' to end of line 6 and insert

'persons mentioned in subsection (4) below of the revocation.

(4) The persons to be notified under subsection (3) above are—

[Mr. McAllion]

(a) the patient and (if practicable) his nearest relative;

(b) the patient's special medical officer;

(c) the patient's after-care officer; and

(d) any person who the Mental Welfare Commission believes plays a substantial part in the care of the patient but is not professionally concerned with the after-care services provided for the patient under section 8 of this Act.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 1

After-care Under Supervision: Supplementary

Ms Jowell: I beg to move amendment No. 48, in page 41, line 32, at end insert—

'Mental Health Act Commission

16A. In section 121 of the Mental Health Act 1983, in subsection (4) leave out from the word "the" on the fifth occasion where it occurs to the end of the subsection and insert—

"(a) the exercise of the powers and the discharge of the duties conferred or imposed by this Act so far as relating to patients received into guardianship or after-care under supervision under this Act; and

(b) the care and treatment, or any aspect of the care and treatment in hospitals and mental nursing homes of patients who are not liable to be detained.".'.

The amendment would modify the Secretary of State's powers to extend the remit of the Mental Health Act Commission. It would not require him to extend its responsibilities, but would allow him specifically to require the commission to have a responsibility towards patients who are placed in aftercare subject to supervision and who are received into guardianship. There are ample reasons to believe that the commission should have responsibility for protecting the interests of patients in the community as much as those of patients in hospital.

First, we have seen from recent reports what can be the tragic and catastrophic consequences of neglect, maladministration and the incompetent care of patients living at home. Is the Minister not prepared to see the connection between the poor standards of care and services that those independent investigations have revealed and the absence of any standing body of experts with legal powers to investigate complaints of poor care?

Secondly, the new legal powers are likely to affect not a handful of patients but as many as 3,000 at any one time. If, as may be predicted, certain patients remain under supervision for long or indefinite periods, the total will rise well beyond that number. If the Minister justifies the policy behind the Bill by observing that care and treatment has shifted from hospital to the community, the logic of that argument should mean that patients in the community, especially those subject to legal powers, should have the same protection as that afforded to those in hospital.

The third justification for the change is that the commission itself wants this added responsibility because it believes it to be necessary, not simply desirable. It is necessary because the Bill introduces new coercive powers, and the use of those powers should be overseen by an independent body with powers to investigate complaints from patients or from carers. It is one of the important checks and balances that make the difference between law that is fair and law that is unfair.

We know that the Government have no principled objection to such a role for the commission, since in Scotland they are to extend the role of the Mental Welfare Commission to patients subject to community care orders. It is not enough for the Minister simply to distinguish Scottish law from that in England, and to use that as justification for a different approach. We can well imagine how his objections to the amendment would be regarded by those who may be among the 3,000 patients subject to new powers, desperately needing the assistance of the Mental Health Act Commission.

In Committee and today, Opposition Members have drawn attention to the flaws of the drafting and procedure of the Bill. We are most concerned that, in practice, the powers may be used unfairly, often to support poor practice and defensive and unimaginative styles of working, rather than humane and effective care. In our view, such concerns provide all the more reason why the commission should have responsibility from the outset for monitoring the way in which the Act is used—not from a distance, but by being able to receive and consider complaints from patients and others acting on their behalf.

Mr. David Atkinson: While I have no objection to what is proposed in paragraph (a) of the amendment, I must question whether the Opposition have considered the consequences and especially the cost of what is proposed in paragraph (b), which extends the remit of the 1983 Act to all patients, not only those who are detained under the Act. That must be at the expense of the patients to whom the Act applies. We are all aware of the challenges before the commission at present, in fulfilling its responsibility to patients who are detained, let alone extending the scope of the Act to those who are not.

The amendment is not any substitute for what is needed now: a complete review of the 1983 Act, which is now 13 years old. I do not think that the amendment is the way forward.

Mr. Bowis: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his last point. Indeed, we have said on occasions that in due course we shall consider that.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for tabling the amendment, which raises a debate that we had at some length in Committee and in another place. Before even a permissive power is taken, the full implications need to be properly thought through, and proper consultation should take place. On that basis, it would not be right to accept the amendment.

I base my view on three factors. The first relates to the priorities for the use of the commission's resources. The commission was set up expressly to safeguard the interests of detained patients. Having been deprived of their liberty, they have a particular claim on the commission's protection. Any extension of its remit to other groups, whether now or in the future, must not be at its expense.

The second reason is connected with the fundamental changes that the commission is already facing. The commission is undergoing a major reorganisation of its structure and approach to its current remit, and that needs to be allowed to settle before an extension can be considered. Thirdly, it would make more sense to consider the commission's remit in relation to the operation of the Act, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) is also suggesting. We shall want to

consider that in due course, when it is possible to assess the impact of supervised discharge in the context of all the other initiatives that we have taken on the care of severely mentally ill people.

That does not mean that in the meantime the Mental Health Act Commission will have no locus at all in reviewing the use of the new power. Given its general responsibility to protect the rights of patients who are liable to be detained, it will be able to review the procedures for making a supervision application, since the patient at that point must be liable to be detained. The commission's involvement will be similar to its monitoring of section 117 aftercare procedures before a patient is discharged. The extension of the commission's remit in that area is certainly not ruled out for all time, but now is not the right time to be considering it. In the light of that, I hope that the hon. Lady will withdraw the amendment.

Ms Jowell: I add only to my opening remarks concerning the conclusion reached by the Mental Health Act Commission. In its public policy statement on the Bill, it said:

"Without some extension to the remit of the Commission to enable it to monitor the use of the new powers, and to ensure that the new statutory controls are only used strictly in accordance with statutory requirements, it considers both patients and community may not derive the full benefit from its provisions."

I listened very carefully to what the Minister said and welcomed his rather veiled undertaking to ensure that the commission keeps those matters under review. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) knows that Opposition Members have long called for a comprehensive review of the Mental Health Act 1983 for the reasons that he outlined. We remain committed to that review and, from what the Minister said, it sounded as if he was at last being persuaded of the need for it.

In the light of the Minister's rather tentative assurances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—[*Mr. Bowis.*]

5.26 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Bill was primarily motivated by the public concern about the plight of people with serious mental illness who are discharged into the community. The plight of such patients has been highlighted by a series of terrible incidents, a disturbing number of which have resulted in fatalities.

Stephen Laudat stabbed and killed a man in 1994, only eight months after being discharged from a psychiatric department. Jason Mitchell was discharged by consultants and within days had killed his father and an elderly couple—also in 1994. John Rous, a paranoid schizophrenic, killed an untrained volunteer hostel worker, Jonathan Newby, in Oxford in 1993. Christopher Clunis, a patient who had been in and out of psychiatric and social services care for most of his life, stabbed and killed Jonathan Zito on the London underground in 1992. Peter Robak, suffering from a severe personality disorder, killed Anthony and Barbara Rawlings and their 15-year-old son just 11 days after being discharged from hospital in 1990.

Those cases show the dangers that are posed to members of the public by a very small number of severely mentally ill people who develop serious personality disorders. We are united with the Government in wanting to see better care for such patients and better protection for the public. The inquiries and reports that followed the tragedies tell us what action could have been taken to prevent the killings. They also make a number of clear recommendations concerning the implementation of the policy of caring for mentally ill patients in the community.

The literature is plentiful: the Ritchie report on the care and treatment of Christopher Clunis; the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Boyd report on homicides and suicides among the mentally ill; the Audit Commission's report "Finding a Place"; "The Falling Shadow", a report by Louis Blom-Cooper and others into the events surrounding the killing of Georgina Robinson; and the 1994 report of the Select Committee on Health into community care for people with serious mental illness.

In each case, the authors point to the same problems: lack of liaison among care agencies, and lack of resources to provide care and treatment in psychiatric departments and in the community, which is particularly serious in deprived inner-city areas. There have also been failures to act on warning signals, sometimes with terrible and tragic results. Every report recommends improvement in those areas as a top priority.

Those are the recommendations that the House should consider, and upon which the Government should have acted when they drafted the Bill. They are recommendations which, if taken up, would both provide better care for severely mentally ill patients and allay public concern about safety.

However, the Government have ignored the recommendations. Instead of listening to expert opinion and learning from the mistakes of the past, they have succeeded in drafting a Bill that misses the point, is unpopular with those who work in mental health and will do nothing to improve patient care. Indeed, it could well make matters worse. The Bill fails to take the action desperately needed to improve the care provided for the small proportion of severely mentally ill patients who pose a potential danger to themselves or to members of the public.

A new concept of supervised discharge is the central proposal in the Bill. Supervision orders are to be made in respect of a patient who would represent

"a substantial risk of serious harm"

to himself or herself or to others. A supervision order will last initially for six months, and subsequently for periods of a year at a time.

As part of an agreed aftercare programme, people under supervision may be required to reside at a specific place or to attend for occupation, education or training. A supervisor, who must be a person professionally involved in the patient's care, will be appointed to monitor the supervision order.

Many people will hear that and think it a good idea. Some patients need extra support and attention while recovering from treatment for serious mental illness, especially if they have a tendency not to comply with their care programme. But such a form of aftercare supervision already exists, and it is known as a guardianship order.

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

Many people who work in mental health community care are at a loss to understand the need for a completely new order when the existing power of guardianship offers an almost identical provision. Although it is used rarely, perhaps because of the strain that it puts on scarce resources, guardianship is effective in the small number of cases in which some form of statutory supervision is required. It facilitates community care, while offering protection to the patient.

The key difference between a guardianship order and the proposed supervision order is contained in the Bill's most controversial and most strongly opposed proposal—the power to take and convey. The need for a power to convey a person under supervision to a place of treatment, training, education or residence specified under the terms of the supervision order is highly questionable. I do not understand how such a power, which may be exercised by anyone nominated by the patient's supervisor, is appropriate to a co-operative and humane approach to community care.

If the power is exercised against a patient's will, it is highly unlikely to encourage compliance with his or her treatment plan. There is also a danger that the coercive elements of the new arrangements will compromise the important relationship of trust that should exist between patients and carers. It is important to emphasise the fact that one cannot care for people in a community environment without some consent and trust between the person being supervised and the supervisor.

The power to take and convey has been opposed by many groups and organisations, including the Law Society, the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales, MIND, the British Association of Social Workers, the Mental Health Foundation, the Community Psychiatric Nurses Association, SANE, the Royal College of Nursing, Unison, Survivors Speak Out and Liberty.

In Committee, the Minister failed to make the case for the power to take and convey, and several hon. Members have shown their opposition to it by signing early-day motion 1487. The power constitutes a significant erosion of civil liberties, with no conceivable benefit to patients.

The Bill allows the patient's supervisor to nominate any other person or agency to take and convey the patient. The supervisor does not have to obtain any additional authority before delegating the power. The application of the existing provisions for "arrest" laid down in sections 6 and 137 of the Mental Health Act 1983 is subject to strict criteria and numerous safeguards made clear in the code of practice. That code contains guidelines for best practice and sets out the rights of patients, and the responsibilities of care professionals to safeguard those rights—safeguards that are absent from the Bill as it stands.

We had hoped that the Minister would accept the widening of the remit of the Mental Health Act Commission to include patients receiving after-care under supervision. That would have reduced the likelihood of the power to take and convey being abused, or used to reinforce worst rather than best practice. The idea was backed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Law Society, MIND and a range of other organisations, including the commission itself, so it is disappointing that the Minister has rejected it.

The Minister has not been consistent about how the power will work. In another place Baroness Cumberlege said:

"Clearly this power to convey would be used only in times of emergency."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 April 1995; Vol. 563, c. 156.]

That begs two questions. What constitutes an emergency? And what kinds of emergency does the Minister believe are not already covered by sections 6 and 137 of the 1983 Act?

The Minister suggested that the power would be used in different circumstances. He told the Committee:

"We are providing for a reserve power, as it were, which would be available to the supervisor of that small group of vulnerable and sometimes unpredictable patients, in order to overcome a temporary unwillingness to co-operate."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 6 July 1995; c. 94.]

Baroness Cumberlege said that the power would be used only in emergencies, yet the Minister said that it would be used to overcome temporary unwillingness to co-operate. The two sets of circumstances are different. So nobody will know how or when the power is to be exercised. Perhaps in this final stage, before the Bill reaches the statute book, the Minister will be able to dispel the confusion and make a final and authoritative statement on when the Government intend the power to take and convey to be exercised.

It is all the more important that the Minister makes such a statement, because the Bill is silent about what will happen once the patient has been taken and conveyed to the specified place. It appears that he cannot be forced to stay there against his will, and it is difficult to see how an unwilling patient, who has probably been further aggravated by being taken and conveyed, can be forced to take part in occupation, education, training, or whatever else he is supposed to do.

The threat will undermine the relationship of trust that must exist between carer and patient. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) referred to the views of the registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Professor Chris Thomson. In an article in the *British Medical Journal*, Dr. Nigel Eastman, the head of forensic psychiatry at St. George's medical school, expressed even stronger reservations about the power to take and convey:

"A highly detrimental therapeutic effect is likely to arise from community psychiatric nurses forcing unwilling patients into their cars and taking them to day centres or hospitals where they are then asked to take treatment that they have (presumably) already refused."

We believe that the proposition is unworkable.

In introducing the Bill, the Government have acknowledged that community care for the seriously mentally ill is not working effectively. We are united on that point. However, they have not realised the scale of the problem, nor identified the solutions correctly. Coercion is not a substitute for co-ordination and co-operation. Statutory powers are no substitute for well-resourced and focused community care. As a consequence, the Bill will not achieve in practice what it sets out to achieve.

5.39 pm

Mr. David Atkinson: I welcome the Bill in its final form, as does the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. We are grateful for the fact that many of our amendments have been accepted. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Minister of State's

pre-emptive response in August to the recent report of the social services inspectorate and the clinical standards advisory group, when he called on health authorities to get their act together in three months, to bridge the gap between the theory of community care for the mentally ill and the reality, when it falls short.

That stark reality was brutally exposed by last month's report of the Woodley inquiry into the death of Stephen Laudat, to which the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred. Woodley recommended better co-operation between health authorities and social services, the provision of more day centres, better training in risk assessment and management and a complete avoidance of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless mentally ill people. All those recommendations echo long-standing concerns of the fellowship—to which I would add the need for a wider recognition of mental disability as well as physical disability in the benefits and allowances that are available for the disabled.

The implementation of this legislation will undoubtedly assist the care programme approach to the mentally ill, by providing more powers and greater flexibility for the supervision of discharged patients. I fear, however, that it will serve only to highlight further the shortfall of psychiatrists and key workers, whose case loads just do not allow enough time for their patients.

Still, although the Bill represents no substitute for a complete review of the 1983 Act, which was conceived against the background of a bygone age for the mentally ill, I welcome the fact that the Minister has confirmed again this evening that the Government are giving thought to a review of the Act. The Bill confirms that the community care approach to the mentally ill is here to stay, and I look forward to the undoubted contribution that the Bill will make to public safety, which must always be paramount.

5.41 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said a few moments ago that coercion is not a substitute for co-operation. Bearing in mind the job to which he is moving in a few months' time, I am sure that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends will remind him of that statement. I can think of no one better than the hon. Gentleman to replace the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon)—and if the hon. Gentleman uses the power to take and convey as effectively as the hon. Member for Jarrow has done, he will be a great success.

This is an important Bill, but I share some of the worries expressed about it by hon. Members on both sides, most recently by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson). The Government will get their legislation. Certainly, they could not afford to ignore some of the terrible tragedies to which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East rightly referred. But I do not think that this is the right measure; I remain to be convinced that it is. The Government's argument was probably the best they could muster in the circumstances.

I commend the Minister's handling of the Bill throughout its stages, but I sincerely hope that he will take away certain clear messages from the whole process. One is that the opportunity should have been taken fundamentally to review and reform the Mental Health Act. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) say that Labour would give the subject priority in the new Parliament, should it have any influence in it. And I know the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) well enough to know that, when we have a Scottish Parliament, it will be high on our agenda there, too. I hope, in the meantime, that the Minister—or his successor—will not forget the undertaking that he has given. The urgent need for reform has been expressed by many pressure groups and by hon. Members of all parties, and I hope that the Government will tackle it constructively.

As I said on Second Reading, I still feel that we need to deal with the problems not so much of the high-profile tragic cases as of the people who might commit suicide or engage in self-neglect, who make up the vast burden of the cases with which the professionals have to deal. I do wonder whether the Bill will help them; I remain sceptical whether it will. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East listed some of the professional bodies that remain unconvinced as well.

It is not a shortage of powers that is the problem: it is a shortage of resources. We need more appropriate accommodation and more employment, training and recreational resources. That is not to say that a blank cheque should be offered, but these are the sort of issues that we would have liked to hear more about from the Department during the passage of the Bill.

I also fear that there will be a diversion of resources within the provision of mental care and the treatment of mental illness, owing to the new Act. I hope that the Minister will look into that carefully and that, if he finds evidence of people having to divert resources from other equally urgent needs in the treatment of mental illness, he will respond urgently. Moreover, I cannot help but think that the Bill will impose a new raft of responsibilities, of a kind that the Government have not foreseen, on mental health nurses.

More than anything else, the Bill is a lost opportunity. We shall give the Minister his Bill; in return he must monitor it carefully, and not use it as a substitute for a thoroughgoing reform in the future.

5.45 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I want to ask just one question: why has the Bill caused so much disquiet in communities that include many mentally ill people or people who have suffered from mental illness at some stage but have been restored to good health? The power to take and convey is responsible for that disquiet, yet it is clear from the Bill that it can be applied only to limited numbers of cases. It is certainly clear, judging by the cases cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, that it is necessary to have powers to protect the public; but the concern is much more widespread than just among those to whom the Bill may apply.

There are many people on what I might term the fringes of mental illness. They may have spent some time in an institution but have since been integrated fairly well back in the community. But they still entertain uncertainties at the back of their minds about these powers—they trouble them. Surprisingly, perhaps, certain groups of people have been anxious for a change in the powers without really having understood them.

[Mr. John Gunnell]

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East that there has been no satisfactory response on the issue of the Mental Health Commission. It could perhaps have been a voice of independence, but there has been no movement on that. People have therefore concluded that there has once again been a lack of consultation and that the Government have been unwilling to compromise on the detail. That only adds to people's fears. There are many people to whom the Minister does not intend this measure to apply, but they still harbour fears—perhaps because at times in the past they have been unable to control their behaviour. They therefore suspect that the Bill's powers might ultimately be applied to them.

There is a second reason for the disquiet that the Bill has caused. It would be fine if the people whom I have described were set to gain something from the Bill, but it is, as others have said, a lost opportunity. It does not tackle the real problems of community care for the mentally ill. When the Bill was first presented it became clear that it would be unaccompanied by additional resources. One recognises that now limited additional resources have been provided, but those resources have understandably been directed to a small minority of mentally ill patients because the Bill focuses on them. However, the Bill contains nothing for the vast majority of people.

The Mental Health Foundation has produced a list of the needs of mentally ill people. It says that they need an appropriate place to live, an adequate income, a varied social life, employment and other day activity, help and support, respect and trust, choice and consultation. All those are absent from the Bill. The Audit Commission report made clear how important was a secure place to live for mentally ill people. The Bill does not tackle that issue. The people who have expressed their fears to me feel that they have lost something. They are uncertain about their ultimate freedom in certain circumstances, but they feel that they have gained nothing from the Bill. What is more, the Bill has been accompanied by a squeeze on the benefits system, which has hit some of the same people who will not benefit from the Bill.

I launched a report in the House some months ago for the Matthew Trust. I am sure that the Minister has seen the document. It contained a list of cases and individuals. Amounts such as £25 or £70 can make an enormous difference to such people, but the benefits system somehow misses them out. People fall through the safety net. A new power is being introduced with which they are unhappy. Their real problems are not dealt with. The squeeze on Government funding and benefits makes their circumstances even more adverse.

Many of the people to whom I have spoken feel that there is discrimination against people who have mental illness. They have certain difficulties if they live in the community without support. People taunt them. Their appearance may be a little unusual. They feel that there is no anti-discrimination legislation in place to protect people who have mental illness, although legislation exists to protect against discrimination on the basis of race or gender.

People feel that the Bill threatens their freedom even though, looking at it rationally, we might say that it does not. I have tried to explain that to some of the people with whom I deal, but they do not want to see the measure on the statute book and they would like to see changes.

The Bill is a lost opportunity, but in a sense it is more than that. The Government have been intransigent on some of the matters that have been raised. Even if in practice those matters make no difference to mentally ill people, that intransigence is seen as a definite Government programme which could just include them. It is hard to bring rational thinking to people who have such fears.

We have seen papers which support the legislation and argue that the provision of transport is a good thing. One can talk to people along those lines, but one cannot convince them that the measure does not provide an all-powerful body with a power that could reach down and touch them in their communities.

The Bill is a lost opportunity. I am glad that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have said that a thorough review of the Mental Health Act 1983 will take place under a Labour Government. I hope that proper resources will be provided for the mentally ill in our community because the need is certainly great.

5.53 pm

Mr. Timms: In the earlier debate on the new clause, I drew attention to the criticisms of the Bill in the Woodley report published last month on the killing of Bryan Bennett by Stephen Laudat in Newham. The critical point is that the Bill does nothing to provide desperately needed additional resources for mental health care. As several hon. Members have said, the Bill could make matters worse.

I have received a letter from Dr. Ruth Taylor, a Newham GP, in which she commented on some of the criticisms levelled by the Woodley report at a Newham psychiatrist referred to in the report as Dr. B. She says:

> "In 1993 three consultant psychiatrists covered the Newham population of 230,000. Dr. B covered a population of 90,000—approximately three times that recommended by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. She carried this burden for ten years . . . Help was requested from the management of the psychiatry services . . . but none was forthcoming. In 1992 the general manager and chief executive were warned in writing by the Newham consultants . . . that their excessive workload made their standards of practice unsafe. No effective change was brought about to alleviate the problem . . . when professionals are given an impossible workload, disasters are daily waiting to happen."

That is the reality of mental health care and the Bill does nothing to help. The family of Mr. Bennett are angry. The family of Mr. Laudat, the perpetrator, are angry. The system failed for both of them and it must be radically reviewed, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have said.

Things are getting worse. The health authority and local authority in my area, despite shocking reductions in their funding, have managed to set aside additional resources for mental health care next year in the light of the Woodley report, but East London and City health authority projects a £7 million deficit next year. The Woodley report highlights the need for extra resources in east London to avoid more incidents such as the one to which I have referred. So why is it proposed to withdraw large sums of money from the district health authority?

That is asking for disaster. I urge the Minister to ensure that those threatened draconian cuts to the East London and City budget do not go ahead.

There is growing anger in east London on mental health matters. On Sunday, several hundred people attended a festival organised by the Newham needs campaign to highlight the problems of inadequate funding for health services in Newham. Fifty-nine people sent electronic mail messages of protest to the Prime Minister and many more sent postcards to the Secretary of State.

Another matter raised by the Woodley report has not been picked up by the Bill. Recommendation 5.20 of the report recommends that

"the Department of Health harmonise guidance on Section 117 registers, proposed Supervision registers, and the Care Programme Approach with Community Care Assessment and Care Management in respect of people who have a severe mental illness and their carers. Such guidance should include clarification of clinical, management and practitioner responsibilities and the importance of choice by the service user in who their psychiatrist or key worker is to be for the purposes of sustaining a therapeutic relationship."

That guidance is urgently needed. It has been discussed for a considerable period. Can the Minister give the House an assurance that it will soon be issued?

Great efforts are being made in Newham jointly by the health authority and the local authority to learn the lessons of the report. A detailed joint action plan has been drawn up. My plea to the Minister is at least to stop taking resources away from east London and other areas like it, which is what is proposed for the health authority and the local authority for next year. This cannot go on. I urge the Minister to act to change things for the better.

5.58 pm

Ms Jowell: The Bill faces in two directions—backwards to the 1983 Act to correct serious anomalies and forward to the new challenges that community care must face. Very rarely is mental health legislation debated on the Floor of the House. It is complex and often controversial. It involves careful balancing of many interests. It raises issues of personal liberty and professional accountability. It touches on the responsibility of public services to provide adequate and effective care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The law is only one of a number of influences that must be engaged for good community care to work in practice. The others are the services themselves, the skills and competence of professionals responsible and, of course, ministerial guidance to authorities on the nature and extent of their duties and to professionals on their practice. It is the role of Government and Government alone to determine the respective importance of each of those influences and to orchestrate their working together.

Public confidence in community care has been badly shattered by recent highly publicised tragedies and that adds a new context to our consideration of legal and policy changes in the area. We can no longer discuss and decide such issues beyond the public's view. For a new contract of trust to be forged with the public, services need to be in place, together with an effective legislative framework, enabling people with mental illness to be properly contained and treated when they are a risk to themselves or to others.

As drafted, the Bill will be unfair and probably unworkable. Where it needs to be certain and unambiguous, it remains unclear and open to wide and varied interpretation. The Bill needed to gain the confidence of those who will experience added restriction and interference when placed under supervision. It can do so by providing clear and effective rights and entitlements to services, but it offers nothing new—nothing more than the present vague and unenforceable section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

The picture painted by recent reports on mental health services suggests that Ministers have profound and persistent illusions, or indeed delusions, about the real world in which people with mental illness and those who care for them have to cope. Certainly, we see little sign of a system in practice in which the guarantees and assurances made by Ministers are on offer.

The Bill needed to win the support of hard-pressed health and social services professionals. It has failed to do so. It merely imposes on them heavy legal and personal responsibilities and furthermore suggests that services to some patients will have to be reduced or discontinued to meet the needs of patients being targeted as a result of the Bill. I hope that the Minister will assure us when he sums up that no one receiving services will have them taken away to enable such targeting.

The Bill should recognise the need for fairness and equity in the use of coercive powers such as "take and convey". It can do so by making professionals clearly accountable when they use them. As we discussed, the Bill omits important checks and balances. Enhancing the role of the Mental Health Act Commission would be a step towards doing that.

The Minister should be encouraging the use of existing powers and legal provisions, such as guardianship. Such an aim should be shaping the contents of the new legislation. Instead, as part of the Government's piecemeal approach to tinkering with what is largely obsolete legislation, they intend to create unnecessary and confusing additional powers.

Many organisations that represent professional staff who will have to use the Bill and those who will be made subject to it have also voiced their concern. They include the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Nursing, the Community Psychiatric Nurses Association, the Mental Health Foundation, the National Association for Mental Health—MIND—and Survivors Speak Out. The support and confidence of such organisations are essential for this legislation to succeed.

I frequently listen and talk to people who are in touch with and using community care services. For five years I was a member of the Mental Health Act Commission and for 13 years I was assistant director of MIND. All the accounts force us to the same conclusion that we find when reading the recent flood of reports on community care—the Ritchie report on Christopher Clunis, those of the Mental Health Foundation, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper and the Audit Commission and now those of the social services inspectorate and the Clinical Standards Advisory Group, which were published in the summer. They tell us that the crisis affecting care in the community has little to do with the law and much to do with the attitudes, skills and resources of professionals and the very limited community opportunities available to those with enduring and intractable mental health problems. To the extent that

[Ms Jowell]

problems result from the present state of the law, they will not be addressed by the limited and unambitious measure that we have been debating.

Before concluding, I must remind the House of the contents of the report that led to this Bill. It was the Department of Health's internal review of legal powers on the care of mentally ill people in the community, which was published in August 1993. It presented the Government with their options for legal change in that area and the principles that should provide the framework for any change. The report said:

"if . . . a new power is introduced it is absolutely essential that account is taken in framing it of the criticisms and fears expressed by many of those who gave evidence to us, and that it is applied in such a way as to minimise the dangers they foresaw".

The review also offered a series of principles to frame the new power. It said that the power should be applied so as to ensure the least restrictive form of care consistent with safe management; that it must have adequate safeguards to ensure appropriate use; that it must be so defined as to minimise the risk of its being wrongly applied to patients who do not need this form of legal constraint; and that it must not discriminate in principle or in practice against particular ethnic or other groups. It also said that it must be recognised that the use of the power implies a reciprocal obligation on the statutory services to provide the support that the patient needs.

We take the Government back to those principles when judging the legislation before us. They must stand judged by their refusal to accommodate in the legislation the principles emanating from their own review.

The Bill was an opportunity to rebuild the contract of trust, which is the essential foundation of community care, between the patient, families, professionals and the public. The Government have failed to take that opportunity and it will now fall to a new Government—a Labour Government—to introduce a new mental health Act, to inspire and recreate that contract of trust.

6.6 pm

Mr. Bowis: I am tempted to say, "Are you sure?" to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell). I suppose that I should be flattered. I do not know if it is a parliamentary record for two Opposition spokesmen to have to contribute to the same debate to balance a Minister. I appreciate the fact that I am to be balanced and that this is a subject on which we need balance. I also appreciate that, recently, the Leader of the Opposition had to stand in to help out the spokesman on the shadow Home Affairs team, but I have never before heard of a spokesman standing in to help out a leader, which is what we have seen today.

The House has given the Bill the thoughtful, thorough and critical attention that it deserves. Despite the rather sad little speech of the hon. Member for Dulwich, I am grateful to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have contributed to our discussions at all stages. They have been good, constructive and, on the whole, good-humoured debates.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office and his team have worked closely with us to draw up a package of measures that will ensure that some of the most vulnerable patients receive the follow-up care that they need. That is in the interests of the patients, their families, their professional and informal carers and their local communities.

The introduction of supervised discharge and community care orders is complemented in the Bill by provisions on leave of absence and absence without leave. The scrutiny in both Houses has refined and improved the Bill. Our mental health legislation has evolved over many years and will continue to do so. That is a pledge that I can certainly make to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). We shall be studying carefully how the new powers are used alongside the existing power of guardianship, but for now we are committed to acting positively to help patients, their carers, families and the professionals responsible for providing services and personal support.

I should add that this Bill brings to an end the time of yet another Opposition Front Bench health team. As they take their bow and leave the stage, rather like the Von Trapp family in "The Sound of Music"—perhaps the Trappist connotation is appropriate in the case of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown)—I wish them well in their new roles.

I believe that these measures will strengthen the care and support of vulnerable people with severe mental health problems. The Bill must be seen in the context of all the investment in services, hospitals and the community that has brought new hope to mentally ill people and their families. We stand four-square behind them and behind the community as a whole, which rightly demands this strengthened level of care and supervision. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Parliament

6.10 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 23 October, be approved.

Last year, I had to make a somewhat lengthy speech to explain the complications arising from the freeze that had earlier taken place. This year, I think that I can explain the position simply and clearly. During the debate on Members' salaries in 1993, two years ago, I made it clear to the House that the Government thought that the right course thereafter was for the salaries of Ministers to be dealt with on exactly the same basis as those of Members. That arrangement has been applied for the past two years and is straightforwardly the basis of the proposed increases for 1996.

As the House will recall, the annual increase in Members' salaries is linked to the pay settlement for civil servants in grades 5 to 7. That means that Members of Parliament will receive an increase of 2.7 per cent. on 1 January without the need for parliamentary action. Because the proposals follow established policy, there is no need for me to go into detail except perhaps to say that the increase for Ministers in this House will be 2.7 per cent., precisely in line with the Members' figure. For our colleagues in the other place, because they do not have a reduced parliamentary salary, the increase is equivalent to the overall cash increase received by their counterparts at this end of the building.

I should remind the House, and with more force than usual in view of the events of the past hour, that the order covers not only Ministers but the Leaders of the Opposition in both Houses, the Opposition Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip in the Commons, and one other Commons Opposition Whip together with the Opposition Chief Whip in the Lords, and, of course, Madam Speaker. Additionally, though they not covered by the order, you will be pleased to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the same increases will be paid to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means and to the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees in the other place.

I say in the friendly spirit with which I address the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) that I might be prepared to accept a manuscript amendment to confine the increase in respect of the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip to the present rather than the prospective holder of the post. That might be attractive, were I in that frame of mind, after the speech that the hon. Gentleman made a few moments ago. Some observations have probably already been made on that. When he finally becomes Deputy Chief Whip and sits two seats along the Bench from where he is now, he would have public executions of hon. Members who spoke at the length that he did in the previous debate. Nevertheless, it was a fascinating speech.

The policy of a clear automatic linkage for Members of Parliament which is then straightforwardly carried through by order to Ministers and others has provided us with a mechanism that has meant that for the past two years we have been able to settle these matters without substantial controversy. The proposals in the order are sensible and right. I commend them to the House.

6.13 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I do not wish to detain the House because this is a repeat of last year's debate. The right hon. Gentleman rightly listed some of the posts included in the order. It goes without saying that the most deserving cases in the order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are, of course, those of yourself and your colleagues in the Chair.

I was expecting that the order would be the same, word for word, as last year's order and that only the figures would be different. This is the only detailed question that I have for the Leader of the House. The order is not the same, word for word, because two words are missing from paragraph 2. I do not understand why the words "of salary" have been Snopaked out of this order.

As the Leader of the House said, the increase is 2.7 per cent., the same as for Back Benchers. That is based on civil service grades 5 to 7, which, I regret to say, have been separated. Therefore, in 1996 some other arrangements will have to be made for Members of Parliament whereas I thought that we had a formula and had put the matter to bed. It appears that we have not.

It is right that the salary arrangements for Ministers should be dealt on the same basis as those of other hon. Members. That being so, I regret the need for this debate. We are not debating Members' pay having agreed a formula such as that which has produced the 2.7 per cent. increase.

In last year's debate, on 24 November 1994, I offered the Leader of the House the chance to secure Opposition support to amend the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975 so as to provide the same automatic linkage for Ministers that applies to hon. Members. I have since repeated that offer to the Leader of the House. It should have been taken up. A Labour Government will legislate to clear up the anomaly. If it is not done before the general election, it will have to be done afterwards. It is an utter waste of parliamentary time, bearing in mind that we have dealt with the matter in respect of hon. Members.

It has been a tough year for Ministers, as the chickens from the false promises made in 1992 have come home to roost. On the other hand, this year the Ministers who will receive this salary increase have had their loyalty tested by the Prime Minister when he put his leadership on the line. They have ended up with a powerful Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) can well manage on a Cabinet Minister's salary. I am surprised that the order, listing in detail as it does different Ministers by title as members of the Cabinet, does not refer to a First Secretary of State or a Deputy Prime Minister. Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman is a member of the Cabinet but is not listed.

I know that the right hon. Gentleman has his own special arrangements for official cars; he does not have one but is paid to use his own. He has not done well at answering questions at the Dispatch Box. All we have had from him so far is party-political rants. Who should pay him—the taxpayer or the Tory party? We are not sure whether he is a second Minister Without Portfolio or the Minister with the good bits of everyone's portfolios. In due course, he will answer for himself, as will other Ministers, to the electorate.

I agree that to participate in public life is both a duty and a privilege. Very high standards of conduct are expected and standards for Ministers are rightly higher

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

than those for others. Notwithstanding the Nolan report, which the Opposition fully support, I believe that Ministers are honourable people carrying out a responsibility placed on them by the Prime Minister of the day. We may not agree with all their actions; we may believe that many of them do not care, are incompetent and out of touch. The answer is to replace them, not deny them a modest increase in pay.

6.17 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House pointed out that there have been some improvements in the mechanism for dealing with Members' and Ministers' pay. I feel bound to say that if one takes a long-term view of the way in which we have dealt with those matters, we are now in a situation that can be described only as a crisis.

Since I first came to the House some 30 years ago, the statistics show that Members' pay in real terms, allowing for inflation, is just back to where it was 30 years ago. Between then and now, it has been below that level, sometimes by a substantial amount. Meanwhile, real incomes in the country as a whole on average have gone up 80 per cent. Members' pay has not gone up at all.

Even more remarkable, and this is relevant to the motion, is what has happened to Ministers' pay and indeed to the Prime Minister's pay. They are paid less than half what people in the Government were paid when I came to the House 30 years ago. That, too, has happened against a background in which the real income of the country as a whole has risen by 80 per cent.

The situation is creating a serious recruitment problem. One cannot divorce the issue of Members' pay from that of Ministers' pay because in our system, unlike that of the United States, for example, where the Executive is drawn from outside the legislature, we have to get people into the House of Commons or House of Lords in order to recruit Ministers. So the level of both Ministers' and Members' pay is relevant in this context. An article in today's edition of *The Times* rounded up the figures, but I suggest that we would need to double Members' pay and treble the Prime Minister's and Ministers' pay to get us back to approximately where we were 30 years ago. If we do not take such a once-and-for-all step, the quality of hon. Members and those fit to become Ministers will become an increasing problem.

Top salaries outside the House have risen even more. The papers talk every day of "fat cats". Let us look at salaries that, in many ways, are not exceptional. I know from personal experience not so long ago that, if one wants to recruit a good finance director for a public liability company in a risky industry—no one can deny that politics is a risky industry in terms of remaining a Member of Parliament or a Minister—one will probably have to pay £250,000. A good chief executive would have to be paid some £500,000. Meanwhile, this order increases the Prime Minister's salary at £82,000 by £1,500. It is preposterous.

We must deal not just with the question of pay. I announced a little while ago, following some totally irrational boundary changes and various other matters, that I would not stand at the next election, so I may be in a stronger position than present Ministers or those who will stand at the next election to make this point. Many people have said that the status of Members is not what it was when I was first elected and, alas, that is true.

Reference was made to the Nolan committee. I can say nothing about that because I sit on the Select Committee that is seeing how its recommendations might be implemented, but I hope that it will do something to restore the standing of Members and that the measures that we have already taken will do so. That is another problem that we must take into account.

We must consider carefully what should be done. I am particularly worried that the salary now paid to Members is not sufficient to attract the sort of person that used to be attracted here—those with a good degree, someone who has been president of a union or who has a similar background in some other field. They are no longer attracted here because they can earn more than hon. Members in two years after university, and, in some occupations, more than the Prime Minister in five years.

Another real change is that Ministers currently in office decide that they will not go on. Previously, ex-Ministers remained in the House for one, two or three Parliaments. I can think of a number of hon. Friends who are still here, and it is true of myself. But that will no longer happen. Few ex-Ministers are recycled, so they will take the first available opportunity to leave the House at the next general election. The people on whom we rely to man Select Committees, to engage in debate on the Floor of the House and give experience, will simply no longer be here. That is a worrying development.

What should be done? We know only too well from the misrepresentations of the increase in Members' pay before the last one, when the press said that it was vastly in excess of inflation—my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House pointed out at the time that that was untrue—that there would be an outcry in the press if Members' salaries were doubled. But we have reached a stage where we must face up to that. We have two possible options. First, as the Nolan committee seems to have remarkable public approval as an independent body, we could refer the question of Ministers' and Members' pay to that body as soon as possible. Secondly, we could ensure that negotiations take place between the two sides of the House on what should be done in the next Parliament. We can do nothing in this Parliament, but if we were to do something now for the next Parliament, we would at least help to deal with the argument that we were voting for our next pay increase, and the electorate would know where it was.

I am sorry that the Leader of the Opposition has decided not to take his pay increase. I notice that some Labour Front-Bench Members did not know that that was so. This is similar to some of the worst excesses of Thatcherism, when the previous Prime Minister refused to take her full salary. That was a serious mistake and I am sorry that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be following in Mrs. Thatcher's footsteps in that respect. I hope that, on reflection, he will give further thought to the matter because we must reach an agreement across the House about what should be done to introduce a once-and-for-all change to redress the balance.

This is now an extremely serious issue. Although my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House says that we can introduce a pay rise now on this basis without it arousing controversy, there is a distinction between having no controversy and ignoring a potentially serious problem.

6.25 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I have listened to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) make exactly that speech on a number of occasions, and it gets more compelling with the listening. He makes a powerful case and is in a strong position to do so. I support everything that he said. We now have an opportunity to get a hold of the problem and make matters more realistic before the next Parliament. That would be the proper and honourable way to proceed.

The right hon. Gentleman's idea of referring the matter to a Nolan-type inquiry ignores top salary pay review reports.

Sir Terence Higgins: They were all ignored.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the matter goes to the Nolan committee and is not ignored, that would be a massive improvement, which may be why the right hon. Gentleman makes that suggestion. I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues for the number of hours that the Select Committee has spent examining the Nolan committee's recommendations. It is a sobering thought that the Nolan inquiry would not have been necessary if Members' and Ministers' salaries had been proper and commensurate with normal market salaries.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was right to stress that this order is ludicrous and otiose. It is certainly so as far as I am concerned. The Leader of the House will recognise that, as a member of a minority party, I have no financial interest whatever in this or any other such order. I am shop steward and I do all the hard work for all the minority parties. I do not mind that. It is a great public duty, which I enjoy doing.

Mr. Newton: Is the hon. Gentleman confirming that the Liberal Democrat party does not expect to form the next Government?

Mr. Kirkwood: I shall not be tempted to answer such an unfair question. It was a monstrous attack, and it was out of character for the Leader of the House to suggest any such thing to such a humble person as myself. I have written the Leader of the House a letter, which he may not yet have received. It does not necessarily offer him a position in my Government but asks him to consider helping the process of the usual channels. That is a separate issue. The important point that the hon. Member for Perry Barr made is that we should use the fast track procedures to get rid of this order altogether. That would save the House time and we would all be the better for it.

Many hon. Members are confused about the new way in which Members' and Ministers' salaries are linked with those of civil servants because there has been a revolution in how the civil service is paid since the introduction of performance-related remuneration and job regrading. I am pleased to see that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for those matters, is in his place. I do not know how it will be possible to achieve a sensible link in future. That reinforces my view that a senior salary pay review body or a Nolan-type committee should investigate the matter so that we can prepare recommendations for the next Government to apply in the next Parliament. They can then take effect properly and with a minimum amount of controversy. However, I accept that there will be controversy and I agree with the right hon. Member for Worthing that we should confront that and take part in it positively and robustly.

I want to ask a genuine question—I do not make a party political point. Given the obvious change that there has been in the power of agencies and given the number of agencies that are now spawned by Ministers, then if we are to have very small policy units with Ministers in charge—I know that there has been much political controversy about the Home Secretary and the Prison Service—should the inquiry that I and the right hon. Member for Worthing and other hon. Members are suggesting, consider the future and continuing responsibilities of Ministers?

However, all those matters should be removed from the potential controversy of a debate on the Floor of the House of Commons. They should be tackled by people who can make evaluations sensibly, dispassionately and objectively. They should make recommendations to Ministers and Ministers should have the courage to implement them.

I should like to think—certainly in as far as I have any influence in any new Government or otherwise—that Liberal Democrat Members would support Ministers if they made sensible recommendations that brought ministerial salaries and Members' salaries into line with ordinary modern market levels.

6.30 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be quite brief; I have only three arguments to make.

First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) on making a case that I should have thought would be acceptable to all hon. Members. The idea that we must at all times do nothing because the press will snipe at us seems to me to be the worst of all possible arguments.

I disagree with my right hon. Friend in only one instance. I do not think that the issue of Ministers' and Members' salaries should go to a Nolan-type inquiry. The case is so well proved that three or four hon. Members—some Ministers and some Opposition Members—should be able to get together to hammer out a joint agreement that can be made public, which will operate from the next Parliament. We should not ask someone else to consider the matter—someone whose recommendations we would review and alter before putting the report to one side. The job should be given fairly and squarely to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), so that together they may work out a new structure.

It cannot be right that the chairman of UK Ltd.—our Prime Minister—is paid less than any chief executive officer of one of the top 100 companies, and probably of many other companies. That cannot make sense. Something has gone wrong with the structure. Whoever the Prime Minister is, that cannot be sensible, and that anomaly should be corrected.

Similarly, something is wrong when Ministers in charge of Departments are paid considerably less than their chief civil servants and often much less than their deputy secretaries and other people, not only the permanent secretary. That is archaic, wrong and should be corrected—and corrected now, to take effect from the start of the next Parliament.

[Sir Peter Emery]

That is the main message that I wish to give to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. However, there is one other thing. Will he please get together with the Opposition to work out what shall be the indices that we must apply in 1996 for the adjustment? We have been through that so many times over the years.

Eighteen months ago, we believed that we had put the thing to bed– that we would never have that debate again. As a result of the alteration of indices, I understand that we shall have to decide on something. Surely that can be done quickly and mutually, because there should not be any dispute about it, and it can be adopted by the House, without any political aspect being brought into it, for the benefit of all Members who will be affected after the 1996 adjustment. Surely that does not need to be referred to anyone. We and our leaders should be reasonable enough to be able to get that done.

That is a common-sense matter, which would be tackled in that way in any other organisation. Simply because we happen to be in the public eye, we are scared silly that we may be criticised for being greedy or wrong or something of that nature.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Emery: I am just about to stop, but of course I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: It is all right as far as it goes, but the right hon. Gentleman is one of those Conservative Members who will gladly support a minimum wage for Members of Parliament, and in this case for Ministers and others, yet, when it comes to ordinary workers earning £1 or £2 an hour, will undoubtedly walk into the Lobby with all the Ministers to prevent those workers obtaining a miserly £4 an hour.

Sir Peter Emery: One might have expected the hon. Gentleman to make that sort of comment, but there are some times when he can rise above being extremely negative and derogatory. The position is not as he would imply. I am suggesting that Members of Parliament might begin to approach—not actually approach—a true market value for the job that they do.

Hon. Members often work 60 or 70 hours a week—not the number of hours that the hon. Gentleman would imply—including working on Saturdays, in time when other people are absolutely free. That is a special job, which needs to be done, and done properly. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing said, we need to attract the best people to do that.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will forgive me for leaving the Chamber. I shall return when he replies to the debate, but a presentation is being made to the Clerk of Committees, who is retiring after 41 years. I shall go, if my right hon. Friend will excuse me, to pay attention and then return to the Chamber.

6.35 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I believe that I hold a quite different opinion from most hon. Members in the Chamber tonight. However, I endorse some of the comments made about a need to regularise the salaries of Ministers and Members of Parliament for the next Parliament. That is prudent.

I shall discuss all the people mentioned in the order at least to Minister of State level, if not higher—with the exception of you and your colleagues, Madam Deputy Speaker, whose salaries are a pale shadow of what they should be.

I broadly agree with one thing that the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) said. In the unlikely event of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) inviting me to join his Government—perhaps contrary to his better judgment—I certainly would accept the salary of the Minister appropriate to that portfolio, because I believe in the well-established trade union principles, "What you have you hold" and "Take the rate for the job." However, I believe that the way in which we set the rate for the job of Ministers is not appropriate. There are some constitutional dangers, on which I invite the House to pause and reflect.

The historical reason why Ministers have salaries is that, in the days when membership of the House was a part-time job—it could be and was done part time by the vast majority of people—obviously when Members were given a ministerial appointment they were expected and required to give up outside interests, so there was a case for a salary, which created a disparity between Ministers and other Members of Parliament.

Nowadays, even if the work of a Back-Bench Member is not wholly full time—although I believe that it should be, and I have no remaining time to give to any outside interest—there is a consensus that it requires a tremendous amount of time and attention. So, of course, does the work of a Minister, but in my opinion a case cannot be made for a disparity of salary between a Back-Bench Member and, at least, a Member who has reached the level of Minister of State.

I believe that Back-Bench Members of Parliament and Ministers of State work equally hard. They have different roles, and there is a danger of our not recognising the different roles. However, it is important that people should aspire as much to the role of a Back Bencher as they do to that of a Minister.

The functions of Back Benchers and Ministers differ from one other. There is a need for people who will concentrate on being a Back Bencher—who will probe, criticise, cajole and ferret out information. There is a need for hon. Members who ask questions in the House of Commons on evenings when others might want to get away and move on to other business. Such people might be a nuisance and make aggravating remarks. That is an important role, and it is wrong to suggest that it is less important than being a Minister of State. We must bear that in mind.

There are other hon. Members with important functions. The deputy leader of the Labour party does not receive any additional salary; the leader of the Liberal party does not receive any additional salary and the Front-Bench Opposition team do not receive a different salary—they are on Back Benchers' salaries. If there is a case for Ministers receiving a higher salary than Back Benchers, it seems that there is a case for those other hon. Members to whom I have just referred receiving a different salary. However, I believe that we should all be equal here.

Before people deride what I am saying, they should reflect on the fact that there is likely to be a Conservative Opposition in the not too distant future. The Conservative leader of the Opposition will have to choose people to serve on his or her shadow Cabinet. They will no doubt be required and expected by the party to give their full-time energy and enthusiasm to their shadow portfolios, but they will have to do so on their existing Back Benchers' salaries. At that time, some of them might remember my speech and think, "Mackinlay had a point." When they are sitting on the Opposition Benches, they may well think that perhaps their worth, energy and enthusiasm, with minimum resources, are as important as those of the Labour Members sitting on the Treasury Bench.

There is a danger of having two tiers of Members of Parliament, which would not be conducive to good parliamentary democracy. There is no doubt that many people come to this place with a burning ambition to sit in a ministerial car. That is a perfectly honourable ambition, but of equal importance are those people who come here to probe and check the Executive.

Some hon. Members have given long and distinguished service to the House. The late Bob Cryer used to sit below the Gangway on the Opposition Benches and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) works diligently as a Back Bencher. Certainly, millions of people consider my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to be extremely good value for money. If there were to be a vote, they would want him to have a salary at least equal to that of a Minister of State.

The system is wrong. I hope that there will be some reflection on the fact that hon. Members should be equal and their salary—their remuneration—should reflect that. Much more important than our income levels are the resources available to us to do the job as Members of Parliament—but that is another debate, as is the subject of hon. Members' salaries. The issue of salaries is important—our cousins across the water in the United States have far more resources than we do to fulfil their roles as legislators.

Mr. Rooker: Will my hon. Friend please finish his speech?

Mr. Mackinlay: My hon. Friend asks, from a sedentary position, when I will finish my speech. He makes my point: the relationship in this place between the Treasury Front Benchers and the Opposition Front Benchers is far too cosy. There are occasions when hon. Members need to stand up and demonstrate a degree of independence which is not reflected here too often.

On that note, I shall conclude my say—I am pleased to have had it. It is time to cut out the cosy relationship and recognise that parliamentarians here are, and should be, equal.

6.44 pm

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to say that tonight's debate has been an almost heartwarming experience for a Minister. It started off with Ministers being collectively described by the Opposition Front-Bench team as kindly, honourable people, or words to that effect. A series of speakers, led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and Opposition Members, then described us as underpaid and overworked. I hope that my right hon. Friends and others will understand that I am not sure that it would be appropriate for me, in my position, to spend the rest of this debate warmly agreeing with every word that they said. I thought that some powerful points were made, on which I shall reflect. I hope that others, including those who comment on our affairs outside the House, will also reflect on them.

I listened to the characteristically engaging speech of my fellow Member of Parliament for Essex, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). I cannot say that I agreed with every word, but, as he defined a Back Bencher's role as being a nuisance, I thought that he had established some degree of expertise and should be listened to with appropriate respect.

I shall now comment on some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), which will enable me to pick up, albeit briefly, points raised by other hon. Members. He asked a technical question about a couple of missing words. I have been given the customary soothing assurances from those who send me such assurances that that was no more than a drafting matter, not a sinister, devious plot. I marvel at the hon. Gentleman's assiduousness; I had better confess that I did not sit down and compare every word of this order—

Mr. Rooker: I did.

Mr. Newton: I know: I am returning the compliment that the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to pay to those on the Treasury Bench by complimenting him on his remarkable feat. I am almost tempted to agree with the hon. Member for Thurrock that the hon. Member for Perry Barr has demonstrated the need to be paid more. I certainly note the point raised by the hon. Member for Perry Barr and assure him that there was no sinister intention or error involved, but an attempt to improve the drafting. We are always looking to save a word here or there to save the hon. Gentleman's reading time.

I recall the offer that the hon. Gentleman made last year relating to primary legislation, which I did not reject then and certainly would not reject now. In my role as the person with responsibility for the legislative programme, may I say that it is necessary to weigh the question of how much time to use on one issue rather than another. Judging from some of the speeches that have been made from below the Opposition Gangway in today's debate and last year's debate, however much co-operation there may be from the Opposition Front Bench, it is not absolutely clear that that co-operation would be universally reflected throughout the House. I note that the hon. Member for Perry Barr has repeated his suggestion.

I realise that the issue of linkage was raised more in relation to hon. Members' pay than to Ministers' pay and so runs a little wider of the main subject of tonight's debate. I note the concern expressed. As I have demonstrated to the House in the past three years, I have no doubt about the value of a system whereby hon. Members' pay can be increased sensibly and fairly, annually, without the need for an annual debate. I have every intention of ensuring that such a system is sustained.

A number of interesting suggestions have been made in relation to Lord Nolan and other matters. I hope that the House will understand that, against the background of today's debate and the time pressures—quite apart from

[Mr. Newton]

the factors that I have already mentioned—it would not be right for me to give an extensive, philosophical speech ranging over all those subjects.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that a number of points have been made—including some by Conservative Members—that need to be considered seriously? Perhaps we shall return to them soon when we debate the Nolan report. Is the Leader of the House aware that one reason that many of us cannot go along with the suggestion made tonight by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) is that, over the past 16 years, a Tory-dominated Parliament has worsened the position of the poorest paid in this country—those who live on a pittance? All the statistics—even Government statistics—bear that out. In those circumstances, there is no room for cosy complacency between the two sides on the issue of pay.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Gentleman says and I understand why he makes that point. I shall not use my former experience in the social security area to expand on the many improvements that have been made for less well-off pensioners or for people in low-paid employment with children through family credit. I simply make it clear that I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis. Beyond that, the hon. Gentleman has not tempted me to make a speech about social security or any other wider subject. Once again, I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 23rd October, be approved.

NORTHERN IRELAND (REMISSION OF SENTENCES) BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Northern Island (Remission of Sentences) Bill, notices of Amendments, New Clauses and New Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

6.50 pm

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

Accommodation Level Crossings Bill (*Lords*)

Order for Third Reading read.

7 pm

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be read the Third time.

The Bill, which is concerned with safety, was originally deposited in the other place in November 1994. It had a trouble-free passage through both Houses to this point. The Bill is modest but important. Railway Bills used to take the lion's share of parliamentary time but they are now something of a rarity, as a result of both Houses accepting recommendations of the Private Bill Procedure Joint Select Committee—of which I have the honour of being Chairman. This is a somewhat unusual occasion but it is nevertheless important.

Although the Bill had a trouble-free passage through both Houses, I must explain its purpose. Railtrack is a public limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985. On 1 April 1994, that part of the British Railways Board undertaking that consisted of the management of the railway network in Great Britain and of related property rights and liabilities was transferred to Railtrack.

Railtrack includes a number of level crossings created for the benefit of owners and occupiers of land adjoining the railway, known as accommodation level crossings. Under the previous arrangements, many of those parts of the railway system were not covered by current legislation. Certain railways within what is now Railtrack were authorised by legislation before 1845. One of them covers my own constituency—the 1830 Act relating to the London and South-Western Railway.

Those parts of the railway not covered by section 75 of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 or by section 68 of the Railway Clauses Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1845 operated a totally different type of penalty for people who failed to close gates on accommodation crossings. Last night, I found in clause 84 of the 1830 Act—and we grumble about the length of Bills today—these words:

"And be it further enacted, That all Persons opening any Gate set up at either Side of the said Railway to communicate with the adjoining Land shall and they are hereby respectively required, as soon as they, and the Carriages, Cattle or other Animals or Things under their Care, shall have passed through the same, to shut and fasten the said Gate; and every Person neglecting so to do shall forfeit and pay any Sum not exceeding Forty Shillings for every such Offence."

Clearly, that is a modest fine in today's economic climate.

The Railways Act 1992 brought up to date fines for all those railways that were subject to post-1845 legislation, but those before that date were not affected. The Bill is designed to bring the whole rail network, and fines for accommodation crossings in particular, up to date.

The Bill has three clauses, and it will do no more than apply to the pre-1845 Act crossings the same penalties as apply to the amended clauses Acts. If the Bill is passed, all accommodation level crossings throughout England, Wales and Scotland would be subject to the same laws concerning the closure of gates and the lowering of barriers—and the same penalty levels. It is important to note the reference to barriers, because many gates have been replaced by barriers, to which no Act of Parliament makes reference. The schedule comprises a long list of the railways affected.

This is a modernising and important piece of legislation, and I commend it to the House.

7.6 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am sorry that we are not joined tonight by the Secretary of State, but a press release today informs us that he is speaking in Grantham, which presumably has a vacant seat. We wish him well there. I note also that in the awards run by *PR Week*, Railtrack is a finalist in the category of best internal publication. I did not know that Railtrack had any internal publications—I thought that they all had become public.

We have no problem with the Bill, and I endorse the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson). The measure will make a significant contribution to safety, but it must be seen in the context of everything that Railtrack is doing. We question whether everything that is happening on the railways is in line with the measures that the hon. Gentleman is rightly proposing tonight.

I will share with the House some of the thoughts of Jan Glasscock, who I understand is a safety director with Railtrack South, contained in a memorandum in which he reviews safety issues within his area. He complains about the prescriptive nature of safety regulations on the railways and states that the inevitable effect has been either to close the railway completely for lengthy periods or cause excessive delay, and/or reduce the number of trains that can be passed over a specific route. Jan Glasscock writes that while not wishing to dilute the safety message, they must be mindful of the commercial effect that those requirements are having on the railway industry and on Railtrack as a business. He attaches a list of rules, regulations and instructions that he suggests should be got rid of without compromising safety.

The most disturbing passage in that memorandum is the final paragraph, where Jan Glasscock concludes with a flourish:

"It is no good in five years' time saying 'We were the safest railway in the world, but we went out of business.'"

That is a very disturbing sentiment. We want to be able to say, unequivocally, that we have—as we have had in the past—the safest railway in the world; but we do not want that to be pitted against the commercial interests of a private company. For Jan Glasscock to predict that he might conceivably say in five years' time, "We were the safest railway in the world, but we went out of business" suggests to me an immaturity and conflict of interests in the organisation which are intolerable, and which on their own would represent a very good reason for abandoning the privatisation of Railtrack.

Jan Glasscock has suggested a list of measures. Some are doubtless fairly marginal, but others are sufficient to make us wonder whether it is really such a good idea to dispense with safety measures that have been built up over time. He suggests, for instance, allowing the use of a passenger train during fog in the event of information that a person has fallen out. I do not know why that is not considered a good idea, but I am sure that I do not want the commercial interests of Railtrack to determine whether that measure should be repealed now.

Jan Glasscock also wants a more lax regime in regard to train crew route knowledge. I do not wish to detain the House, but the list continues. In regard to signalling, for instance—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman would be wise to follow his own advice. We are dealing with a narrow Bill—on Third Reading, which makes the debate even narrower.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to you for letting me get this far, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I nevertheless think it important to view safety issues in a wider context—and it so happens that some of Jan Glasscock's recommendations for a more lax safety regime apply to level crossings.

It is important to put the Bill in that context. If, as a result of privatisation, we are indeed moving towards a regime in which safety is pitted against the commercial interests of Railtrack, it is all the more important to have the measures and penalties that we are discussing.

I leave hon. Members with that thought from Jan Glasscock:

"It is no good in five years' time saying, 'We were the safest railway in the world but we went out of business.'"

What worries me is that in five years' time we could be saying, "We were the safest railway in the world, but then we were privatised and commercial interests took over." That really would be a tragedy for the country.

7.12 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) loses no opportunity to blame every leaf on every line—and, no doubt, inappropriate kinds of snow—on privatisation, which has not yet come about. He was remarkably restrained this evening, however: we did not hear of a single leaf, or a single flicker of snow.

The Bill rebuts the hon. Gentleman's implication—British Airways might have some difficulty following the logic of this extraordinary proposition—that the introduction of private capital and more effective management necessarily leads to lower safety standards. As my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson) pointed out, it is a housekeeping measure, which seeks to bring the penalties imposed on railways built before 1845 for leaving crossing gates open into line with those built after that date. The anomaly is due to the omission of pre-1845 railways from the Transport and Works Act 1992.

I suppose that, as a previous chairman of the Campaign for Freedom of Information in the House, I should reveal that on occasions such as this Ministers are furnished with sheets of questions and answers anticipating the difficult barbs that may be launched by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I can exclusively reveal—provided, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you promise not to pass the information on—that question 2 on my list reads, "Why missed out?" The answer is "Oversight".

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Somebody probably cocked it up.

Mr. Norris: I am not entirely sure whether that is parliamentary expression, but it is more or less the reason for our being here this evening.

Mr. Allen: A slip of the quill.

Mr. Norris: A slip of the quill, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says.

I do not think that I need add to the succinct explanation offered by my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest of why this innocuous measure should not be given its Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third Time, and passed.

Oxbridge Lane Primary School

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

7.15 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment to her first Adjournment debate. I was very pleased when someone whom I know to be a fellow Landrover owner—and a keen one—took over the portfolio; I look forward to working with my hon. Friend in her new job.

The debate is about future facilities at a school in my constituency; it is not—as the media seem to expect—a debate about lack of Government funding, the need for repairs or over-large class sizes. Oxbridge Lane is a very pleasant school, although it is small: it is efficiently run and well led, in good repair and with good class sizes. There are two classes of 30, and the rest comprise between 25 and 30. The buildings are in very good condition.

The debate concerns the future of the school, which is a victim of its own success, with a full roll and parents choosing to send their children to it. The plain fact is that the schoolis simply too small for the number of children who currently attend it, and too small for the number who will want to attend in the future.

At present, the school has some 450 pupils and 21 teachers. After Christmas, there will be 490 children. Given the current admission of 75 children per year, the maximum number that the school could hold is 525. The Department's maximum, I understand, is 442; the figure is based on an admission of 56 per year.

Under the Education Reform Act 1988, primary schools must admit pupils up to their "standard number". That was calculated in 1991 as the highest of the following: the number on the roll in May 1991, divided by the number of age groups; the number produced by dividing the capacity of the school by the number of age groups; and, if applicable, the number intended to be admitted under the most recent proposals under section 12 or 13 of the Education Act 1980. In the case of Oxbridge Lane, that figure is 525.

As a result, the school is so crowded that it has to have split break times and split lunch times, and cannot hold an assembly for the whole school at once because the hall is too small and such an assembly would not comply with fire regulations. There is no room for a library, or for proper physical education facilities as required by the national curriculum. There is only one playing field, across the road and up an alley, recently reclaimed from derelict land by the county council. The school nursery and music facilities are delivered in a Horsa hut, also across the road and up the same alley. There are terrible parking problems in the area, as there is no off-street parking.

Generally, the staff are doing wonders with what they have. The buildings are warm, dry and well maintained; when working, the school is quiet and well ordered. None the less, it is exceedingly difficult to run split meal times and breaks when children do not concentrate because other children are indulging in other activities outside the window and there is simply not enough space for all of them to be out in the playground at once. The school was built in 1890. It is now 105 years old; it will be 106 in February. The parents have recently raised a lot of money to refurbish the playground, and I pay tribute to them for their efforts and for the support that they have given to the school. The school is hemmed in on four sides by the Victorian streets that it is built to serve, and there is no room for expansion in any direction.

The children from the Oxbridge area of my constituency deserve adequate facilities so that they can receive excellent access to the national curriculum. Therefore, one of two things will have to happen: either there will have to be a reduction in the standard number at the school, to 60—the physical capacity, which will leave many parents disappointed at not receiving their choice—or a new school building will have to be provided on a site where it is possible to expand.

A reduction in the number of children would fly in the face of the Government's policy of parental choice. That has been endorsed by the governors and the local education authority, but it is, however, not an ideal solution. For instance, even at the lower standard number, the school would still have no kitchen facilities and all the catering would continue to be delivered on wheels from St. Bedes, some distance away, by lorry. That in turn takes the school hall out of use for a good part of the day. Ideally, if the school is to remain where it is, it would benefit from Marlborough road, the adjacent road, being closed off to give safer access to the grassed area and the nursery up the alley on the other side of the road. The Horsa hut, in which the nursery and drama facilities are housed, would also need replacement, as it dates from before the second world war, even though its present condition is quite good. There would still be no access to playing fields. There would still be no technology suite, and the staff room would still not accommodate all the staff at once.

The alternative is to consider building a new school. In another part of my constituency, Ingleby Barwick, we have two delightful new primary schools for a whole new community of new houses. But, in my submission, old communities in old houses deserve good schools for their children as well. The site for a new school is already designated. There are two models of what such a school could be like.

It would be in line with our policy to give parents a real choice if my hon. Friend were to recognise the strength of Oxbridge Lane's claim for capital over the next five years; recognise that it has been top of Cleveland's bid for the past five years; and lobby our colleagues for the necessary funds to start this great project. If she cannot do that, I would very much appreciate her advice as to what should be done.

7.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Employment (Mrs. Cheryl Gillan): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on raising the situation of this school with me, and welcome the opportunity to respond to the points that he has put on behalf of his constituents.

My hon. Friend is well known as an assiduous and hard-working Member who constantly puts issues on behalf of Stockton, South before the House. His constituents are most fortunate to have him as their representative in this place. I also thank him for his kind

remarks, and as a fellow Landrover owner, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall try to keep this vehicle on the right road.

I am well aware of the position at Oxbridge Lane primary school, as are officials in my Department. Thanks to my hon. Friend's efforts, I and other ministerial colleagues have corresponded with him about the school on previous occasions. Indeed, my officials visited Oxbridge Lane last summer to see the school at first hand. I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend's description of conditions at Oxbridge Lane and have taken note of the representations that he has made about them. My hon. Friend and others on Teesside believe that there are too many children currently attending the school in the light of the facilities that are available on the current site. They also believe the reason for that situation to be an excessively high standard number, which forces the school to recruit additional pupils at a level above that which is sustainable.

I shall first of all say a few words about the rather technical system of the standard number and what it is designed to achieve. I shall then make two suggestions to my hon. Friend as to how the current situation at the school might be alleviated, which I hope he will find helpful.

As my hon. Friend will know, a standard number is a fixed minimum entry number and is intended to be an indicator of a school's capacity, which admissions authorities are required to honour. The intention of the system is to protect the exercise of parental choice. It means that as many parents as possible can have their first choice of school for their children, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would join me in endorsing that principle. We do recognise, however, that standard numbers can sometimes be too high in the light of the facilities that are available at individual schools. We have a mechanism for dealing with that, under which local education authorities can publish proposals for the reduction of standard numbers. Such proposals require the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. She looks at each case that reaches her on its merits.

Our expectation is that most successful cases will involve the removal of physical capacity at a school, which implies, of course, that fewer pupils can be accommodated. My right hon. Friend is prepared, however, to take other arguments into account in reaching decisions on proposals for reductions in standard number. It is open to local education authorities to put to her whatever they feel is a convincing case. In reaching a decision, my right hon. Friend would, of course, have regard to the Government's policy of more open enrolment. As many parents as possible should be offered places for their children at the school for which they have expressed a preference.

We must remember that any reduction in a standard number could mean a reduction in the number of parental preferences that can be met. The case for a reduction must therefore be made with reference to the existing standard number and to the changed circumstances of the school since that number was set. My right hon. Friend will need a clear explanation as to why the current standard number should no longer apply. In the case of Oxbridge Lane primary school, therefore, it would be open to the local education authority to publish proposals to reduce the standard number if it felt that it was too high. Were it to do so, I can promise my hon. Friend that I and my right hon. Friend would look very carefully at any arguments that it put. We would also bear in mind what he said tonight.

I should add that the initiative in publishing such a proposal lies with the local education authority alone. Whatever impression my hon. Friend's words may have made on me tonight, action would lie in the first instance with Teesside. The local education authority has not published a proposal to reduce the standard number of the school, and my hon. Friend will, I am sure, wish to take the matter up with it directly.

It may be helpful to my hon. Friend if I comment on a further point about where responsibility for publishing any such proposal would lie. Cleveland county council is currently the local education authority for my hon. Friend's constituency, but from April 1996, Cleveland will, as he knows, be passing that particular baton to the new unitary council for Stockton-on-Tees. If it was the intention that the standard number should be changed before 1 April 1996, it would be for Cleveland county council to publish any proposal. If, on the other hand, the proposal was intended to be implemented after that date, it would be the responsibility of the new Stockton council. We have made explicit provision in regulations for shadow local education authorities such as Stockton to be able to publish proposals before they formally enter into their education kingdoms. There should be no delay in dealing with matters such as this purely because responsibility for education is transferring from one local authority to another.

My second set of remarks relates to capital funding. If something needs putting right at the school, action must in the first instance lie with the local education authority, which has a statutory responsibility for providing school places in Stockton and for ensuring that the buildings where children are taught are safe. Like other local education authorities, it will have substantial capital resources of its own that it could devote to the kind of work at Oxbridge Lane that my hon. Friend mentioned, if it so wished. It is not for me to seek to influence the decisions that it makes about local spending priorities. I should add, however, that it is open to Stockton-on-Tees council, which will have responsibility for the school capital programme in my hon. Friend's constituency from next April, to put in a bid to my Department for capital resources at the school. Indeed, I know that Stockton made reference to the school in the bid that it submitted to my Department only last week. My Department is currently considering local authorities' capital bids, including that of the new Stockton unitary authority, and final allocations will be announced in December.

It may be helpful to my hon. Friend if I explain a little about how our system of capital allocation works. As he knows, local authorities are given permission to borrow up to a certain level to fund capital programmes for all their services, including education. Decisions on how to use the resources generated by borrowing are entirely for the authorities: they must decide priorities between services and between projects within services. The borrowing limit is not the limit on authorities' capital spending. As I have already suggested, authorities are also able to invest capital receipts and they can use funds from their revenue budgets for capital purposes if they wish.

In determining each local authority's share of the national total of capital allocations, consideration is given to commitments arising from projects allowed for in

[Mrs. Cheryl Gillan]

previous allocations, providing new school places in areas of population growth, and implementing cost-effective schemes to remove surplus places.

After allowing for authorities' liabilities for work at voluntary-aided schools and for approved capital work at special schools, the remaining resources are distributed by a formula to contribute towards the cost of all other capital-related work at schools. The formula is made up of elements to meet improvement work, work at special schools and other work.

The national priority criteria have been agreed with the local authority associations. They reflect authorities' statutory and contractual liabilities and have remained substantially unchanged for more than 10 years. They are designed to meet the most pressing needs for capital funding in schools.

One example to which my hon. Friend referred is the construction of two new primary schools in Ingleby Barwick. He should be aware that my Department was able to make a substantial financial contribution to the funding of those projects.

Each year we undertake a review to determine whether the procedures should be amended in the light of changes in the organisation of schools and of comments from local authorities and other interested bodies. Of course, we would consider carefully any representations for a change in the criteria which attract consensus support.

I understand that the local education authority and the governors would prefer to replace Oxbridge Lane primary rather than reduce its standard number. However, my hon. Friend will wish to note that, in its past three capital bids, Cleveland local education authority has not bid for a named project for the school in one of my Department's priority categories but has said that it is a project that it wishes to fund out of its improvement/replacement formula. Capital under the improvement/replacement formula is not given for named projects, and it is up to local education authorities how they spend their improvement/replacement resources and, indeed, as I said a moment ago, their total annual capital guidelines allocation.

It is always open to local education authorities, however, to bid for additional capital resources in the supplementary credit approval rounds that take place three or four times a year. Supplementary credit approvals are late additions to local authorities' capital allocations for cases where capital could not be issued in the main capital round. They also act as a way of providing for projects that are clearly very worth while but might just fail to meet the strict criteria for specific cover that I have already outlined.

My Department currently gives priority to projects that involve significant investment from the private finance initiative and those connected with the single regeneration budget. I must, however, emphasise that all bids will be examined on their individual merits. I know that my hon. Friend would not expect me to make any promises here and now.

Cleveland local education authority has not bid for a supplementary credit approval for the school in question. The next supplementary credit approval round is likely to take place early next year. Any allocations given in that round are for spending before April 1996. Again, my hon. Friend may wish to approach the local education authority on that point.

Clearly, I cannot guarantee the success of any bid submitted for consideration, but my hon. Friend can be assured that, if a bid is submitted, I shall take into account everything that has been said this evening. If bids are unsuccessful, local education authorities are welcome to ask that their bid should be reconsidered in future capital rounds.

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this subject and for the opportunity to discuss some of the issues surrounding school building projects and our policy on admissions. I am always happy to take account of any points that he would like to draw to my attention, especially in connection with Oxbridge Lane primary school, and I have sought to be helpful tonight.

I have particularly noted my hon. Friend's opening remarks, in which he said that the school is pleasant, efficiently run and well led. There is no doubt that his comments will be reflected on with pride by the teachers, governors and parents alike at that school.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 27 October 1995

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Sport

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

9.35 am

The Minister of State, Department of National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The House will remember that on 14 July, the Government published their consultation paper "Raising the Game". As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) will recall, we had hoped to debate that document before the House rose for the summer recess, but the tragedy of Bosnia intervened and the House, understandably, had an emergency debate on Bosnia instead. Perhaps that was a good thing, because the intervening months have given everybody the chance to study our proposals from a greater perspective than would have been available had we debated the consultation paper in the immediate aftermath of its publication.

This morning, I shall lay out two matters as clearly as I can. First, I shall go into some detail on the contents of the consultation paper. Secondly, I shall put the policies that the paper contains in the context of sports administration.

All of us who are involved in sport in the community experience seminal moments when something strikes home, which itself may not be of tremendous importance but which sets alight one's determination to take action on something that is wrong. My mind was set alight at a seemingly casual occasion—a coffee morning in the village of Great Holland in my constituency, of the kind that we all attend on Saturdays. One couple said to me, "We've just had our grandson staying with us. He is mad keen on sport, but his school does not play it. He is particularly keen on cricket, but does not play any cricket at all." Another couple, on overhearing those remarks, said, "It is exactly the same for our grandson. He is mad about football, but at his school he does not play it for more than 40 minutes every fortnight."

We have all heard such anecdotal evidence, but it struck me that I should question whether those accounts were true. If they were, something was badly wrong that needed putting right.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the sort of conversation that he has just described is the result of a great deal of unwise and, misguided political correctness of the sort that crept into education over many years? There are, to be sure, some honourable exceptions on the Opposition Benches, but the real problem has been the doctrinaire socialist view, beloved of so many left-wing teachers, that there is something politically incorrect about competitive sport. I pay tribute to the Minister for laying that bad old socialist idea to rest.

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend and pay tribute to him for leading the field in that respect. I believe that he wrote a paper about competitive sport in schools a couple of years ago; it was extremely valuable to me for the research that I was doing at the time. I also know how hard he has worked for schools such as Roseacres in his constituency—no one has done more from the Conservative Back Benches to help put sport back in schools.

There was another problem that set me thinking that something was deeply wrong. When I was beginning to research how much sport was played in schools, I had a meeting with officials at the Department for Education and Employment to try to find out what was going on. I asked an official to give me some idea of how much sport is undertaken in a week by the average 14-year-old. I know that average figures can be misleading—it all depends on the school—but the answer was: one hour a week of PE. It should be remembered that children watch television 25 hours a week. This morning I heard an interesting interview with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), who paid a generous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. He also said that children watch two and a half hours a day of television. What a generation we are helping to bring up! They watch more television in one day than they do PE in a week.

The House will know, furthermore, that PE is not necessarily sport, since it includes dancing, aerobics and lessons in the history of diet. Those are all very important, of course, and I would not downgrade them—but they are not sport. I remember on one occasion—mine is a wonderful job—going to see Great Britain play rugby league against the Kiwis at Wembley, and then coming back for a performance at Covent Garden. I can assure anyone who entertains any doubts that rugby league is not the same as ballet. They are both important, but they should not be lumped together. That is why I want to get sport back to the heart of school life.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who has been kind enough to come in and sit beside me this morning, will know that the single most important thing that I can do in this Department is to ensure that young people play proper games at school and get proper exercise—particularly but not exclusively in competitive team games.

The reason I am so keen on sport in schools is that I do not regard sport as a mere add-on to education—as an optional extra. The real importance of sport lies in the fact that it is an essential part of education. Certainly, it is valuable because it is so healthy too. Perhaps some of my hon. Friends will have seen the report from the British Heart Foundation stating that this generation of young people is the most unfit ever—they are a generation of couch potatoes. I know that the armed forces are encountering difficulties with new recruits, who cannot march more than a couple of miles in heavy boots because they have not had enough exercise at school. The same goes for the fire service. At a fire station in my constituency I was told that new recruits do not have enough upper body strength when they arrive, so a great deal of their induction period has to be spent building it up.

[Mr. Sproat]

Sport also provides great pleasure and enjoyment for young people. There is not so much pleasure and enjoyment around that we should deny it to young people. I shall never forget visiting Consett county junior school and watching the children being let out and rushing into the playground. That day a special demonstration of rugby for young people had been laid on by the chap who runs the Consett rugby team. I also remember visiting a school in Melton Mowbray that was involved in "top play", and hearing the screams of delight of the young people as they ran around.

So sport is not just healthy; it is a pleasure. Above all, however, it develops social values and character, including an understanding of team spirit, of good sportsmanship and of playing and living within the rules. A primary school teacher can go on until she is blue in the face about how we should stick to the rules in life, but that may not seem very important to a 10-year-old—until he is playing his first game for the school and is about to score a goal when some little thug trips him up from behind, which of course is against the rules. Then he will begin to understand the value of playing within the rules. All sorts of lessons can be learnt about courage, commitment, discipline and self-discipline.

Besides discovering the inadequacies of sport in schools, I looked at the other side of the spectrum. At the time, the soccer World cup was about to be played in the United States, and not a single British team had reached the finals. Yet we gave the world the game, and most other games as well. And those we did not invent, we popularised. That is why I want sport back in the heart of schools, for every child. Obviously, a small number of children are physically unable to participate, but most can. At the other end, I want this country back where it belongs—on the international stage.

The measures that we have introduced have been designed to help to develop opportunities for people of all standards in sport. They are contained, mainly but not entirely, in the consultation paper "Raising the Game", published on 14 July. It contained three main sections: sport in schools, including further and higher education; the role of local sports clubs; and centres of excellence for our top athletes, would-be gold medallists and would-be international players.

The wonderful thing about a Friday morning is that there is enough time for most hon. Members to speak in rather more detail than would be possible usually in the House, and I want to take this opportunity to ensure that everyone, inside and outside the House, understands the strategy that we are seeking to adopt. No doubt some criticisms will be levelled at me, but I want first to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, although not in an attempt to embarrass him. I know that he does not like everything that I have done, but in general the House has supported our initiative, and that is most welcome. It has greatly assisted its momentum throughout the country.

The consultation paper makes about 40 points, and I do not propose to go through every one, but I shall pick out some of the crucial ones. I shall deal first with the amount of time that we want devoted to sport in schools. I have already referred to the average of one hour a week for 14-year-olds. By definition, some schools do more than the average, and there are certainly some wonderful state schools. One of my greatest pleasures while helping to put together the strategy has been visiting some of those schools. My constituency is blessed with exceptionally good schools. I pay tribute to Colbayns school and Cann Hall primary school in Clacton, and to their head teachers, Messrs Holt and Williamson, who were terrifically helpful when showing me their curricula. I am not making a constituency point, however. Schools such as Windsor boys school, a comprehensive with just under 1,000 pupils, have shown just what can be done.

Many people would say, "Minister, you are asking for the moon. Schools cannot possibly do what you ask of them." The best and truthful response is, "Don't say that, because it is being done by Windsor boys school, Barclay school, Stevenage and Gilberd school, Colchester." That is the proof. In a sense I am saying, "Here is the best practice, copy it." Different schools will wish to place different emphases, but it should be understood that everything to which we draw attention in our consultation paper is being done somewhere. Well, not everything, because the paper contains new proposals as opposed to proposed changes in curricula. It is more accurate to say that everything that comes within the sporting curriculum is already being done somewhere.

We want schools to aim for two hours a week of sport within curriculum time and another four hours a week outside it. At some schools, teachers and pupils will appear long before breakfast. I do not advocate the example that I am about to give to everybody and to all schools, but I know that at Windsor boys school the pupils arrive at 7 o'clock in the morning to practise their rowing. There is a dedicated teacher and extremely keen pupils. Many other schools have pre-breakfast work. In addition, lunchtime is available and the period from 3.30 pm onwards. There are also weekends and holidays. I have discovered that everything is possible if a head teacher and the teaching staff really want to achieve something.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Sproat: I give way to a former head teacher.

Mr. Greenway: Even now, I regularly undertake training and sporting activity in the early morning. I always did that with my school pupils. Does my hon. Friend agree that what he says about children getting up early and arriving at school early for training or for practising their sports gets them into the right culture? Does he further agree that that is the only way to overcome the body flab and flabby bodies of the present generation, of which he has spoken so dismissively and so rightly?

Mr. Sproat: I would certainly agree with my hon. Friend. Truisms—

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): What does the Government Whip say about that?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is extremely fit. He is just solidly made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made an extremely good point. To risk a cliché, truisms are truisms because they are true. Mens sana in corpore sano was true 1,000 years ago and it is still true. We are trying to ensure that we do not forget the old wisdoms while we seek new ones.

We want parents to know exactly what schools are offering. We are aware, of course, that some parents are not as keen as others on sport for their children. Some parents will want schools where a greater emphasis is placed on the academic side. Other parents will want a balance between the academic and sporting sides. I understand also that some parents will want a greater emphasis on the arts.

I am proposing that from now on every school in its annual report or prospectus should set out clearly—not in education jargon but in terms that every mother and father can understand—its sporting aims and the games that are played by it, especially team games. Every school should state how much time a week is given to individual games and the sporting facilities that it has. The statement should make clear the physical education and sporting qualifications that teachers have, with which other schools the particular school plays, the games played and the results of those games.

Winning is not, of course, all-important. I believe that most Members would accept that playing the game in a proper spirit is far more important than winning. None the less, we want schools to make it clear what games are played with other schools, how they have got on, what local business sponsorship they have and whether they have a governor who is responsible for sport, for example. We are consulting to determine exactly what questions should be answered in annual reports and prospectuses. We believe that it is an extremely important point of principle that parents should know exactly what a school does about sport before they decide whether they want to send their child to it.

We shall set up two new schemes to judge the sporting merits of schools. There will be a sports mark scheme. Schools will be able to say that they have met that mark with so many hours of sport each week and decent facilities, or that they are trying to improve their facilities. Of course, there are many schools with poor facilities that still do tremendously well because they are working hard to improve their facilities. To meet the requirements of the sports mark scheme will be a pretty good achievement. There will be a gold star scheme—if any hon. Member can think of a better name, I shall be obliged to him or her. The gold star scheme is, however, a working title.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The Pendry memorial award?

Mr. Sproat: I shall demonstrate my generosity. I should be happy with that suggestion, given the support that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde has given me on so many occasions.

I have been surprised and disappointed by the lack of information about what sport is played in our schools. It is extremely difficult to ascertain which schools do what. In future, the Office of Standards in Education will inspect the quality and range of games offered as part of the PE curriculum, which is the absolute "must be", as it were. It will also inspect what goes on outside that curriculum—for example, before school starts, at lunchtime, after 3.30 pm or whatever. Ofsted will inspect and report. It will also conduct a survey of good practice.

As I said, many wonderful schools throughout the country have had and implemented good ideas. We want to see those ideas spread even more widely. We shall place a requirement upon the chief inspector of schools to report annually on the state of PE in schools, so that we are not faced with a decline in sport about which no one knows until it becomes obvious. We have anecdotal evidence, but it is difficult to ascertain exactly what is happening. I am not the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, but I should like the inspector's report to be laid before the House every year.

A genuine problem that many schools face is that many teachers do not have training and coaching qualifications. About 85 per cent. of teachers in primary schools are women. I know that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) is terrific at football.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I would not say that.

Mr. Sproat: Well, the hon. Lady is very interested and has a great knowledge of the game. There is a problem, because many women primary school teachers do not have that interest and knowledge. Every primary and secondary school teacher will be encouraged to take a subsidiary qualification in a sporting or PE subject. That will apply also to the arts. We are talking about sport, but my imagination is not bounded by playing fields.

We want teacher training colleges strongly to encourage would-be teachers to gain subsidiary qualifications. The Sports Council will put approximately another £1 million into the schemes for which the National Coaching Foundation is responsible, and there will be additional schemes. There will be modules. Would-be teachers at training colleges will be able to obtain coaching qualifications in the sport of their choice.

Sport is not solely about enjoyment, health and getting rid of youthful high spirits, although it is a marvellous way of doing so. We all want to see those high spirits, but they should be channelled into socially helpful behaviour and not into the dreadful anti-social behaviour that we too often see exhibited by young people. We want to build on the work to encourage young people to understand the ethical lessons that can be learnt from sport. A tremendous amount is already being done on that. Mr. Michael Parker, who was himself an Olympic athlete, started the idea within the Sports Council. In the new year, we shall set up a group to look at the Football Association, rugby, tennis, cricket and so on, to see how good ethics are taught in those sports, to get the best practices there and to spread them throughout the school world.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My hon. Friend mentioned ethics. Does he not think that one of the best ways to teach our young sportsmen and women how to behave is to ensure that their role models are of the right kind?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I certainly do. I was interested to see how the great England fast bowler, Devon Malcolm, is already being taken as a role model in South Africa. I listened to Mike Atherton on the radio this morning, saying that of course they wanted to win all the test matches, but that they were strongly aware of their responsibilities in helping to encourage the healing benefits that sport is bringing to South Africa. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that sportsmen should be role models, but there are too many examples of sportsmen who are not.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: It appears that the Minister is about to turn to other matters than education. I should like to raise an issue that seems to me to be of possible significance. Apart from school facilities, many colleges

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

and universities have extensive sports facilities that are provided in the first instance for the use of students, although for a substantial period of the year, they lie empty and unused, when they could be put to the advantage of the community as a whole. Is that an issue that the Government think is worth pursuing?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, the Government certainly do. I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman, who will remember that he came to see me with the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) to discuss what universities and further education colleges should do. I shall come back to that later, as it is an important matter. We have set up a committee under Sir Roger Bannister, and part of his remit will be just what the hon. and learned Gentleman was saying. I had not quite left education; it was just the break in my voice that gave that false impression.

The Sports Council will establish a working group to analyse existing coaching schemes and ensure effective use of resources. We have a shortage of information. What are the good coaching schemes? Indeed, what coaching schemes are there to start with? How good are they? How relevant are they to teachers? I pay tribute to the work of the Sports Council and the wonderful work that it has done and is doing. I pay particular tribute to the chairman of the Sports Council, Mr. Rodney Walker, and his chief executive, Mr. Derek Casey. I cannot speak too highly of the work that they have been doing.

Had the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) been here today, I would have told him how much I owe him for a remarkable speech that he made in the early part of 1993, about rugby league. It opened my eyes to the injustices that had been suffered by rugby league. I shall not go into them now, as the House has heard me on that subject before. As a result of his speech, I became very interested in rugby league, went along and met Mr. Rodney Walker, the chairman of rugby league, was extremely impressed with him and then got him appointed as chairman of the Sports Council. Among the many other things that I owe the hon. Gentleman is certainly an introduction to Mr. Rodney Walker.

On schools, Ofsted will also be asked to report on teacher training colleges, because there is thought to be—I do not put it any stronger than that—a lack of dynamic enthusiasm for sport in teacher training colleges. Given the problems that we have identified of whether teachers are capable of imparting to their pupils how to play sport, of training and enthusing them, it is very important that teacher training colleges play their part. I am sure that the lack of enthusiasm is not typical of all of them, but some evidence has been put before me that they could be keener, so Ofsted will look at them and see what they can do to improve the training of teachers in that area.

I am talking about sport because it is a sporting debate, but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage has said, we are extremely keen to use what we have learnt in trying to do something for sport, to do something for the arts. We should like to transfer this template of sport—in schools, local sporting clubs and centres of excellence—to the arts and look at how the arts can be better in schools; how we can link local art galleries, local musical groups, local drama groups and local orchestras and integrate them more with schools; and how we can then smooth the way up to the centres of excellence: the great dance and drama academies, the Royal Opera House, the great regional orchestras and so on. I shall not go into that in great detail, but I just lay it before the House as perhaps a way of raising the game.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I welcome the fact that Ofsted will be looking at schools in my borough, but is the Minister confident that he will be able to get the resources for Ofsted to be able to do all those things, which are very welcome?

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. Lady for her general support, for which I am sincerely grateful. I want to keep this, as much as possible, an all-party matter, but no doubt the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde will have a biff-bang at me in a few minutes' time.

As far as the money is concerned, I think that we have cracked it. There is the extra £1 million for training. The Sports Council is putting up another £2 million to be bid for to improve the links between sporting clubs and schools, and we have the lottery. The lottery can certainly help schools in so far as school facilities are being used by the wider community, which comes back to the point raised by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

That can be done—not just because of the reasons that I have just given. The biggest single reason why I am confident that it can be done is that the greatest single power to do good lies with the head teacher, the staff and governors of the school. Barclay school, in Stevenage, has a terrific head teacher, Mr. Russell Ball. I remember walking round the school with him recently and talking to the PE staff. The question of money came up. I do not want to put words into their mouths and so will not attempt to quote them directly, although I think I remember the words pretty vividly. They said, "We are not thinking of money. We are here as professionals. We love our job. We want to impart our enthusiasm to our pupils." Every Saturday, they are out with their teams. They are not asking for extra money. Money obviously is an important part, but it is certainly not the whole part. I think that we have the money bit right, but time will tell. If we have got it wrong, we shall come back. I am not saying that it is a perfect document in every way.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great successes of our education policy—local management of schools and grant-maintained schools—is the greater dissemination of information to parents, in the form of the annual report and the prospectus to parents? Does he further agree that one of the great sea changes arising from this policy paper, when parents are considering the choice of school, will be the choice not only of academic excellence but, from now on, of sporting excellence and sporting facilities that are available in the school?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The principle of parents being as well informed as possible should be extended into sport. As he knows, that is why we shall put it in the annual reports and prospectuses. No doubt that can be extended to the arts, so that parents can have a real choice and will not be directed by county council bureaucrats, of whatever political persuasion, who tell them, "You must do this." Give them the choice.

The second part of the consultation paper involves local sports clubs, which are very important. Too often in the past, young people who have been terrific at sport at

school have left at 16 and fallen into a black hole; they have not continued with sport and so miss the pleasure, healthiness and good discipline that they had before. It is important to try to get schools and local sports clubs to work more closely together.

When the governing bodies of sport apply for grants from the Sports Council, the council will want to see included in the business plan the governing bodies' ideas to link local clubs with schools. I do not want to put too much weight on that aspect—it is a good thing: it has connotations of apple pie and motherhood. I understand that many governing bodies do not have tremendous power over their local clubs, such as the Melchester tennis club. We shall give extra encouragement to the Sports Council's branches in the regions so that they do their best to encourage the links between clubs and schools. I shall return to the increasingly important role of the Sports Council's branches in the regions later. I want them to focus on sport for young people and to ensure that the clubs and schools work together.

No one will know better than the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde that many clubs have terrific schemes. Arsenal contracts its players to spend so many hours a week in schools and communities. I believe that West Ham has a scheme called the Young Hammers, whereby everyone contracted to West Ham has to attend the birthday party of a member of the Young Hammers. That is a great practical way of knitting together the community and schools, which we want to encourage.

Clubs are also thinking of other schemes. One such proposal is that, every Wednesday from 6 to 8 pm during July, clubs will allow anybody from schools to come and play freely and be given coaching, tennis rackets and balls. Enthusiasts from the clubs will also visit schools to help with training and coaching. That shows how, at a low, but important and practical level, we can extend the sporting links in the community.

The national lottery plays an important part in providing money for the sports schemes, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall said. A vital use of the lottery fund, as distributed by the Sports Council, is to ensure that clubs and schools get together to devise schemes with their local authority and local businesses to provide facilities for joint use.

I remember reading the Labour party's White Paper that was published some time in the mid-1970s—I think that it was 1976—

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): It was 1975.

Mr. Sproat: It was 1975—I stand corrected.

I was struck by much of the valuable content of the White Paper, but nothing has happened. Both major parties have been in power since, so I am not making a party political point. One aspect emphasised time and again in the 1975 White Paper was the dual use of schools for local communities. Talking off the top of my head, I believe that only 12 per cent. of outdoor school pitches are used by the community and less than 50 per cent.—I think that it is 49 per cent.—of indoor school facilities are used by the community.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East raised the issue with reference to further education colleges and universities, where it is just as relevant. I want the FE colleges, schools, local sports clubs, local authorities and businesses to get together to make applications to the Sports Council so that we can positively improve our sporting facilities through the lottery.

There are other ways of injecting money into youth sport, including the sportsmatch scheme, of which the House will be well aware. The Government provide about £3.7 million a year, which is roughly matched by the private sector for sport at grass roots level. From now on, the sportsmatch scheme will earmark £1 million of its funds specifically for schemes for young people. In a way, that re-answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Vauxhall about money. I am considering every legitimate way to channel money into sport, whether it be through Sports Council grants, Sports Council lottery funds, the sportsmatch scheme, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts or the Sports Aid Foundation. Having mentioned the sportsmatch scheme, I should like to say how much I admire the work of Stuart Errington and Mike Scott who run it and who concentrate on grass roots sports; they keep a lean machine and do a terrific job.

One of the great things about sport is that so many organisations contain volunteers who want to get stuck in. The Foundation for Sport and the Arts, run by Grattan Endicott, does a terrific job. It complements the Sports Council and the Sports Aid Foundation. I have seen a lot of Paul Zetter recently—what a great man he is. He gives his time and money generously, and is a good friend and wise counsellor.

Mr. Peter Lawson of the Central Council of Physical Recreation has done valuable work over the years and shown great dedication. Keith Smith is a member of the CCPR and a former head teacher who has done much work on how to get schools more involved. Much wonderful voluntary work has been done.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): One of the central problems that I should like my hon. Friend to consider is the strategic provision of resources throughout the country. I am sure that he will agree that the provision of facilities throughout the different parts of the country is uneven—that is particularly true of the provision of swimming pools. Many communities of 10,000 or even 20,000 people do not have adequate access to a swimming pool. Are there any plans to make a study across the country to see where swimming facilities are in short supply and to see what can be done to rectify that?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, there are. Mr. Rodney Walker and Mr. Derek Casey of the Sports Council are conscious of the need for an even spread of facilities. One point that I did not raise in my reply to the lottery debate the day before yesterday was that the former Secretary of State for National Heritage, my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), sent a letter on—from memory—20 June 1994 to the Sports Council. In it he said that the council should take into account the geographic spread of all the grants that it gives. Obviously, that is difficult because it has to respond to the projects from the grass roots. My right hon. Friend specifically told the Sports Council that it should take the geographic spread into account, whether in relation to swimming pools or any other sporting facility. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) raises an extremely important point.

I did not mean to thank a catalogue of people, but we have received terrific support from Craig Reedie and Dick Palmer of the British Olympic Association. I do not know

[Mr. Sproat]

whether it is right for me to thank my officials in the House—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will pull me up if I am out of order. I should thank my officials for all the work that they have done: it has been a terrible battle to get the proposals through the treacle of Whitehall. I should like to make special mention, for their extraordinary work, of Mr. Niall Mackenzie in my private office, of the sport and active recreation department under Miss Alex Stewart and of the permanent secretary.

One of the reasons for having a Department of National Heritage is that we have the clout within Whitehall to drive through a paper that—dare I say it—trespasses on other Departments. It was not always in line with what those Departments had originally thought, but they eventually saw the wisdom of our ways. I should like to pay great tribute to the Department of National Heritage.

My last point on the issue of what the consultation paper naffly describes as extending sporting culture is an important aim, on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was keen. My right hon. Friend's policy aid, Mr. Nicholas True, gave us tremendous help and was of unique importance; he is a great man. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"By the year 2000 our aim is that all young people will have access to quality facilities, including playing fields."

That is a very important proposal in a rather bland sentence, but in the context of the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South, it means using lottery funds to encourage local communities to suggest projects for sporting and recreational facilities involving young people, schools and local businesses. We want to encourage that and in the new year I hope that we shall be able to announce or encourage more publicity about what we want to see done and how to do it.

I mentioned local business, and business sponsorship is important. Coca-Cola already sponsors a football competition between schools. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) will know that the *Daily Mail* sponsors rugby for young people, the Midland bank sponsors tennis and *The Cricketer* sponsors cricket. Business spends hundreds of thousands of pounds on sport and I want to encourage that.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East spoke about further and higher education, and I shall add one or two details to what I said about the importance that we attach to that. The Further Education Funding Council intends to carry out an audit of existing sports provisions, to report on trends and causes and to make recommendations to the Government. Amazingly, we found that we knew hardly anything about what happens in FE colleges. I do not claim that an audit is a world-shaking announcement, but one cannot make policy until one knows the current situation, so at least we shall put that right.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Standing Conference of Principals will carry out an audit for higher education. We intend to invite and encourage—we cannot command—further education colleges and universities to state what sporting facilities they provide and their sporting aims so that teachers and students will know exactly what to expect from the FE colleges.

I spoke about the committee that we have set up under Sir Roger Bannister. Sir Roger is terrifically keen and calls the Department three or four times a day. He is not just a figurehead, but is keen to find out what we can do to make sure that sport is entrenched in universities because, just as there has been a trend in recent years for sport in schools to go down, there has been a similar trend in universities. Obviously, some universities are much better than others.

I thank the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East and my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne for coming to see me shortly after I became a Minister. I remember them saying, "We must do something about Wednesday afternoons. They used to be sacrosanct for sport, but that is no longer the case." We put together the committee under Sir Roger and it contains not only the dons and professors who are involved in running sporting departments but students, so that the matter is looked at not just de haut en bas. The committee also contains Eric Peters, and I am sure that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East will remember Mr. Peters scoring a great try against Wales in the Five Nations championship last year. I am sorry to note the melancholy look on the face of the hon. Member for Neath at the recollection of that marvellous moment. If people have any further thoughts on such matters, we shall be happy to hear them, because we want the right people to come up with the right answers about sport in universities.

I have taken rather longer on that subject than I intended, so I shall move swiftly to the third part of the consultation paper, which is about centres of excellence. We have moved in a continuum—a word beloved by the Sports Council—from sport in schools through local sports clubs to centres of excellence. At the end of last year or the beginning of this year, the hon. Member for Neath asked about my visit to Australia. Its purpose was to see exactly what that country had done. The Australians were rather melancholy about the fact that they returned from the 1976 Olympics in Montreal with hardly any medals. There may have been the odd bronze but, basically, they had won no medals and they were horrified.

Australians believed that sport was a tremendous binding and intrinsic part of their national identity, yet they could not win medals on the international stage. They looked at the idea of an Australian institute of sport centred in Canberra, with each state having its own institute for sport. There was the New South Wales institute, the South Australia institute and so on. I looked at the Australian institute of sport, at different state institutes and at various academies of individual sports. My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) will be horrified to know that I looked at the rugby league one, but only because there was not a rugby union one on show.

While I was in Australia, I also looked at the cricket academy, which is run by that tremendous Australian test player Rodney Marsh. I came back with ideas, because I think it was Samuel Butler who said that appropriate ideas were there to be appropriated. I thought that the Australians had done rather well and I intended to take the best of what they had to offer, to see whether it could be transplanted here. Of course, much of what the Australians do is based on what our Sports Council has been doing for many years. I emphasise that we are not copying in every detail what the Australians have done, but we are copying their central principle of a place of excellence.

Within the next few days, the Sports Council will publish its ideas on a British academy of sport. My ideas are roughly the same and I shall shortly outline them. Those Sports Council ideas will be looked at by anyone who wants to do so and people will submit bids to run a British academy of sport. They will be assessed by the Sports Council, which will announce its decision next summer. I cannot promise, but I hope that before the House rises we shall have a fair idea of the plan for the academy, and there is no reason why the foundation stone should not be placed next year.

I shall give the House a quick idea of how I see such an academy. It will be on a campus of about 200 or 300 acres, and it could be on a green-field site or on one that is already used. It will have residential accommodation for about 500 people on some kind of sports scholarships—a matter that is dear to the heart of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. We need to make sure that, in an increasingly competitive world, our athletes are properly supported financially, and we are determined to do that.

The academy could be anywhere in the United Kingdom, but I imagine that it will be reasonably central. It will have the world's highest standards of coaching, training facilities, sports science and sports medicine. That is what I should like to see and if any person, group or charitable trust would like to run it, I should like them to come forward. The Sports Council will make money available from the national lottery funds to cover the capital cost of building. I think that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister mentioned an amount of up to £100 million but, obviously, different groups will come forward with different ideas. The money is there for the capital building and there will almost certainly be endowment funding and revenue funding for the academy. As I said, the Sports Council will put its ideas in writing and people can respond to them.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Does the Minister envisage one of those centres of excellence in Wales and one in Scotland, apart from regional arrangements in England?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I certainly do. I am conscious of the time and do not want to go into that in too much detail. What I envisage is not necessarily what will happen, but I see the British academy of sport at the top and it will be a centre of excellence, the best in the world, for our athletes. Underneath that, Scotland and Wales and the regions of England will have their own institutes of sport, which will be attended by people who do not want to go full time to the academy although, of course, not everyone at the academy will need to go full time but, basically, there will be full-time residence there.

The Cardiff institute of sport is terrific. I went round it with Nigel Walker; I know that we are all extremely disappointed that injury has kept him out of rugby. The institute is the sort of thing that I envisage for institutes of sport underneath the British academy.

After the British academy of sport at the top, and then the regional institutes and the national institutes of Wales and Scotland, if they want it, the third tier will be the academies of individual sports such as cricket, rugby and rowing, run not by the Government, but by the individual sports, and of course they will be eligible for lottery funds and responsible for putting forward their plans. Lottery funds will be available for all those things.

On the structure of the sports councils, within weeks of arriving in the Department, I came to the conclusion that the idea for a new sports commission was rubbish. Apart from anything else, it was going to have about 200 bureaucrats, so I scrapped that. I then considered the Great Britain Sports Council. I found that there was little logical consistency about it. Its individuals were terrific, but it had members from Wales and Scotland, even though Scotland and Wales had their own Sports Council. Northern Ireland had its own Sports Council, but was not represented on the GB Sports Council. Its chairman, Mr. Don Allen, used to sit on it, but could not vote. The whole thing was a grotesque and illogical inconsistency, so I scrapped it.

From 1 January next, for the first time, we shall have a United Kingdom Sports Council, whose main job will be to consider sports policy, to find out where it has a British application and whether there is too much overlapping, duplicating and waste of resources in our bodies—perhaps not, and there is no presumption that we do. As one of its major duties, the council will have to attract to this country international sporting events of first-class quality. An Olympic games has not been held here since 1948. That will therefore be among its prime duties.

The chairman of the UK Sports Council will be Sir Ian MacLaurin, chairman of Tesco. He was a first-class cricketer, a man of dynamism, imagination and business experience. It will have the four chairmen of the national sports councils of Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales, so that nothing that the UK Sports Council thinks about, says or does shall be apart from the national councils.

For the first time, I was keen that someone from a professional sporting background should be a member of a body—we have Trevor Brooking on the GB Sports Council, but he is there because he is Trevor Brooking—so I have appointed Gary Lineker to the new UK Sports Council. I also appointed Rob Andrew, who was supposed to be a representative of the amateur game when he was appointed. However, the aim was to have not just professional and amateur people on the council, but young people. The aim was to have not just people whose sporting days were long past, but people who knew what sport was like today.

The UK Sports Council also has Craig Reedie, chairman of the British Olympic Association, not so much as chairman of the BOA and as a corporate member, but on his own merits, and Sarah Springman, a don at Cambridge and an international triathlete. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is rightly keen on ensuring that women's sport has its proper place in all this, which is important. It also has Clive Lloyd, the great ex-West Indian captain who has made his home in this country. I hope therefore that we have a balanced UK Sports Council of 10.

We have a new English Sports Council of 15, of which Mr. Rodney Walker will become chairman. It includes some names that the world will know, such as Ian Botham, a cricket legend, but a man of strong and independent mind and strong character, just the sort of chap who, I hope, will go in there and say, "We are here as board members to make policies; they will not be made by the bureaucrats." Members of the old GB Sports Council have not perhaps taken enough of a lead in making policy, which has been a problem.

[Mr. Sproat]

I want to get five members from the regional sports councils, the ministerial nominees, on the English Sports Council. Too often, the Sports Council at the centre did not know too much of what was going on in the regions and the regions did not know too much of what was going on at the centre. Now, on a changing rota, five out of the 10 chairmen of the sports councils in the regions—chairmen and ministerial nominees—will be members of the English Sports Council.

That is my intention. We have new vision, new structures and new money in sport. It is a great opportunity for sport in this country. I commend our paper to the House and to the country.

10.34 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I think that the whole House will be grateful to that Tory coffee morning meeting that the Minister attended because he certainly had a flash of inspiration on that occasion. Of course, he is not listening, but I am trying to say that it is good that he went to that coffee morning.

I begin by congratulating the Minister on his elevation to the status of Minister of State. This is the first opportunity that I have had to do so on the Floor of the House as this is the first debate on sport that we have had since then. Equally, it is good to see that the Secretary of State for National Heritage is sitting in on probably her first sports debate in the House.

Anything that elevates the position of sport in the House and therefore in the country gets my nod of approval. In any case, the Minister is deserving of his new status and I genuinely wish him well, up until the general election. Nothing I say from now on, I can tell the House, is a criticism of him personally, but enough of praise.

The main reason for the debate is the document "Raising the Game", which is laughingly called the Prime Minister's sporting initiative. I will return to the reason for my mirth at that description later. Before I do so, I must chide the Minister for the fact that we are having this debate on the Government's so-called sports policy only today, almost four months after the publication of the document. In the first instance, the Government promised us a Green Paper. Despite what the Minister has said today about this being a consultation document, it says here clearly that it is a policy document. Of course, the Government have abandoned any pretence of consultation.

Nevertheless we waited with bated breath for the White Paper, promised as it was in early summer—that promise appears at column 316 of the *Official Report* of 23 March. In truth, the Minister's Department was still referring to it as a White Paper just days before the announcement itself, right up to the publication date. In the event, it came to be called a "press conference document", and it was released not in the hurly-burly of the House, but in the tranquil setting of New Den, home of Millwall football club. How unlike Labour. In 1975, when it was in office, it produced its White Paper, which was already been referred to, entitled "Sport and Recreation" and it was properly debated in the House. By way of compensation, we were promised a debate before the recess, as the Minister has said, but, naturally, because of the emergency in Bosnia, that debate was delayed until today.

Now, however, yet again we have the debate on a Friday. I know that the Minister has some sympathy with this line of argument as we both know hon. Members who have committed themselves to constituency engagements who would dearly like to engage in this debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would certainly have liked to have been here, as would the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). I absolve the Minister from blame here because I know that he is just as keen as I am to raise sport's profile. It may be a good idea if we both got together to make representations to the Leader of the House to press him for a better spot in future.

But enough of that. I genuinely welcome many of the proposals in the document. I know many hon. Members here today are sceptical about the Government's ability to match their fine rhetoric with action. After all, until today, their track record in this area is hardly impressive. I am not trying to be a killjoy, but it is apparent that most of the Government's proposals—and no doubt those ladies at the coffee morning knew about them before the Minister—were stolen from either the Opposition or the Sports Council.

I am certainly prepared to give the Government a last chance, but whether my hon. Friends are I am not sure. I am not optimistic, as the Government have a long record of broken promises and the Prime Minister must realise that being photographed at the Oval, Lords or Stamford Bridge is no substitute for a real sports policy.

The Prime Minister said:

"the Government and the Sports Councils will, as the paper makes clear, commit extra resources . . . to improve facilities and support for those teachers and others who lead sport."

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) is also very keen on that, as her intervention demonstrated.

What does that mean in effect to the Government? I shall ask the Minister some specific questions and I hope that he will be able to answer them in his reply. They were certainly not addressed by the Prime Minister in his press conference document. Will the Government give extra resources through the Department for Education and Employment? Those cannot come from lottery money through the Sports Council as it is revenue funding. At whom will the resources be targeted? Is this something that we should anticipate in the Budget? As I said, the Prime Minister is full of fine words, but the House has a right to know the answer to those detailed questions.

Back in January of this year I asked the Minister how many officials were involved in the preparation of the press conference document. I was told six. It seems that they spent the following six months copying down other people's views—the Sports Council's, previous recommendations to the Government, which they predictably did not enact, and ideas generated by the Opposition. I am only too happy to take this opportunity to notify the Minister of the mass cribbing that is going on in his Department. Perhaps he will look further into that.

Let me illustrate my point. I referred to the only time that sport has been taken seriously in the past 20 years. If we look again at the 1975 White Paper, we will see that it contains some very familiar ideas. Had Labour not lost the 1979 election there would have been no need for "Raising the Game" as the policies would have been in place—my noble Friend Lord Howell of Aston would

have seen to that. To answer the Minister's argument that such policies had not been put in place, we had four years, but the Government have had 16 years.

Under the heading, "Youth Sports Programme", for instance, the White Paper said:

"there is a need for closer contact between school sports bodies and governing bodies of sport, aimed at ensuring that school-leavers are in touch with the junior sections of adult clubs."

That rings a bell, does it not? "Raising the Game" states:

"Too many young people are lost for ever to sport because there is not a straightforward and attractive way, through local clubs, to continue playing sport after the age of 16."

Similarly, Labour's White Paper, under the heading, "Gifted Sportsmen and Sportswomen", talks of the need for

"diverting resources to those who are gifted in sport",

and

"developing centres of sporting excellence."

But lo and behold, what is the Government's big idea in "Raising the Game"? Hon. Members have guessed it. Under the heading, "The Development of Excellence", it states:

"we want to ensure that talented competitors at every level have the support necessary to allow them to exploit their talents to the full."

The words may be slightly different, but we all know that the meaning is the same. I could go on, but I will not.

Instead, it is worth pointing out that the 1975 White Paper was not merely radical for its own day, but more than 20 years ahead of its time. It talks of the need to redress the balance in sporting facilities in the areas of urban deprivation, to work with local authorities in partnership with Government, to allow retired people to enjoy sporting facilities, to provide for mothers with very young children and to understand the importance of non-competitive sports, such as dance and movement and to take into account the particular needs of disabled sportspeople. Disgracefully, "Raising the Game" is silent on all those issues.

Let me press on, for I intend to return to some of those themes later. I also mentioned that the Government are stealing ideas from the Sports Council. I have here a letter from the council, dated 7 July—just a few days before the Prime Minister's press launch—which runs through its existing policies and, surprise surprise, we find a number of elements that have been copied down as part of the Government's new policies, such as the links between school and club in and out of curriculum time, the provision of international standard facilities for promoting excellence and allowing the council to become a consultee on planning applications. I have no problem with the Prime Minister borrowing—

Mr. Sproat: I did not catch the name of the paper to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Pendry: It is a letter from the Sports Council and I will hand it to the hon. Gentleman.

I have no objection to the Prime Minister stealing either our clothes, the Sports Council's or anyone else's. I just wish that they would acknowledge ownership. Instead, the day following the launch, the Prime Minister was allowed to masquerade in the glory of 1,000 press column inches, claiming sole copyright. It is a shame that the Sports Council did not distance itself further from the Government over that but, to be charitable, I suppose that it is after all a Government quango.

If the House feels that the 1975 White Paper is the only policy statement on sport that we have produced, I must remind hon. Members of Labour's 1992 "Charter for Sport"—the only sports policy produced by any party during the 1992 election. It called for closer working partnerships with the private sector to widen opportunities at all levels, the prevention of further sales of playing fields, raising the status of physical education in the curriculum—on which the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is keen—and opening up school facilities to the community. Those are all themes that were repeated in "Raising the Game".

The Government's document also refers to the need for fair play. Unfortunately, their record on stamping out cheating is not a good one. One part of Labour's "Charter for sport" said:

"The present Government has failed to take effective action against drug use in sport. A Labour Government will not shirk from its responsibility."

The Government's press conference document makes just a passing reference to doping. All that it is offering is more education for youngsters on the dangers of steroid abuse. I welcome that, of course, as do other Opposition Members. Many hon. Members joined me just over a year ago in signing an early-day motion calling for just such measures. But when will the Government finally adopt our commitment to outlaw the drugs themselves?

In January 1994, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs—the Home Office's own group of experts—recommended a legal move to ban the use as well as the supply of such drugs. Finally, in November last year, the Home Secretary reacted to the pressure put on him by hon. Members on both sides of the House, including the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). We do work together on a cross-party basis on many issues, as the Minister said.

In his written reply, the Home Secretary promised to impose further controls on anabolic steroids, but we are still waiting for action. Although the new Secretary of State has left her place, perhaps she could make a bright start at the Cabinet table by pressing the Home Secretary to introduce such legislation.

In their document, the Government are keen to point to the deficiencies apparent in our sporting life and keener still to attribute blame for the failures to anyone bar themselves. They talk about

"misguided attitudes and mistaken policies over the last generation".

But who has been in power these past 16 years? I wish that we had had more coffee mornings earlier on in the period of Conservative Government so that Ministers could have been converted to these views.

The Prime Minister claims to

"have been concerned about the growing evidence of a decline of sport in many of our schools. The Secondary Heads Association themselves have produced alarming evidence of this."

Let us consider that evidence. When did this decline occur and who was responsible? The SHA reported that between 1987—I do not think that Labour was in power then—and 1994, there was a huge decline of more than three quarters in extra-curricular sporting fixtures, largely due to the increased work loads of teachers.

Further evidence produced by the Sports Council and the Health Education Authority revealed that between 1977 and 1992 the number of PE teachers fell from

[Mr. Pendry]

41,800 to 24,000. Clearly, the sharp decline in school sport to which the Minister referred has occurred in the past 16 years of Tory Government and mainly during the premiership of the current incumbent, not a generation ago as he likes to pretend.

Let us look more closely at the Government's proposed solution. They rightly acknowledge the existence of a sporting continuum, stretching from our primary schools, moving through the educational establishment to our universities and colleges, linking it with clubs and societies and finally ending at the pinnacle of sporting excellence. They propose to support each part of the pyramid with new initiatives to bolster our sporting achievements. They are fine sentiments that we certainly endorse, but such policies simply cannot be put in place without the necessary resources—or are we to have another pledge broken, one made during the passage of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 by the Prime Minister himself and successive Ministers?

Where are the funds for the sport development officers to come from? Where are the funds to ensure that schools can provide adequate sporting facilities by the year 2000? Where are the funds to implement sports mark and gold star and to ensure that an increasing number of schools reach their demanding targets? Where are the funds to overhaul teacher training and coaching programmes? Clearly, the lottery will provide some of the resources, and that is good, but they will be for capital programmes. It must be at the discretion of the Sports Council, which should not slavishly follow the diktats of the Prime Minister or the Minister.

What about the rest? As revenue projects, they are not eligible for lottery funding. The Prime Minister committed himself to giving extra resources. However, he is the man who has presided over huge real terms cuts in education spending, resulting in the loss of at least 3,500 teaching posts this year alone. In fact, the only major spending commitment contained in "Raising the Game" is to build the new British academy of sport with lottery funds, which is estimated to cost some £100 million. I do not complain about such a development. Indeed, as I said earlier, my party developed the idea in our 1975 White Paper. It was yet another of our ideas that was hijacked by the Government, but it is another case of the Prime Minister interfering in the distributive role of the Sports Council.

We can create excellence at the top only if we put the necessary resources into the grass roots of sport. The proposals are clearly based on the Australian institute of sport. The Minister will recall that by agreeing to pair with him to allow him to go to Australia—kicking and screaming, I must say—I was keen to help him to go to that institution. Nevertheless, he must remember that the Australian Sports Commission has the dual role of promoting participation as well as excellence. He rightly said that there is a difference between what he proposes and what the Australians have. It is a very important difference—one is a sport-for-all policy rather than a sport-for-a-few policy.

The Minister should also remember that Australia is rich with first-class sporting facilities. That compares with London's single 50 m swimming pool shared by 9 million inhabitants. The academy has a role to play but only as part of a balanced picture for British sport.

In issue 5, volume 3 of *Public Policy Review*, the Minister said:

"As Minister of Sport I don't intend to tell sports bodies how to run their affairs."

How does he square that with the statement from his own document which reads:

"The Government has asked the GB Sports Council to . . . invite bids, by 31 March 1996, from the sports world to establish the British Academy of Sport."

In 1994, the Secretary of State's predecessor, with whom she swapped jobs, wrote to me saying:

"It has always been an important principle of the National Lottery that proceeds from the Lottery will be additional to current expenditure programmes and not a substitute for them."

Again, that was repeated by the Secretary of State and the Minister in last Wednesday's debate. They were repeating a promise made to the House during the Second Reading of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993: that the Government would not direct the spending of lottery money—as if it were the Government's own. It was clearly repeated by the Secretary of State on Wednesday at column 1039 of the *Official Report*.

The pledge was even written into the directions for distribution written by the Minister's Department. They state quite categorically:

"All distributing bodies shall take into account . . . the need to ensure that they do not solicit particular applications."

Clearly, that promise has been broken and a new precedent set.

As I have said, I welcome in principle the establishment of the British academy of sport, but a few questions need to be answered first. For instance, who will control its operations? Who will direct its resources? Where will it be based? Some of them have already been answered by the Minister and I welcome the fact that, although we hear in this era of leaked documents that there is a healthy punch-up going on between the Minister and the Sports Council, the Sports Council will very soon be issuing its consultative document.

It would appear that the Minister favours a private operator developing a green-field site rather than extending existing complexes such as Lilleshall, but what if the commercial interests start to conflict with the interests of sport in the medium to long term? What guarantees will we have if the Minister has his way over the long-term future of the academy? In "Raising the Game", we were promised that the Sports Council would bring forward proposals on the academy, and it is good that they are to come very soon. They were promised earlier—I think that they were given to the Department in the first week of October although we were promised them in September—but, as long as we get them before Christmas I do not think that we shall be quibbling too much.

Let us return to the other end of the spectrum: the plans that the Minister has outlined for in-school sport. In recent years, the amount of sport played in schools has fallen dramatically, as the Minister said. The Government continue not to guarantee two hours for school sport a week. In 1987, 72 per cent. of the 14 to 16 age group had at least two hours of physical education a week. That had declined to just 25 per cent. by 1994—that is some progress, and all under Conservative Governments.

I remind the Minister that at present an average of 91 minutes a week is allocated to sport for children aged 14 to 16, leaving just over an hour after changing and travelling time. That is clearly not enough, and I am glad that the Minister agrees with us on that point.

In addition, the Government still favour compelling schoolchildren of all ages to play competitive games. Naturally, many youngsters derive great enjoyment—I certainly did—from competitive team games and find them a rewarding experience, but others do not. They are more likely to engage in other activities such as dance, jogging and aerobics which will be sustained throughout their adult life. Surely, by the age of 14, after nine years of competitive games, children are old and wise enough to make up their own minds.

In the introduction to "Raising the Game", the Prime Minister refers to the document being the result of widespread consultation with interested parties. According to the Prime Minister:

"Their advice has been hugely valuable in putting these ideas together".

Clearly, that was not the case with the issue of compulsory competitive games because more than three quarters of the responses that the Minister received from that consultation document were opposed to the idea.

The Minister ignores those voices at his peril because they have been joined by Gary Lineker, Bryan Robson, Kevin Keegan, Trevor Brooking, Paul Gascoigne and Terry Venables, all great sporting competitors who questioned whether youngsters are being taught properly in Britain. They all recognise the wider dimension to developing skills in sports and endorse the system used by Ajax Amsterdam, which focuses on balance and movement skills for youngsters before they go on to the competitive field.

The Daily Telegraph wrote last Wednesday:

"With their determination to promote competitive team games at the expense of all other activities, the Government have clearly got it wrong."

As the House can imagine, I do not always endorse what *The Daily Telegraph* says, but, in this instance, I support its sentiments wholeheartedly.

Quite the most controversial aspect of "Raising the Game" is the section that deals with school playing fields. We should like to know exactly what the Sports Council will do in its role as consultee to planning applications affecting playing fields. We have seen plenty of evidence of the Sports Council doing the Government's bidding in the past. We really need to know what its attitude to DES circular 909 is and whether it will be repealed.

In any case, should it be the Sports Council that is made the consultee in this instance? What about the Association of Metropolitan Authorities or the Association of County Councils? After all, the amount of money provided by the Sports Council—£49.8 million—pales in comparison with the £2 billion provided by local authorities.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I am keen to retain and expand school playing fields. May I ask for the hon. Gentleman's support in opposing Ealing's Labour council which is attempting to sell the playing fields at Dormers Wells high school for housing development?

Mr. Pendry: I regret any playing fields being sold, but I do not blame any council—Conservative or Labour—for making that choice when it is strapped for cash and receives a circular allowing it to make that difficult choice. I regret it. As a Government, we shall remove that temptation.

Mr. Greenway: Will the hon. Gentleman support me?

Mr. Pendry: I will support anyone in putting a case for sporting provision in specific places, but I will not make a decision about the priorities of any one council. It is for the elected councils to do so. My argument is that the circular allows local authorities to do that, and that we should take the temptation away.

In a letter to me, the Prime Minister accepts the argument, but he does not go on to allow local authority associations to act as consultees.

It was the Government who introduced DES circular 909, as long ago as 1981, which reduced minimum areas for playing fields and encouraged schools to sell playing fields in the first place. Since then, more than 5,000 playing fields have been sold off so that cash-strapped councils can generate capital receipts. The Minister has never disputed that.

What makes it worse is the fact that school attendances have steadily increased recently—up by more than 10 per cent. in primary schools in the past 10 years. Initially, the sale of playing fields was said to be related to falling attendance rolls; those rolls are lengthening again. At the same time, the fields have gone, largely never to return, as they have been concreted over and turned into car parks and housing estates. Yet the Minister now wants schools to buy them back, as he said on 16 October at column 5.

How will that be done, and at what cost? Perhaps the Minister will tell us that. Obviously, we shall buy back the fields that remain for a larger sum than we sold them for.

At the end of last year, I wrote to the Prime Minister about that subject. I was surprised by his response. Rather than acknowledging that the regulations encourage schools to sell off surplus land, the Prime Minister claimed that they actually protected playing fields. I was staggered by the sheer hypocrisy of the Government. First they urge local authorities to flog off playing fields; then they claim that they have been protecting them all along.

We should also note that the specifications laid out in the regulations are minimum requirements—only 1 hectare for primary schools with 300 pupils, which is not enough by anyone's standards. The Government have done nothing to strengthen the minimum provisions, but have encouraged further sell-offs.

I have before me an extract from a speech made by the Prime Minister only two months after his supposed conversion. Speaking to the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation, he said:

"At present, you can only sell surplus assets with the expectation of keeping half the proceeds. That is fine as far as it goes . . . I can say today that, as from next April, you will be able to retain the full proceeds of such disposals."

If that is not an encouragement to sell off more land, I do not know what is.

The National Playing Fields Association has said:

"Such policies may have an inadvertent negative impact on school playing fields. The simple position is that the only assets which schools have available for disposal are buildings and land and for the major part most buildings will continue to be required."

What the document omits is as worrying as what it includes. There appears to be little or no recognition of the importance of parental support in producing first-class sportspeople.

[Mr. Pendry]

I am told that somewhere in the paper—which I ask the Minister to pick up—there is a reference to sport for disabled people. I have read the paper several times, but I am unable to find it. I contacted the British Sports Association for the Disabled to discover whether it could. A helpful spokeswoman there said that she had heard about a reference, too, but that she could not find it.

Perhaps the Minister can advise me where to look now and on what page that reference appears. I shall wiliingly give way to him if he is able to direct me to the relevant page, but I do not think that he can.

Why are there no references to the achievements of disabled sportspeople in that document? Does the Minister not recognise them as important?

The Minister should be aware that, in recent years, Britain's disabled athletes have distinguished themselves in many world sporting competitions. Last year, the Great Britain swimming team topped the medal table at the world championships. Last summer, the Great Britain athletic team came third in the world championships, winning 66 medals, including 22 gold. As a patron of the British Paralympic Association, I am aware that there are high hopes that the team will top the medal table in Atlanta next summer. It is an appalling omission that those athletes receive no recognition in "Raising the Game".

Another major omission is the role of local authorities and especially their leisure and education departments. They are the major providers of sport and leisure in the country, investing almost £2 billion annually, yet they are referred to only twice in passing in the document.

One major surprise to me was the mention—I am sure that it must have been a mistake by the Minister and the Department—in the paper of a school in my constituency, which seconded a teacher to take special responsibility to promote sport for its pupils among local clubs. However, there is no mention of the role of the Tameside leisure department, assisted, one might say, by the local Member of Parliament, who closely supported the school in all that.

For example, the Labour council directly grant-aided the school netball and fencing clubs, school coaches attended council training programmes and, as a result of council support, the school secured additional sponsorship for new changing rooms and for five-a-side football and netball areas. Those are only a few examples of that Labour council's support for Hyde high school. It supports many other schools in the district, as do other Labour-controlled authorities throughout the land, which are not mentioned, of course.

We believe that "Raising the Game" has done something at last to raise the profile of sport; we welcome anything that does. It is certainly better than nothing. However, it is a patchwork quilt policy of other people's ideals and ideas, hurriedly put together. It is unlikely to be the panacea for British sport that the Prime Minister portrayed it as. I fear that the sporting world will have to wait for the next Labour Government before there is a coherent sports policy. When that day comes, I hope that the Minister will be as supportive of me as I have been of him in many of his endeavours.

11.6 am

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am delighted to take part in the debate. I am sorry that Opposition Front-Bench Members could not find it in their hearts to be more supportive of what the Minister is doing. I found his speech invigorating and exhilarating. He understands what he is talking about and really cares for the game. He is giving it the shake-up that it has long needed. The document that we are considering today emphasises that. I wish him all the best in his endeavours, especially regarding schools, where it is most important that we get sport going again. One's school days—and sometimes university and college—are the happiest days in one's sporting life.

In this important debate which touches the lives of so many people, I wish to discuss two topics: the effect of money on sport in general and its effect on rugby union specifically.

At the risk of being accused of being a purist or an idealist or of wanting to turn the clock back, I believe that we need to take a new hard look at the position. Sport at its best has so much to offer, especially to the young: the thrill of competition, being part of a team, fairness, respect for decision makers, self-discipline, honour and, not least, the ability to lose with good grace. But what do we see in so much of our sport today? Here I speak not so much about sport at school or university or at the lower levels, but about sport at the higher levels, which is what most people watch.

In cricket, the practice of sledging—fielders close to the bat making rude remarks to the batsman, constantly to try to talk him out of his wicket—is now commonplace. At test level, people appeal for catches when they know full well that the ball touched the ground.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) is or was a well-known athlete. Athletes of the highest level now do not break a record on a Saturday if they can make more money by breaking it on a Sunday. Athletics has become a travelling circus world wide, with appearance money and people making a fortune out of it.

Even tennis, a relatively gentle game, is becoming almost brutal at the men's finals level—bigger rackets, grunting all round, serve and volley, over in five minutes. I understand that softer balls for Wimbledon are being discussed. How long before it will be smaller rackets and higher nets?

The Ryder cup is a stark example from recent weeks of what happens when money is not important. Although professional players took part, they played not for money but for country, honour and pride. The atmosphere of that Ryder cup was entirely different from that of any other golf match the whole year round because not money but something else was the key issue.

I intervened in the Minister's speech to talk about role models. Let us take our national sport of soccer as an example. If we watch it regularly on television, we see referees—who in my opinion are saints—being bombarded face to face with four-letter words by half the players on the field. One top-class player leaps into the stand and aims a kick at a spectator's face. And recently, for the first time, a footballer has been sent to gaol for head-butting somebody.

It is difficult to apportion blame specifically, but I believe that most of it is due to the increasing sums of money and the greater importance of money in all games,

and to falling standards on all sides. How much sport can give to our country, yet how little it is giving at present—and, indeed, how much damage it does in some respects. Last week a commission on youth said that young people were trying to be too macho. How much of that derives from the role models that young people see in sport–wanting to win at all costs and the methods employed to do so?

As a young man, my main sport was rugby union and I developed a deep love for the game which I have never lost. Until now, it has been the one major national sport to have stood out against professionalism and said that it would not pay players to play. It was a wonderful example of sport played for fun, with no expectations of financial reward, and that is what gave the game its special ethos and special following.

I do not pretend that everything has been perfect and entirely above board. There were always stories of money being tucked into boots after games, extra travelling expenses and a certain amount of fiddling behind the scenes in some clubs. Many of us deplored that, but it did happen. In recent years, the pressure has increased. We had paid coaches, the formation of leagues, sponsorship encouraged by firms and corporate hospitality at grounds. The World cup has greatly increased the commercial attractions and the television coverage. In many ways, that was commercialisation of the sport but until recently, at least from the players' point of view, rugby union remained an amateur game. Now, however, it has been announced that the game is going professional.

What finally pushed England—I am talking about England in particular today—into making that decision? There were two reasons. The first was pressure from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, which wanted to pay their players—and had, indeed, been paying their players for years. The second was the greed of some of the present crop of internationals, whose shameful part in those events will be remembered long after their rugby achievements are forgotten. It is disgraceful that international players lucky enough to be honoured by selection for their country to play an amateur game should use the amateur image to build up their own reputations and then destroy it in their desire for money. In doing so, they have denied future generations the opportunities and pleasures that they themselves have enjoyed. I recently heard one such player described as a business man in shorts, and that sums it up rather well. Those players, some of whom delude themselves that they individually have the spectator-pulling power of Pavarotti, have been behind the scenes bludgeoning the Rugby Football Union with the negotiating skills and techniques of Arthur Scargill.

I understand that the proposal for the England squad is to pay the whole squad for the whole season: what a cosy arrangement. Surely the fairest way is to select game by game. What about injuries and loss of form, and emerging new talent? Whatever happened to annual trials, at which current internationals had to prove regularly that they were worthy of their places, and better than those who aspired to replace them? Under the present arrangements it is not surprising that some of our current internationals have 50 or 60 caps.

Rugby union is not naturally a spectator sport. It is only at international level or at the varsity match that the combination of the amateur spirit and fierce competition has traditionally attracted large crowds. Even then, the fierceness of the competition, the degree of fitness and the closeness of the marking can make for exciting but not very spectacular matches. Rugby union is essentially a game for playing, not for watching. The kind of people who go to watch rugby do so for all sorts of reasons. Of course they support their side and hope that it will win. They may also hope to see some exciting running—although in that respect they are frequently disappointed. But people also go to watch because of family and friends, or perhaps because their children are playing. They go to meet old friends, and to drink beer. There is a sense of occasion. In rugby union winning is certainly not the be-all and end-all.

It has been argued that the Rugby Football Union in England had no choice, that professionalism was inevitable and only a matter of time. Some of the players say that professionalism has removed the hypocrisy. What nonsense that is. The most important hypocrisy was displayed by players posing as amateurs while working hard behind the scenes to get paid for what they were doing and to turn the whole game professional.

Players complain about the pressure of training and keeping up to present standards. Apparently it interfered with their careers, so that they could not train and have a career. Why do they not do what earlier generations did and have an international career when they have time to train, and when they no longer have that time, get on with their career and make room for younger people, whose careers are not yet so important, who have time to train and who desperately need the opportunity?

I have already mentioned the great pressure from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. I understand that those countries already pay their players. At the risk of sounding nationalistic, the game is called rugby and it was created at Rugby school in England. Our national organisation is called not the England Rugby Football Union but the Rugby Football Union, and Twickenham is affectionately known all over the world as HQ. What we needed from the Rugby Football Union was leadership and foresight, and the determination to preserve the game loved by so many people. If the game needs cleaning up, let us clean it up, not simply give way and see it ruined.

What will happen now? What does the future hold? That has not been thought through. I am sure that there are many Members in the Chamber who understand the game, so they will know what I mean when I ask how prop forwards who are paid can pack down against prop forwards who are not paid. How can players ruck and maul—extremely fierce activities—for money? How can amateur rugby clubs be bought and sold, as is now being discussed, and how can players be bought and sold? Cardiff is looking forward to the return of Jonathan Davies from rugby league. I understand that, and I understand his desire to go back into the Welsh fold. But has Cardiff thought about the fact that while Jonathan Davies is coming one way, some of the club's other best players may be going the other, to be bought by Newcastle, Bath or Harlequins? That has not been thought through. There are a thousand and one problems that have not been addressed.

We must realise that we are in danger of reinventing the wheel. The same debate took place 100 years ago, when rugby league was created. Despite what the Minister said earlier, I have no objection to rugby league. It is a fine game and I enjoy watching it. It was created 100 years ago not

[Mr. Michael Lord]

simply so that players could be paid, although that was important, but to make the game an enjoyable spectacle to watch.

Although I love rugby union dearly, many aspects of it are boring. The scrummages can last too long, and line-outs are boring to people who do not understand what is going on. If one really wants open rugby all the time, as one sees in rugby league, there are too many people on the field in rugby union. What will happen eventually when the whole game goes professional? Rucking and mauling will be too fierce and too boring, while line-outs will be too complicated and will slow the game down. There will not be 15 players on each side, as that would be far too many for an open game. How many players could we have on each side? Let us say that we would have 13 on each side. We would simply have recreated rugby league all over again. That game already exists and those who want to play it and get paid for doing so should go and do so, rather than staying in rugby union and trying to change the game that so many of us care so much about.

An interesting point is the question of who owns Twickenham, which is steeped in the amateur tradition. Twickenham belongs to all clubs, not to the Rugby Football Union. I do not believe that it can be right to turn such a famous stadium into a professional stadium.

I am a great believer in democracy and, occasionally, referendums, and I believe that all clubs and members of the RFU should have been consulted before the decision was taken. The Minister said today that some things happen in our lives which set us alight, and this is something that has set me alight. I had a letter published in *The Daily Telegraph* on the subject a little while ago and I received a lot of correspondence as a result, urging me to do something and perhaps to take a lead.

In response, I have organised my own referendum. I am writing to every club in England, asking the following five questions: "Do you think the RFU was right to make rugby union a professional game? Do you think that all clubs in the RFU should have been consulted before the decision was taken? Would you support the re-establishment of an amateur rugby union for all clubs that do not wish to pay players? Do you think that rugby players who want to be paid should play rugby league? You may not be aware that Twickenham belongs not to the RFU but to all clubs—including yours. Should professional players be allowed to play at Twickenham?" I will await the responses with interest, and I shall publish the results. I sincerely hope that most clubs, including the senior ones, will want to remain amateur. If they do, we must see what can be done about setting up an appropriate framework.

I hope that we are not too late. A huge onus has been placed on my generation, who have enjoyed rugby union and who know what it means to us, and it is important that we show responsibility in passing the game on to future generations. Rugby union is the last great sport in this country that is played for fun and nothing else. If it goes professional, the game will become sleazier and sleazier. A great tradition will be lost for ever, and money and television will have won. If we could save the game, what a feat that would be, and how future generations of amateur rugby players would thank us.

11.22 am

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I intend to confine my remarks to one sport—professional football. It is probably known that I am a director of Sheffield Wednesday from the premiership, and that I am the chairman of the all-party football group. I am also a member of the Select Committee on National Heritage.

I do not agree with what the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) has just said about football. There is no doubt that football commands a tremendous amount of coverage in the tabloid newspapers—probably more than Parliament or politicians—because of massive public interest. Anything which is scrutinised in such a way every day will obviously have any sort of misdemeanour splashed all over television, and intensely concentrated criticism is something that football has to bear.

The way that the game has responded to incidents shows that it takes a hard line on self-regulation. When Eric Cantona attacked a member of the public, the Football Association increased the penalty that his own club had given him. The FA punished Tottenham Hotspur by deducting 12 points from it and preventing it from entering the FA cup. The manager of Arsenal was banned for one year, while a Millwall fan who foolishly went on to the pitch the other night has been banned for life.

One of the problems that the FA has is when people in the game persist in going to court. Many politicians know that a rule book is simply a guide for friends, and a rule book being challenged in court prolongs divisions and makes it difficult to punish people. I hope that those in football, and all other games, will refrain from going to lawyers when they dispute the rules.

There has been a phenomenal difference in football in the past five or six years. It is said that it is an ill wind which blows no one any good, and the ill wind of the Hillsborough disaster, which occurred at my club and in which 95 people were accidentally killed, was one of the traumatic events of this century. But the disaster resulted in the decision of Lord Chief Justice Taylor that all top clubs had to have all-seater grounds.

Fortunately, that decision coincided with Sky doing a television deal with the clubs, and that deal has made a fantastic difference. Football in this country is now rich enough to allow foreign players such as Ginola and Bergkamp to come and play here for very high wages. In the past, our best players went abroad to Italy and Spain. The fans are paying more to come to games, but the standard of football has increased massively, and that is why the game is in such demand by television companies.

The sponsorship that has resulted from that demand has meant that our stadiums are now without exception the best league stadiums in the world, although we do not have the best international stadiums. Gate money taken at the turnstiles—while high—nevertheless just pays for the wages of the players, some of whom at the very top are earning £10,000 a week. The average wage in the premiership is about £2,000 a week. Those wages are paid for by money at the gate, while sponsorship and television cash pay for ground improvements and transfer fees.

The system is working very well, and the Government should thank God for the all-seater stadiums, which are the most massive and impressive pieces of construction in this country for some time. The unemployment figures

would have been a great deal higher were it not for the £400 million that football clubs have spent on their all-seater stadiums.

There is no doubt that our thanks should go to the Football Trust, which—with money from the pools—has put £136 million into ground improvements. That money has come from the pools, not the national lottery, and it is appalling that while the lottery pays only 12 per cent. in tax, the football pools companies are still paying 32 per cent. with VAT at 17 per cent. The football pools industry has been penalised in this country following the introduction of the national lottery, and many hundreds of jobs have been lost. The pools industry was handicapped right at the beginning, as the lottery was permitted roll-overs and television advertising. The industry was also unable to allow people aged 16 to play the pools. Yet despite all of the burdens placed on it by the Government, the pools industry has still managed to hand over £136 million via the Football Trust to assist in the building of the all-seater stadiums insisted upon by Parliament. The industry has an unfair burden placed on it, and something should be done about that in the Budget.

Football is criticised for other things, including club shirts. We all sell shirts, kits, tee-shirts and even after-shave in our club shops. We do not apologise for that, as the average premiership club shop can take £1 million in a season. An average club can sell 15,000 to 20,000 shirts to its supporters. People say that clubs charge too much for shirts, but it should be realised that a football shirt—manufactured in a batch of 15,000 to 20,000—will be more expensive than a shirt from C and A, which will be making 250,000 at a time.

The club shirt must also have a complicated design. If it did not, somebody down the street would copy it and within three months would be selling it from a barrow outside the ground. The first time the buyer put such a shirt on, he would stain his neck blue or red. He would have been ripped off.

Mr. Lord: People do not object too much to clubs selling shirts. What they object to—I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's club does this—is when the clubs change their shirts every five minutes. All the young lads want to buy the latest model, and it costs a fortune.

Mr. Ashton: I was just coming to that. Most clubs do not change their shirt designs every five minutes—although Manchester United, which has a lot of supporters abroad, does change its shirts too frequently in my opinion. The average club changes its shirt design every two years, for reasons of fashion. Buyers of football shirts are predominantly young people. They want the club to change its shirt and to have a different away strip—my club has used yellow, green and hoops.

It is no coincidence that the shirts are marketed in June and July, because supporters will be taking their holidays and want to show off their club shirts on the Costa Brava. They have become a big fashion item. Football shirt manufacture provides 700 or 800 jobs and is keeping three factories open. The likes of Puma and Umbro and the textile industry would go down on their knees to thank football fashion. In the same way that jeans or anoraks go in and out of fashion, football shirts change their style and colour.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): In fact, the majority of people who purchase football shirts are the mothers of young supporters, and it is mothers who complain about the inordinate cost of those shirts.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend makes a justifiable complaint, but the lad who used to deliver my newspapers—he is at college now—wore the same Sheffield Wednesday shirt every day for two years. His mother probably washed it on Sunday, but she could not have received better value in her life than that £30 shirt that her lad wore every day for two years. Compared with how much is spent on Christmas toys such as Nintendo—which are chucked aside after two or three years because the youngsters get fed up with them—football shirts, which are probably worn every day of the year, represent good value for money.

There are wide variations between local authority licensing committees. The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central talked about going to a rugby match and having a pint. I wish that one could do the same at football matches. All too often, the local justices seem to be living in the days of the riots and hooliganism of 10 years ago, which do not occur now that there is better segregation in all-seater stadiums. The justices are adamant in refusing to allow the average fan to have a pint with his pie. It is okay if the fan can afford to use the hospitality lounge and pay for a £25 meal, but all too often the average fan is unfairly denied the chance to have a pint.

There are also massively wide variations in the cost of policing. Hourly costs differ from town to town and from one police force to another. Some forces charge for just the two hours of the game; others charge for four or five hours. A club such as Lincoln might be allowed just one policeman in case of arrests; other forces think football matches are a milch cow and that they can make a lot of money out of their local clubs. I have seen the Home Secretary about that. Why can the Home Office not direct that the charge should be a percentage of the gate? No club would mind paying 2.5 per cent. or 5 per cent. of its gate, because the amount would be decided on the size of the crowd, which would result in a much fairer and more realistic charge, but for some reason the police and the Home Office will not agree to clubs being charged in that way.

An important development in sport is the construction of a new national stadium. Indeed, I understand that the owners of Wembley are meeting the Sports Council today. We all have fond and nostalgic memories of Wembley. It cost just £750,000 to build in 1926 and a crowd of 120,000 used to turn up in those days. We all remember the 1966 World cup. Wembley is a magical place, and probably every one of us has been to it, but it is a poor stadium by 1995 standards. It is nowhere near as good as Old Trafford, Arsenal or any other Premier league grounds. The sight lines are bad because it was designed for standing crowds. Now that there are seats, the crowd are constantly up and down because they cannot see above the heads of the people in front. The catering facilities are poor and the general atmosphere is one of drabness and decay. There is a feeling throughout sport that the country needs a new national stadium.

There are arguments as to where the new national stadium should be located and what sort of stadium it should be. The Sports Council and the Premier league clubs have banded together to bring about a new stadium, and they have a national lottery grant of £130 million. As to the design, the athletics authorities want a stadium like

[Mr. Ashton]

Wembley, incorporating a running track. The football authorities do not. They argue that a running track destroys the atmosphere because the crowd is too far from the game, which players do not like. Many other countries have track stadiums, which is why foreign players often do well at Wembley—far better than they would at Old Trafford, Villa Park or Hillsborough. Grounds without a running track are more compact and have a much better atmosphere. A running track also adds considerably to the cost of a football ground. Wembley has talked about shifting seats and moving grass, but a track would put at least £20 million or £30 million on the cost and would satisfy no one.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: The hon. Gentleman presents a false dichotomy. Most modern stadium designs—including that suggested for Birmingham, which I commend—incorporate retractable seating, which allows the capacity to be extended for football matches, but for the running track to be reinstated for athletics meetings.

Mr. Ashton: It is possible to do as the hon. Gentleman says, but it is much more costly. I understand that Birmingham cannot get planning permission for its bid because it would use a green-field site. Of the five locations that are bidding, Birmingham is probably at the bottom of the list.

Wembley has since its inception been run by a private company. One argument made by the football authorities is that they pay too much to that company. My information—Wembley may challenge this, but I do not think that it is too far out—is that for every £1 paid for a cup final, each team gets 19p but Wembley takes 38p—a total of 76p. The rest goes on value added tax, the Football Association's share, policing and other running costs. Wembley gets as much as both teams. Wembley also gets the revenue from television rights and programme sales. If Wembley sells 100,000 cup final programmes—a large number are sold by mail—at £6 each, that generates £600,000, which is more than the winning team receives. Teams playing in a cup final probably each get £450,000 and Wembley gets about £1.25 million.

I am not blaming Wembley or accusing it of making excessive profits. There are probably 40 or 50 events a year at Wembley, but the stadium has to be maintained 365 days a year. It was better a few years ago, when occasions such as the pop concert for Nelson Mandela increased the number to around 80 events. It is obviously extremely costly for a private company to maintain a huge stadium, even though events are profitable on the days when they are held.

The Sports Council, athletics interests and football authorities understandably say, "Why don't we build a stadium instead of Wembley?" The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) mentioned Birmingham. There are also bids from Manchester, Bradford and Sheffield. Wembley's bid involves pulling down the existing stadium and building a new one on the same site. That would be about £50 million more expensive than using a derelict site in the north. Wembley would offer parking for perhaps 7,500 cars, whereas sites in the north could provide parking for 25,000 cars—a phenomenal difference. Sheffield has also made a bid. Geographically, Sheffield is at the centre of the country and can offer a site right next to the M1 with three accesses to that motorway. The M18 is about four miles away, and there are good links with the A1 and the M62. The vast majority of the football clubs that pull in big crowds are in the north of England. There are about 9 million people within an hour's drive of this site. To put that in context, I should point out that it can take an hour to get from Trafalgar square to Wembley.

Hon. Members may know that there used to be seven miles of steelworks between Sheffield and Rotherham. As happened with the London docklands, when the steel industry collapsed all the works were pulled down flat—that is why such a huge site is available. Wembley has about 40 acres, and the site offered by Manchester is 140 acres, but the site in Sheffield is nearer 300 acres. Sheffield came in for a lot of criticism about the student games, but I will not go into that now.

Most of the new development is being managed by the Sheffield development corporation, not the city council. By the side of the M1 the corporation has built the biggest shopping mall in Europe—Meadowhall hypermarket. Department stores' rents are 50 per cent. higher in Meadowhall than in Oxford street. It has 100,000 visitors on a Saturday, and 35 million people went there last year. People drive long distances to visit this shopping area. A huge entertainment centre is being built, including night clubs, along what was once going to be called Bourbon street. In any event, it will be a massive attraction.

Within a few hundred yards of the Meadowhall development is the planned site for the new stadium, which will be an enormous complex. I have referred to the row about whether an athletics track should be included. I should perhaps mention that Sheffield already has the best athletics arena in Britain. It is so good that the Rolling Stones played to 55,000 fans there this summer. They also played at Wembley, a concert which got massive coverage while the one at Sheffield got none. The new football stadium could be built alongside the athletics stadium at considerably lower cost and on an enormous site with first-class parking and access.

Last week the Select Committee on National Heritage went to see those sites in Sheffield and was impressed by what it saw. A supertram runs along the Don valley, straight from Meadowhall. The next stop up the line is the indoor arena, which Pavarotti regularly fills with 12,000 spectators. Incidentally, the Jehovah's Witnesses also manage to fill it with that many people. All sorts of international stars such as Whitney Houston play there. London never knows or understands what is happening in the north of England: it has become complacent, imagining that it has the best of everything, simply because Londoners never bother to go and see what is happening in the rest of the country.

The indoor arena, linked to the athletics stadium and the international Olympic swimming pool, with its amazing diving facilities, are all run under the auspices of the Sheffield development corporation. The Minister talked about an academy of sport. Hallam university has already produced plans for one at which 2,000 pupils would be accommodated. What the Minister did not mention, however, was the need for a sports injuries expertise centre in this country. Every club these days has a physiotherapist, and certain consultants specialise in cartilage injuries or hernias, but we need to bring together all the best know-how in one place. After all, these sports stars are valuable.

The UEFA championships are coming to Sheffield in 1996, to be held at our ground where we are building a £6.8 million stand. The new site is reachable from the City airport in about 85 minutes. Wembley cannot possibly compete with such facilities. The reason why the English football team gets poor attendances for Wednesday night games at Wembley is that people have given up trying to get there. It is possible by tube from Baker street, but for anyone coming down the M1 or around the M25 it is quite hopeless. So people go and watch the game on Sky television in a pub, or at home. London football attendances are pathetic, with the exception of a few big clubs such as Arsenal. Sheffield's two big clubs, Wednesday and United, pulled in 55,000 spectators when they were both in the Premier league—more than 10 per cent. of the population, or the equivalent of 1 million people in London.

I hope that the decision on where to build the new stadium will be taken without prejudice, and that the Government and the national media will not say that it must be built at Wembley for reasons of nostalgia. When that stadium was built, it was at the end of a metro line. Since then other cities have overtaken London, which has not undergone massive site clearance in the way that some northern cities have because their industries have collapsed. Even the Manchester site is far too near the centre of Manchester. What is needed for a new stadium is good motorway access so that people can get away quickly. Leaving Wembley the minute the whistle blows, it can still take an hour to get to the tube. With a good car park and motorway access, people can be away in much less time.

If all the national lottery money and football league money paid by the fans is to be spent, the stadium should be put where the fans and the public want it and not necessarily where the London establishment wants it.

11.46 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) had to say about Sheffield. It would certainly suit me down to the ground if the new national stadium was built there. It is not far from my constituency, and it would be an easy drive down the motorway. The facilities there might lend themselves well to such a venture.

I was recently in the United States to see the Seattle Seahawks play at their home ground, the Kingdome, and it brought home to me the fact that we are woefully under-provided with really big facilities compared with what the Americans have. It is an all-weather pitch where 60,000 people can pack in easily under cover. The entire pitch and arena can be covered with a retractable roof, so that a variety of games can be played in all weathers—even when there is deep snow outside. We do not often get deep snow in our part of Yorkshire—perhaps even less than the north York moors—but the weather in the north can be inclement at times and, to give those soft southerners a chance if they ever reach a final in the national stadium, perhaps we ought to be able to keep the rain off them.

I want to talk about the historical sporting perspective today. I read with some disappointment lately that the Army is having trouble recruiting people of sufficient physical capacity to serve. The last time that happened was in 1903, when a report was submitted to the Minister of War, as he then was, about the state of young recruits. It said that seven out of 10 were being rejected. We have not quite got to that point yet, but it does show that times have changed considerably—not always very attractively, either.

The problem in 1903 was malnourishment and poor housing. There was real poverty in the inner cities, and it was not uncommon for officers in the British Army to be more than a foot taller than the men whom they commanded. We have got past those problems of poverty now; our young people's problems these days are to do with affluence. Nearly every home has a television and a video recorder, and young people watch about 25 hours of television a week. They take less than one hour's physical exercise at school, and many of them take part in no physical activities outside school. At the same time we have an alarming rise in juvenile crime. Members receive complaints about it all the time.

In that respect, I took an initiative during the summer. A large group of young people from a school in my constituency visited me in the House. I gave them an hour's talk in one of the Committee Rooms. I was concerned to stress that young people should not feel that politics is a remote activity that has nothing to do with them. I explained to them that politics is about the apportionment of scarce resources among competing demands. We started to talk about real needs that were not being met in the area where they lived. They all agreed that leisure facilities in their town were virtually non-existent and that something had to be done.

The young people returned to their homes and thereafter undertook a survey of all the young people in Yarm in my constituency. They then reported on what those young people would like to see provided in their town. Two items that came way ahead of everything else were the provision of a leisure centre of some description and a cinema.

There is a problem because groups of policemen are so often moving in on young people who are sitting on benches, for example, and loitering in a way that causes distress to other residents who have homes nearby. Those other residents want to know why young people are hanging around outside their houses and looking quite menacing. The problem is that the young people have little to do. That is why I asked a question about swimming pools earlier in the debate.

When I was a young person—I suppose that I still am; in any event, when I was a very young person at school I used to take a job during school holidays teaching swimming and life saving at the local swimming pool. The pool was frequently jammed with young people during the holidays because they had little else to do. At least there was a pool. I am talking of Thornaby, which is also in my constituency.

At Yarm, which is a much more prosperous area than Thornaby, there is no swimming pool. If anyone wants to take part in leisure activity, it is necessary to travel to Stockton or Thornaby. There is a fundamental problem. We do not have a proper set of leisure facilities in larger communities throughout the country. Local authorities, which have had to carve up the cake in different ways, have been left to make provision. Many Labour-controlled authorities, such as the one in the area that I represent, have taken the view that the more prosperous suburban

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areas have the financial resources to make provision for their own children. Those areas are low priorities when it comes to providing swimming pools and other facilities.

One of my friends on the Opposition Benches has once again become a shadow Front-Bench spokesman. He told me that during the summer recess he learnt to swim. As secretary of the all-party hockey club—my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is the chairman and a great captain—I know that it is necessary to explain the rules of the game to Members who wish to join the club. Sometimes they do not understand the rules because they have not played the game for so long. Some have not played it at all. That demonstrates that there is a twofold problem: people are not playing enough sport in schools and they do not participate in a sufficiently wide range of sports. Many are not aware of the rules. In many instances, they have not followed up the introduction to sporting activities that they had when they were very young because there have not been the necessary facilities or opportunities to do so.

It is crucial that in schools we encourage team games. That is because they help to build social skills and because work itself these days is team based. We see, for example, how members of the Opposition assemble themselves. They call themselves the environment team, the Treasury team or the national heritage team, for example. Conservative Members do the same. None of us works alone. We, too, work in environment teams and education teams, for example. I work in the Department of Trade and Industry team. Outside, whether we work in the law, from which I come, or in industry, perhaps especially in industry, in manufacturing or in marketing—this applies in any aspect of life that anyone cares to mention—everything is moving to much less structured hierarchical arrangements. Indeed, we are adopting team-playing arrangements.

It is crucial that people learn to play in team sports. It was on our sporting team ability that we built our military team ability. We are involved now not in military but in economic warfare, and that involves teams playing together.

Mr. Pendry: We are saying that certainly we should have competitive team games. We have always been in favour of them. The element of compulsory competitive team games is another matter. I take a little further the hon. Gentleman's analogy of team play in the House. It is not necessary to be a member of a team. A Member can be a Back Bencher. Those who wish, similarly, to play solo sports can do so in a school environment. We are talking about a healthy mix. It seems that the Government are proceeding down the pretty narrow road of compulsory competitive games.

Mr. Devlin: Individuals should have a healthy mix. I had to play rugby twice a week when I was at school. I played cricket in the summer. I swam every day, or twice a day, with the school swimming team. At the same time I indulged in other sports such as squash, tennis and fencing, which are individualist sports. We must encourage the well-rounded man or woman coming through a sporting environment. As the individual becomes a well-rounded man or woman in terms of participating in a wide range of sporting activities, in other areas of life we all have to co-operate with others while playing in teams. At the same time, there are other activities that we pursue on our own. There must be that mix for every individual.

I would encourage an element of competitive and compulsory team sports throughout school. Life is about compulsory team sports these days. I hear what the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) says, but we must seek to provide a full range of opportunity. We should ensure that people do not give up team games too early. As I have said, they will have to play team games later in life.

I wish to draw attention to the much larger and wider sports clubs that are to be found on the continent. Those clubs engage in football and a complete range of other sports. A family may go to a large sports club, perhaps privately run, to play hockey, football, squash or tennis, for example. If they take granny along, the family can even play bowls. In that way, attendance at the sports club becomes a family activity.

If anyone is interested in that approach, I point them to two examples. Two years ago we took the House hockey club to play at an excellent hockey and sports club in Brussels. That club, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North will recall, provided everything. It had all-weather pitches as well as grass pitches. It had tennis courts, bowling greens and a swimming pool. It had a complete range of facilities. There were fixtures throughout a Saturday. If a family went there, one member could play basketball, another tennis and another hockey, or whatever. There was something for everybody. It often turned out to be the Belgian mum who was not involved in a sport. She could watch the children playing or go to an aerobics class. We do not have such facilities in this country, and we should and are looking at that. My colleague and friend, Sir John Hall, who built the Metro centre and is now the chairman of Newcastle football club, is looking at that at the moment. He is looking at using the football club as a vehicle for widening out into the whole range of sports and having a whole family, whole sport experience.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Statistics have shown that the average size of sports clubs in Britain is half the size of those in France, and one seventh the size of those in Germany. Significantly, the size is about one seventh less, possibly, than Spanish clubs. Does not that bring into play the fact that the division between professional and amateur sports in this country has persisted for too long, and that what one needs if one is to produce the critical mass that my hon. Friend has been talking about is professional and amateur sports coming together, as they are in Sir John Hall's Newcastle concept, to the benefit of both?

Mr. Devlin: That is right. There are opportunities for people to consider, at 16 or 18, whether they want to go into professional or amateur sport. If they decide not to go into professional sport, but perhaps decide to stay in amateur sport, or, indeed, just intend to put sport on the back burner and go off into their careers and do whatever else they are going to do, there are opportunities for them to come back and play for leisure in their spare time and to support their local team. The concept of the critical mass superclub that Sir John Hall is talking about in Newcastle is an important development and one that I hope the Minister will go and see. I hope that he will consider it carefully and encourage the country at large,

because what I saw in the "Raising the Game" White Paper, which, in fact, turns out to be green, is a marvellous proposal for links from schools into clubs. That is a very important feature of sports provision.

I well recall, having played rugby and hockey to a reasonable level at school, going on to university, to find that the one that I had chosen, mainly because of its political dimension—the London School of Economics—had virtually no facilities whatever. Word had it that there was a pitch at somewhere called New Malden, but I have never been there to find out whether that was true. Sports clubs can play a vital role in developing people after their school sporting activities. I am glad to see that 585 sports projects have already received £104.7 million from the national lottery. I understand that, eventually, there will be some £300 million for British sport from the lottery. That will be very valuable.

I also take on board what the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said about sport for disabled people, because on Saturday I had the opportunity, indeed, the honour, to present a cheque for £3,000 to the disabled tennis association in Cleveland. I watched those people, some of whom were deaf or in wheelchairs, indeed some of whom had no hands, playing tennis and thoroughly enjoying themselves and really getting a great deal out of it. Almost as important, the tennis players who came down from the local tennis club to teach them, help them, play with them, collect the balls and so on were enjoying themselves as well. There was a wonderful crossover and linkage. It was a wonderful social occasion for the able-bodied and the disabled to play together. For hon. Members who do not know how to play disabled tennis, it is exactly the same as ordinary tennis except one is allowed two bounces. Some of the guys in wheelchairs are as good as some able-bodied people I know who can play tennis. In fact, one of them is probably better than me, but I was not going to play him and let on. It was a wonderful day, and it shows how disabled people can be integrated into the community so well. That should be very much part of what we do in the future.

We have to get back into medals. It is really important to this country's feeling of national self-esteem that we go to the Olympic games, the European games, to all the different contests, and come home with a decent collection of gold, silver and bronze medals. It is good for national morale. It is good for our own sporting community and it encourages sport all the way through the system. I remember when Chris Boardman won his gold medal. The whole street was full of people on bicycles, because they suddenly realised that cycling was a sport that was going to be taken seriously. That was great. As the Prime Minister says, we need more national heroes. We need more of our own brothers and sisters to excel in the various fields of life. We need more people we can look up to, not just footballers, but athletes, cyclists and swimmers—the whole range.

I am pleased to see that people such as Duncan Goodhew and others—prominent sportsmen and women—have welcomed the document. It is important. The House will do well to take it seriously. The only comment that I would make to my hon. Friend the Minister is that it will not always be possible, certainly not in my constituency, to match the resources that come from the national lottery. We desperately need two more swimming pools. We desperately need a lot of all-weather pitches and other sporting facilities, but we shall not always be able to raise the 50 per cent. that is needed for those projects.

I warmly welcome the White Paper and look forward to seeing it as it translates into new facilities and encouragement on the ground in my constituency.

12.5 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) is not with us for the moment, because I wish to suggest to him an additional question for his referendum: do the rugby clubs and the membership of the Rugby Football Union agree with Mr. Will Carling's description of the committee of the RFU? I suspect that the hon. Gentleman might have a better chance of predicting the response to that question than some of the others that he asked.

With justification, one could say that the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central sought to bring to our attention what are now called traditional values. I think that he is wrong when he describes track and field athletics as having become a travelling circus. He fails to recognise that the nature of the sport has changed in such a fundamental way that although people still run and jump just as they did before, they are competing in an atmosphere and to a level beyond the comprehension of those of us who practised that particular sport some 30 years ago. If that is true of track and field athletics, it is certainly true of rugby football, because the standards of fitness and the nature of competition are much different from what they were when the hon. Gentleman won the rugby blue at Cambridge, which is signified by the fact that today he is wearing the tie of the Hawkes club.

The hon. Gentleman also omitted, although he made a passing reference to it, to understand as fully as he might the influence, so far as rugby union is concerned, of the intervention in the southern hemisphere of large-scale media interests. The reason why the South Africans, New Zealanders and Australians are able to pay their players at the proposed levels is the interest expressed by two of the greatest media organisations in the world, which have effectively been willing, in return for exclusivity of broadcasting rights, to put very substantial sums of money into rugby union. We have seen the same here in rugby league. There is a question that he might have asked, and which I certainly pose to myself from time to time, although I have not yet arrived at a satisfactory answer to it. What will be the effect on these sports of the extraordinary control and influence that the large media organisations now have? That may have much more to do with the ultimate shaping of the nature of those sports than the fact that people take them more seriously now than the hon. Gentleman might have preferred.

As the Minister rightly set out in his full opening speech, today's debate is designed to try to bring some focus on the Government's plans that were published in July this year. I give a cautious welcome to the plans, which are rich in good intentions. They are susceptible to some criticism: they are less obviously rich in the new financial provisions than they suggest.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) was right to say that the absence of a comprehensive reference to the role of local authorities in the provision of facilities for sport is a defect in the document. However, on this occasion I will try to take a

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more positive view than he felt able to take. Criticisms can be made—to rely substantially on the support of private sponsors is a precarious base on which to build long-term security for the financial provision of sport.

I have some minor experience of that fact myself—not directly in sports, but in the arts. I was chairman of a repertory theatre company in Edinburgh, where for a time we enjoyed substantial sponsorship from one company. But the company's policy changed, the managing director changed and the interests of the new managing director were not so much in theatre as in some other form of the arts. Therefore, the sponsorship on which we had come to rely was no longer available. Private sponsorship, while entirely desirable, should always be regarded as—if I may borrow an expression from another debate that we have from time to time in the House—an issue of additionality. Economic conditions change and companies are no longer so willing to put up money by way of private sponsorship. There can be radical changes in company policy.

I approve of the notion of centres of excellence, some of which already exist in this country. Reference has already been made to Lilleshall, and we know of Plas-y-Brenin, Glenmore Lodge in Scotland and the outdoor sports centre at Inverclyde. I hope that as part of their approach to centres of excellence, the Government will consider the best way in which to enforce and enhance the contribution that existing centres make to the development of sport in this country.

A British academy of sport seems an entirely sensible idea, but we must recognise that not every athlete and not every sport will fit into whatever scheme finally emerges. I understood that the Sports Council was due to bring forward its proposals by the end of September 1995. That date appears to have slipped; I hope that the Minister will be assiduous in holding the Sports Council to its commitment and will ensure that it produces its proposals as soon as possible. If my recollection is correct, according to the terms of the document that we have been discussing, bids are expected by the end of March 1996. I hope that that time limit will be adhered to as far as possible.

The terms of the document are rather general in relation to precisely what the Government envisaged as an academy of sport. The Minister sought to fill in some of the gaps with his personal description, but he was careful to state that he was offering it in a personal capacity. The House would certainly want some opportunity, not to direct how the academy of sport should be developed, but to express a view on the nature of the proposals as they finally emerge through the process of, first, the Sports Council's publication of its ideas and, ultimately, the approval of the bids. I emphasise that we should not try to impose conformity on every sport and every sportsman and sportswoman. There will be sport-by-sport variations, regional and geographical variations and individual variations.

The document refers to the desirability of a network of facilities. As I said in an earlier intervention, I am concerned about the fact that we already have extensive facilities that are not always effectively used. I have in mind those facilities in schools, colleges and universities. Accepting that they are primarily provided for schoolchildren and students, and that during term time those for whom they are primarily provided have first right and entitlement to use them, it cannot be right that such extraordinary investment—almost certainly public investment—should be made in facilities that often lie vacant and unused for large portions of the year. That does not make sense. It is not quite that one sees children with their noses pressed against the window pane, but on occasion I have driven past sports facilities belonging to a university—not in my constituency—and seen children playing football in the street outside the facilities because they have been denied the opportunity to use them.

There is no doubt that there are problems of management and vandalism. I am reminded of something that I said in a debate in 1991. When I was first appointed to the British Sports Council by the now Lord Howe in 1965, my first meeting concerned dual community use of facilities. The great stumbling block was who would pay the janitor's wages if he had to stay on after 4 pm. About 10 or 12 years later I found myself on the Scottish Sports Council, and the first meeting that I attended involved a discussion on the community use of sports facilities. Once again, the stumbling block was who would pay the janitor's wages after 4 pm. I expect that that discussion is still being mirrored up and down the country in regional sports councils and elsewhere.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there has been a movement forward in dual use? Under the system of the local management of schools, schools are now able to recoup hiring charges from letting out pitches, which is happening quite a lot in my constituency, much to everyone's benefit.

Mr. Campbell: I have some reservations about that. If, as a result of what the hon. Gentleman tells us, better and more economic use is being made of facilities that might otherwise lie fallow, clearly, as a matter of principle, that is obviously highly desirable.

Excellence comes about only as a consequence of mass participation. An analogy frequently used in sporting discussions is that of the pyramid. Sufficient numbers of people reach the top of the pyramid only if the pyramid's base is sufficiently broad. If we are genuinely anxious—as is the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin)—to achieve medals, we can do so only when there is a substantial base of mass participation. It is right that we should achieve medals, not only because of the achievement of those who are able to win them, but because their achievement helps to create what is sometimes called the feel-good factor. As I think most people recognise, and as some of today's debate has certainly acknowledged, such success is best achieved through the educational system.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned the national fitness study carried out by the Sports Council and the Health Education Authority. He mentioned that the number of physical education teachers had fallen from 41,800 in 1977 to 24,000 in 1992. There were just two other pieces of information from that study that I wish to mention. The first involves what is, in a sense, a value judgment. Young people have surprisingly low levels of physical activity, and boys are much more active than girls. A survey in 1993 by the European Physical Education Association found that we spend less time on physical education in England and Wales than any other European countries.

One cannot change that sort of emphasis by berating the Government. If there had been sufficient political will generally on such issues, many of the advances would

have been achieved before now. It would be in the long-term interests of sport in this country—I shall say a little about structure later—if we could arrive at some consensus so that sports organisations, sports councils, the academy of sport and the centres of excellence know that they can plan over a long period and are not likely to find themselves subject to change for the sake of political change on the termination of one Government and the accession of another. There is certainly plenty of anecdotal evidence that teachers do not devote as much time to extra-curricular weekend activities as they once did, and the problem is how to arrest the decline in sport in schools. The document makes some sensible suggestions and I hope that the Government will put every ounce of political effort into trying to bring those to fruition.

In this general discussion on school sport I invite hon. Members to consider that many schoolteachers still put a quite remarkable amount of effort into not only their own schools but schools associations. I have the good fortune to be the honorary president of the Scottish Schools Athletic Association, a voluntary organisation that is run by a number of extremely dedicated schoolteachers. I think that I have said before that the secretary of that organisation must do about 20 to 25 hours of unpaid work a week in addition to his other commitments as a schoolteacher. I am sure that that is true of the rugby football associations and the swimming associations.

In discussing the provision of sport in schools one is inclined from time to time, because of anxiety about the reduction, to concentrate on what seem to be the adverse elements of sport in schools. We must recognise the tremendous amount of good and dedicated work that is still being carried out.

As I said informally to the Minister earlier in the week, I have a constituency case which illustrates some of the difficulties that are faced by individual athletes. I have already communicated with the Prime Minister about it. Quite by chance a constituent visited my surgery on the evening of 14 July and she has given me her permission to refer to her circumstances in detail. Her name is Caroline Innes. She is an outstanding competitor and in September 1994 in recognition of her sporting achievements she was invited, along with others, to a reception at 10 Downing street. She has just successfully completed her second year at university and therefore combines sporting and academic excellence.

Miss Innes is a highly motivated, confident young adult. She is a complete athlete who is a candidate for Atlanta next year and it is her burning ambition to go there. But the difference between Miss Innes and others is that she hopes to compete in the Paralympics, not the Olympics.

In the summer Miss Innes received a letter from the British Paralympic Association containing a request by the BPA itself. I shall read the terms of that request because they illustrate the kind of difficulties that are faced by British sportsmen and sportswomen. The letter states:

"We would like each athlete/staff to try to raise £1,000 each. This is not the cost of a place in the team or a guaranteed ticket to the games. This is an appeal to each sport, not individuals, to try and help BPA's cash flow situation when it comes to paying for flights and entry fees. As reinforcement of the integrity of this request, records will be kept in terms of each sport's collective contribution, so that should the funds not be required or only part required because of success in other areas, those funds will be returned to that sport for their own elite development. Please accept that this is a difficult thing to ask but it is an essential fall-back situation at this stage. The BPA will take a dim view of any athlete who makes an appeal for funding on the basis that if they do not get it they will not be able to go to Atlanta. Rather if they make such an appeal in that way they may end up not being selected.

The deadline to achieve this target per sport is the end of 1995 and should be based on the anticipated team size including staff. This appeal also includes the core management group, including myself, and the medical team: in the case of the core group the funds would stay within BPA."

Miss Innes is an extremely talented young athlete. I look upon her as an athlete with a disability, not as a disabled person who is an athlete, and that is an important distinction. Her burning ambition is to go to Atlanta to compete in the Paralympics but she is being invited, not as a precondition but to ensure that the team can go, to try to raise £1,000 by the end of 1995. It cannot be right that she should be asked to do that and it certainly cannot be right that the British Paralympic Association has to ask her to do it. We must find a way to release lottery funds for top athletes—both those who are able-bodied and those who are disabled.

In preparation for the debate I consulted a number of sports officials, not all of whom were anxious to be quoted directly. A senior sports official whose anonymity I shall preserve told me that he believed that, on average, anyone who competes as a British internationalist in amateur sport needs to find about £10,000 per annum. I do not want to reopen the debate about the lottery because we had a debate about it this week. However, large sums are being generated and we must find a way to ensure not only that we build splendid stadiums and provide outstanding facilities but that we find the sportsmen and sportswomen who will take maximum advantage of those facilities. What better way to pursue the excellence that is central to the document than to ensure that our sportsmen and sportswomen at the highest level are properly catered for.

I should like to return to the point that I made earlier, which is that we must not assume conformity in these matters. For a variety of reasons, for some internationalists an academy of sport will simply not be an option. If for good reasons they choose not to take up what is offered there must be financial support from another source that will allow them the independence to achieve as much as they possibly can in their chosen sport.

Mr. Lord: I am sorry that I was not in the Chamber when the hon. and learned Gentleman spoke about me. Is he suggesting that these people should be full-time athletes and that they should be subsidised to train? Secondly, would they have alternative careers and if so how would they find the time to qualify for them?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point which, to some extent, he foreshadowed in his contribution. For those who want to compete at the same level as Linford Christie it is not possible to carry on in parallel a professional career. I said earlier and I am happy to repeat because the hon. Gentleman was not here, that although track and field athletics are essentially the same as they were 30 years ago when I was a competitor and although people still run and jump, it is now a different sport. The generation of which I was a member was almost all students. We were in a sense subsidised because the nature of student life allowed us—I suspect

[Mr. Campbell]

that the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central was in the same position when he was a distinguished rugby player for his university—to combine training with professional career development.

At the highest level, the nature of sport is such that it is virtually impossible to do that. Some distinguished people do so. I think of Mr. Jonathan Webb, who played full-back for England for some time and who combined being a doctor with playing at the highest level, and of Rory Underwood, who is a pilot officer in the Royal Air Force, although from time to time he finds it difficult to combine the exacting nature of that occupation with the requirements of full-time sport. If the hon. Gentleman wants more Linford Christies—and if he does not, some Conservative Members certainly do—he cannot expect such sportsmen to compete at the highest level and, at the same time, be concerned about how they will find the money for board and lodging.

I have no difficulty with accepting the fact that, at a certain stage in an athlete's development and achievement, full-time sport, supported by funds from the lottery, is an appropriate way to proceed.

Mr. Lord: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for clarifying that point. He raises two important points. The first involves the question of subsidisation from somewhere for these people. Secondly and more important, in athletics and in my own sport of rugby union, if it goes the way that I fear it may, all children of parents who would formerly have had careers and studied during the years when they were perhaps at their athletic best, will now have to make that choice. Many will choose careers and so Roger Bannister and Chris Chataway will never happen again. The only people who will pursue athletics will be those who do not care whether they have a long-term career. That will cut many people out of it.

Mr. Campbell: It is a question of choice in the sense not of either-or, but of how much emphasis one puts on one as opposed to the other. It will still be possible for people to play rugby for recreational purposes, even if only for the beer, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his speech, and for people to use track and field athletics to keep fit, rather than to compete at the highest level, but they will have to make that choice.

The intensity of the sport is in some respects mirrored by the intensity of professional requirements. I do not think that it would be possible for me to do what I did when I was a student, not only because of the intensity of sporting competition, but because of the intensity of academic requirement. People will be forced to make that choice.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): How is it possible to turn an intervention into a speech? [HON. MEMBERS: "It is a speech."] I beg your pardon. I am so sorry. I offer grovelling apologies to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell: Can I have that in writing?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It will be in *Hansard*.

Mr. Campbell: I hope that you will not take it amiss, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I say that I expect to dine out on that for some time.

One thing has certainly been demonstrated. As yet we cannot tell whether it is a direct consequence of the lottery, but there has been a fall in the income of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and of the Football Trust, to which the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made extensive reference. Those alterations in income must have consequences for the extent to which those worthwhile organisations are able to fulfil their original responsibilities. In due course, we shall have to reconsider whether it is as a direct consequence of the establishment of the lottery that those reductions have taken place.

Another thing is unclear: the extent to which local authorities may reduce their discretionary expenditure on sport and recreation in reliance instead on lottery funding is not yet understood. There will therefore have to be careful analysis of the total amount of spending on sport and recreation that is carried out by those with responsibility for it.

Drugs is a topic in which I have taken a particular interest since I first entered the House. I have tried unsuccessfully to introduce private Members' Bills to make anabolic steroids controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

A series of Ministers of State at the Home Office—the right hon. and learned Members for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and the right hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—all promised some legislation. The most recent position was that it was the stated intention of the Home Office that there should be legislation to provide that the supply of anabolic steroids should be a criminal offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

That legislation is yet to emerge. Perhaps it is too much to hope that it will be the centrepiece of the Queen's Speech, but I know the Minister is seized of its importance. Might I exhort and encourage him, if keeping up the pressure is the way in which the Home Office can be persuaded to accept that it ought to implement the obligations it has given on that matter, to continue to do so?

I do not suggest for a moment that making anabolic steroids controlled drugs, to the extent that the Government have suggested that they might be willing to consider, under the 1971 Act will remove the problem of drug taking in sport, as there is also an educational requirement. Someone mentioned ethics. It is a question of persuading and encouraging people to understand the ethical considerations involved. Legislation that had at its heart an effort to deal with the supply of anabolic steroids would be an important weapon in the fight against drug taking in sport.

Mr. Sproat: I well remember the powerful arguments that the hon. and learned Gentleman has directed at me, which I attempted to direct as powerfully to the Home Office. He will be extremely pleased to know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary hopes to table an order bringing anabolic steroids under the control of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 very shortly.

Mr. Campbell: I might be dining out on that as well, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take a great deal of pleasure in

hearing that announcement. I must associate myself with my colleague in these matters, the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and with the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). Together, the three of us have made a continuing effort in that regard and I think that we would all want to thank the Government for responding and to take pleasure from the Minister's announcement. I am extremely grateful.

There is no doubt that there are considerable financial pressures on local authorities over playing fields. Perhaps I should declare something of an interest, as I have acted on behalf of appellants at planning inquiries who sought to carry out housing developments on playing fields. One important consideration should be borne in mind. It is not merely the acreage of playing fields that is important, but the quality. We have all seen playing fields that, frankly, are a danger to anyone who plays sport on them and where the supporting facilities, such as dressing rooms, showers and so forth, are wholly inadequate.

There may, therefore, be some scope, if not for prohibiting the sale of playing fields in all circumstances, for saying that it should be a condition of any planning development—as an element of planning gain—that the developer must maintain part of the site and provide enhanced facilities, if the major part of the acreage is developed, thus ensuring that the opportunity of using the playing fields is not entirely removed.

It is worth pointing out that it is not merely a case of school playing fields, as many large institutions, such as those hospitals in which we used to incarcerate anyone with any kind of mental disability, have substantial playing fields. The preservation of those fields and the extent to which they can be made available to the public is another issue worth considering.

On structure, most people who have an interest in these matters welcome the rationalisation of the structure of the sports councils, which the Minister first announced and is about to implement. I hope that I will not embarrass him when I welcome him as a convert to the concept of federalism, because he has created a United Kingdom Sports Council, under which there are to be four councils with proper representation for all the home countries—England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Often, these questions of structure are less important in theory than in practice. The benefit that might accrue from the implementation of the Minister's decision is that there might be a much clearer demarcation of responsibility.

There is no doubt that there was a considerable period of uncertainty in all the sports councils while the proposals and counter-proposals were being debated. The Minister has therefore brought an element of certainty to a situation that went very much against the interests of the proper management and development of sport in this country. He is to be congratulated on that. All of us who have an interest in the issue wish the new arrangements success not only in theory but in practice.

It would be too cynical to say that the announcement of a debate on sport is a signal that the general election cannot be far away. However, if one examines the history of these debates, it becomes apparent that they have a remarkable capacity of coming up in the period not long before a general election. I do not want to make that observation—it would be much too cynical—but I must say that the Minister displayed a great deal of enthusiasm and, on some occasions, passion in his account of what he was about. The House welcomes that, but will welcome with just as much enthusiasm the opportunity to keep a close eye on the development of the matters to which he referred. I take this opportunity to ask the Minister to confirm to what extent the Government have implemented the plans contained in the document that has been central to our discussion.

12.40 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on what must be a world record intervention. I also congratulate him on the speed with which the Government reacted to his suggestion; that must also be something of a world record.

I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that it is slightly ironic that when something in the region of £300 million a year, potentially, is coming from the lottery for capital projects—we appreciate that facilities still have to be evened up across the country even though they have improved greatly over the past 20 years—people who have reached the top of their profession should still be living hand to mouth.

The current British doubles ice dance champion lives in my constituency. She told me that she had been living hand to mouth until she eventually got sponsorship. Would not it be better if part of the lottery funds were put into a trust fund to be used to cover the revenue costs of people who achieve such standards of excellence?

Having said that, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State on his promotion. It is not only well deserved personally but a proper reflection of the importance of the Department of National Heritage to our lives. I also congratulate him on the excellent initiatives contained in "Raising the Game". It may take 10 years, but I think that that document will have a revolutionary impact not only on participation in sport but on health, excellence and, I hope, social attitudes. I commend him for the enormously important work that he is doing.

I am sad that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) is no longer in his place because I should like to remonstrate with him. He talked in rather antediluvian terms about the great virtues of amateurism in rugby union and argued that the awful professional game of association football was played by the lower orders and was full of people who kick spectators and misbehave on the field. Frankly, the opposite is the case.

For too long, the Rugby Football Union, as we saw in the Select Committee on National Heritage, has been an organised hypocrisy that turned its back on people who wanted to play in another league and actively discriminated against them. Thank heavens it has seen sense in the past year and got its act together by coming to terms with the enormous and inevitable impact of the media on sport.

On the other hand, association football has sensibly and constructively taken advantage of the funds that have been made available to it by competing television companies—of which BSkyB is obviously the main one. It has got its act together and launched great initiatives.

Teams such as Arsenal, the Hammers, Aston Villa and Birmingham City—I have to say Birmingham City because it does the job so well and it is the premier team in the second city—have reached out to communities extremely constructively, exactly in tune with the "Raising the Game" philosophy.

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

I wish to speak about the dichotomy, or past dichotomy, between the amateur side of sport—the participation side—and the professional side of sport, into which so much money is now coming.

There are some curious contrasts in sport. If we consider sport on one level, we find that it thrives as never before. The latest census figures show that 29 million people take part in active sport at least once a month, and no fewer than 6.5 million people belong to sporting clubs. There are 150,000 clubs. As I said, although they may not be evenly spread throughout the country, facilities have grown to be better than ever before. That is so in my constituency, where some sporting facilities are not only excellent but, sadly, at the moment underused. I understand that there are about 1,100 swimming pools, 1,600 sports halls, 500 athletics tracks and even 99 dry ski slopes. More and more of them are being professionally run.

The national lottery pumps £300 million a year into sport and private sponsorship puts in about £250 million a year. Local authorities spend about £450 million on sport. The Sports Council makes a relatively small contribution, but the sum that it has received from the Government in the past 20 years to put into sport has increased in real terms. It puts about £50 million a year into sport.

There is therefore an enormous amount of activity. The total economic impact of sport has been estimated to generate about 460,000 jobs in this country. When one considers that it is the sporting events that break records on television, whether it be 23 million people watching Torvill and Dean at the most recent winter Olympics or 14 million people watching Nigel Benn fight Chris Eubank, one becomes aware of the hold that sport has on people's imagination, and many people take part in sport as well.

On the other hand, the figures for participation by young people are disappointing. We know that they spend too long watching television. The Minister mentioned the words "couch potato" and I suppose that that would account for many of those who spend 25 or 26 hours a week watching television and only an hour and 10 minutes a week doing sport in their schools.

Undoubtedly, the teachers' pay dispute in the 1980s had the effect that many teachers who previously were involved in extra-curricular activities reduced their commitment. However, to be fair, many teachers spend an enormous amount of time, often at their own expense, on Saturdays and after school, looking after and promoting sport, although it must be admitted that, perhaps as a result of the demands of the national curriculum, the number of people choosing to specialise in physical education at teacher training colleges has decreased, which is one of the reasons why the number of suitably qualified physical education teachers has gradually decreased.

All that leads to potential health hazards. The university of Exeter and the Health Education Authority, with Allied Dunbar, found that a third of men and two thirds of women could not negotiate a 1 in 20 slope on a walk for 10 minutes without being significantly breathless. In the 16 to 24-year-old age group, they found that 70 per cent. of men and 91 per cent. of women did not do enough exercise to avoid future heart or cardiovascular problems. Even at school age—that is, under 16—it was found that 50 per cent. of girls and one third of boys did too little exercise to guard against heart problems.

The problem was not so much the amount of exercise that schools allowed for—although as we have heard, many do too little—but the type of exercise. A report called "Health-Related Fitness in Secondary School Physical Education—a descriptive analytic study" prepared by the Somerset county adviser for health-related and physical education and by Exeter university academics—although for some reason it was funded by the university of Alabama—involved studying the work of physical education teachers carefully and in depth. It says:

"Although the 20 teachers in this study were clearly hardworking and dedicated professionals, they provided their pupils with limited opportunities in which to participate in the type of physical activity associated with health benefits, allocated no time for pupils to engage in fitness activity or acquire health-related fitness knowledge, and did not promote or demonstrate fitness."

What matters is not only the quantity but the quality of the physical education that takes place in schools. I hope that the Minister will take that fact on board when discussing such matters with the Teacher Training Agency. The high quality of physical education is as important as the amount of it.

However, although we have been saying that insufficient recruits for the British Army have the right upper body strength, that is not a new phenomenon. The Victorian age is often looked upon as a halcyon age when everyone was playing all sorts of team sports, but during the Boer war the country was so disappointed with the quality of its recruits that a committee on physical deterioration was set up to improve the situation. The problem is of long standing, and I congratulate the Minister on trying to tackle it.

Mr. Devlin: I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned the worries about physical deterioration, because that led on to the eugenics movement, and a significant improvement was made in the health and abilities of young people between 1918 and 1938. There was a further boost between 1950 and 1960, but from about 1960 onwards the fitness of the nation went back into decline. I believe that that was due to materialism rather than to poverty.

Mr. Coombs: Yes, there may be a direct relation between electronic and computer sophistication, and people's physical activity levels and therefore their fitness.

As I said, there is a dichotomy between the large sums pushed into one part of sport and the relatively low levels of proper fitness activity in another. In the context of "Raising the Game", although more inspection of schools by Ofsted is important, as is extra teacher training and the idea that schools, especially in the grant-maintained sector, may be allowed to specialise in sport, the most important part of the initiative lies in bringing the voluntary and professional sectors together. The £2 million from the Sports Council, although a relatively small sum, will be immensely valuable in improving links between schools and clubs.

In my constituency there is Stourport hockey club, which has a close relationship with King Charles school in Kidderminster, and Stourport athletics club, which has close relationships with Stourport schools. We also have

Kidderminster Harriers, which should have been a football league team but was robbed of that opportunity. That team too has a close relationship with several schools through its coaching clinics.

Mr. Lord: I am sorry that I missed my hon. Friend's remarks about me. I have popped out of the Chamber only a couple of times this morning, yet it seems that the moment I leave, people start saying things about me. I am being described as some sort of out-of-touch buffer. But I have received a letter from Ian Beer, the ex-president of the RFU, which says that he is entirely supportive of what I am doing. It might also be of interest to the House to know that—while it was not at the right university as far as I am concerned—Simon Halliday, who is a lot younger than I am and has a large number of England caps, spoke at Oxford university yesterday on professionalism in rugby union and said that he was entirely against it. The movement is growing.

Mr. Coombs: I hear what my hon. Friend has to say.

The relationship between clubs and schools is extremely important, and we must encourage it. We must get more active sportsmen and women into our schools as volunteers. I did that at schools and universities, and found it to be immensely valuable and rewarding. It can buttress the number of people who are available to take school sports.

It is equally important to give local companies an opportunity to sponsor school sports to a far greater extent than they do at present. Too often, companies regard school sports as forming a part of the public sector, and think that never the twain shall meet. We must make sure that some of the £250 million sponsorship money available every year gets to schools and clubs.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) said, the type of initiative that has been embarked upon by people such as Sir John Hall in Newcastle is not a step on the slippery slope to professionalism, but a sign of ensuring that professional resources are made available to communities, so that we can strengthen sport within local communities and make sure that more people have access to it. That can involve the private and public sectors.

I am immensely proud that, in my constituency, we have got the money together for a regional sports centre for a relatively small set of three towns. The first work on the centre is to be done in the next few months. How did we do it?. I pay tribute to the local authority—which is not Conservative-controlled—which has done a first-class job in bringing people, including the county council and local schools, together. We received a significant grant from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, and local clubs such as Stourport hockey club and the Stourport squash and tennis clubs have all sold land to help us put money into the pot. That has now been topped by a magnificent grant from the lottery of £1.5 million. That is a classic example of the voluntary sector, the state sector, local councils and the private sector coming together to produce a facility that will be enormously used and will be extremely valuable for the people of my area.

I end on that note. I applaud the Government's intention, and I applaud "Raising the Game", which will be crucial if we are to make a success of sport in this country. It is vital to ensure that the interface of the professional side of the game and the voluntary, or in old-fashioned terms, amateur side of the game is not criticised when one side moves to another, as we have heard this morning. That should be seen as part of a continuing movement towards a shared goal—everybody doing all that they can to bring more sport to more people at a higher standard than ever before.

12.59 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I shall mention the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) at the beginning, so he can feel free to leave the Chamber when he wishes. I do not know who is conveying to him that he is an "old buffer", but it must be realised that the hon. Gentleman speaks for a lot of people who are concerned about the way sport is going. I do not agree with what you said about rugby union, but I am glad that you made your views known.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I remind the hon. Lady that she is addressing me, rather than the hon. Gentleman?

Miss Hoey: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the beginning of a new Session, or nearly the beginning of a new Session, and obviously I had forgotten that requirement.

I share the concern that this debate is being held on a Friday. Since I entered Parliament, there have been about three debates on sport at different times. But perhaps only two or three more hon. Members would have been present if this were not a Friday, and that reflects how let down sport has been by Parliament, even though hon. Members may have said many things in their own constituencies.

I welcome "Raising the Game" not necessarily for its content and detail but as a measure of the importance of sport and of the need for it to be central in social policy. The more that can be achieved without party political back-stabbing, the better. I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that all political parties can share in the future of sport. We do not serve sportsmen and women or the millions of people who enjoy watching and following different sports by always trying to identify policy divisions. There is strong agreement, as has been shown this morning.

Fundamental to any policy must be the opportunity for people at all levels fully to participate in the sport of their choice to the limit of their abilities. I strongly support the consultation paper's emphasis on team sports. There is no doubt that sports taught properly in schools are beneficial to young people in channelling their energy, aggression and competitiveness. We have seen standards fall in team sports in schools. Some people may think it old-fashioned to talk about team sport, good sportsmanship, obeying rules and self-discipline. If it is, I am proud to be seen as old-fashioned. Team and individual sports are not mutually exclusive and should not be played off against each other, but if youngsters do not get the chance at school to play team sports, many of them will not get that chance elsewhere. I am pleased that the Minister has considered the time to be given to sport in the school curriculum, although two hours is still too little. There should be greater emphasis on sports activities before and after school. There needs to be much more flexibility in the school day, and that applies not just to sport.

I welcome the plan for schools to account for their sports activities in their prospectuses. If sport matters enough to be included in a school's prospectus and to be

[Miss Hoey]

monitored, that will raise the status of staff in physical education and sports departments. I welcome also sports and PE inspections. When I intervened earlier, my concern was that Ofsted would not have enough resources—given all the extra things that it is already doing—to take on another commitment. I was not thinking in terms of money, but perhaps we can return to that matter later.

We must try also to get rid of the hang-up about compulsory competitive sports. There will always be youngsters who do not like participating in sport, as in any other type of lesson. I hated mathematics at school. I was hopeless at it, and probably still am, but I had to do maths because it was compulsory—and I probably got something out of those lessons. Of course teachers are sensitive these days to pupils' interests, so the idea of compulsion does not really alarm me. Any sensitive PE teacher or sports coach these days will not force a 14-year-old to do something against his or her will. But if there is no compulsion, and sport is not made central to the curriculum, its status will decline, as it has done in recent years. We should not therefore spend too much time in detailed argument about compulsion; it is the principle that matters.

The Minister did not fully deal with all the points in the document, some of which I should like to discuss now. I was delighted to hear him announce his drug education measures. The document itself does not contain much about substance abuse, but it is a growing problem from the top to the bottom of sport—it is no good pretending otherwise. There needs to be international agreement on how to tackle it. Fine words and resolutions agreed at European meetings are not enough.

The Sports Council runs a drug testing programme, but it does not publish the results of all who are tested. The drug testing programme needs much more transparency. The names of all who are tested and found not to have taken drugs should be published, as well as the names of those who have failed their tests. That would damp down speculation about the size of the problem. Those who pay good money to watch competitive sport should be in a position to know that an honest competition is taking place, untainted by drugs. The fear is that what we do now may be just the tip of an iceberg. That is why we need a highly organised campaign, run by sports organisations with the co-operation of the Government and schools, to educate young people about drugs. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the governing bodies to make sure that the sports that they govern are clean.

National vocational qualifications are not mentioned in the document, either. They allow many people to enter sports administration and coaching. The problems, however, lie with the bureaucracy and in-fighting which have delayed the availability of NVQs in many sports. But there is a great deal of demand for them, and I hope that the Minister will knock some sense into those concerned and sort out the difficulties between the Sports Council and the awarding bodies, so that NVQs become more widely available in sport.

There is general agreement that, without qualified coaches, sports development and talent spotting will for ever be handicapped, talent will be lost and participation stunted. I welcome the extra money going into coaching. We need to take action to promote training and the development of coaching in all sports at all levels, for without coaches and a national coaching scheme the work of the British sports academy will be put in jeopardy.

Sports coaches must also be given training in the ethics of sport, to enable them to proceed more sensitively when teaching vulnerable young people. Sport is not just about winning all the time, although that is exciting and wonderful; it is also about discipline and self-esteem. Role models are very important, and more and more of them are emerging from sport.

There has been a great deal of discussion recently of boxing and the martial arts. Perhaps the Minister would like to tell us about the current state of the law reform study considering the legal aspects of those activities. Did the Minister give evidence himself; may we be told what he said?

As for cricket, I declare my interest, having been lucky enough to be elected as the Member for Surrey county cricket club, as it were, and having now been elected on to the committee. The club has not been doing especially well on the cricket field but I can promise hon. Members on both sides of the House that that will change. Two of its fine cricketers, Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe, are currently members of the England team. England is today playing its first match at the Oval in Soweto. I am sure we all wish the England team the very best of fortune in its tour of South Africa.

Much more could be done for cricket. Local authorities of all political colours throughout the country are having to increase the hiring charges that they levy on cricket teams. Pitches are becoming poor and dangerous. Cricket in schools is being discussed but much needs to be done.

Girls' cricket has been extremely successful at all levels up to the women's England team. There is, however, a lack of facilities, such as poor changing rooms. Costs are increasing and generally poor facilities are detrimental to women's cricket. Even where there is a will, there is often the problem of lack of resources. There is also difficulty in ensuring that resources are brought to where they are needed. Last night I was pleased to host at the House the Test and County Cricket Board test match ground committee's meeting.

There is a determination among all the county clubs to do more and work for schools. Some may be slower than others but there is a determination throughout for changes to be made. The clubs know that if they do not begin to get the kids coming through, the long-term aim of getting a better international cricket team will not be realised. Substantial sums from the national lottery will have to be used to increase the capacity of test grounds. The money that is generated by test matches on the few days when they are played can then be pushed down to the grass roots. I have an interest, of course, in ensuring that Surrey county cricket club receives extra money so that the capacity of its ground can be increased. As part of the deal the club is working closely with the local authority and the Sports Council to ensure that community facilities, in an extremely poor area, are improved and that everybody will benefit, not only those who like to watch cricket, including test matches.

I was concerned by the attack of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) on London, as he would expect me to be. I hope that the Minister will say something about the national stadium. It is crucial that a decision is taken. I know that there are supporters of Birmingham on the Government Benches. Along with the

hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), I worked extremely hard to have London accepted as the site for the Olympic games a few years ago. We felt that it was the only place in the United Kingdom that could realistically host them. It is pleasing that the British Olympic Association now agrees with us that London is the only place that will ever bring the Olympic games back to this country. The association takes the view that it will be London and nowhere else.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend will agree that there is no local council representing London. There is no Greater London council. We all know that the Government abolished it. That is one of the great handicaps when it comes to bringing anything to London. After all, London has no governing body.

Miss Hoey: I am sure that my hon. Friend shares my confidence that the next Labour Government will introduce a Greater London authority. It will not be, I am sure, like the old GLC. I am confident, however, that it will be an authority that will bring London together. But there is already in London a great deal of co-operation and co-ordination. London First and many other organisations in the business community and the private sector are involved. We still have the City of London. There is unity in London. The BOA is backing London. It has decided not to continue its support for either Manchester or Birmingham.

We talk about what comes to London and what goes out of London but we must not forget that London is the capital. On the whole, tourists want to come to London. All the other bids in the past have included bits about London, for example, visits to Buckingham palace—all the nice bits about London—as a way of attracting people to come to Manchester and Sheffield. If we did win the Olympic bid for London, the benefits to the whole of the United Kingdom would be fantastic. Wembley is a brand name across the world. People know what Wembley is. One does not have to spend millions of pounds on marketing it, so we already have an advantage. I think that the combination of the new stadium at Wembley, with its very imaginative design—I am not an architect, but to me it looks very imaginative—allowing the athletics to continue, and the whole system that is already in place there means that it has to be the location for the national stadium, although I appreciate that hon. Members have views on their own areas. I remind hon. Members that Wembley is already building a new underground station.

I shall make a quick point about swimming, as it has been given only one mention in the document, and I do not think that any positive plans have been announced for the extension of swimming pool opening hours. Again, it is a local authority problem. It is very remiss that the document makes virtually no mention of local authorities. One cannot ignore them. The Minister may not like some of the things that they have done, but they cannot be ignored, and they have to be brought on board. We have to learn from the good things that they have done and be able to use that. Swimming is one of those areas where the local authority has to be central. For people of all ages, swimming is the greatest physical recreation. As a competitive sport, it is also exciting, and Britain has had a successful record. I would like the Minister to say something about where he sees recreational swimming, competitive swimming and diving fitting into the development of sport.

We know about the wonderful role of volunteers, sports administrators and so on. I do not think that anyone can question the amount of voluntary effort that goes into sport. I am sure that the Minister will praise all those people who do so much at their own expense, but within "Raising the Game" there is nothing about the quality of administration. I wonder whether we need to look at bringing the quality of our administrators, who are so important in the governing bodies, up to a higher level.

Whatever happened to ice skating—I was going to say whatever happened to Torvill and Dean—and the plan for a stadium when Richmond closed? It was promised that Richmond ice rink would be replaced. I am sure that other boroughs would be interested in a new national ice centre. I could offer one area in my own borough, Streatham, that has great experience and is an obvious site.

I now deal with the national game—football. I do not share the optimism of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw about how wonderful everything is in football. Yes, attendances are up and there are lots of new all-seater stadiums, but if we are honest—I am not talking about some of the things that have happened off the field—we must recognise that football has changed. Perhaps that is what people want. Perhaps they want to see a different type of supporter, but there is absolutely no doubt that many football supporters have been driven out because of the cost. They cannot afford to go. They certainly cannot afford to go regularly. There is no doubt that many clubs have abused the loyalty of their fans in terms of what people have to pay.

I am pleased that the Football Supporters Association, which is one of the most progressive organisations in football, has been taken on board and been given funding to work with the football authorities for the European championships next year. The Football Supporters Association shares the concern that football has changed. It is all very well looking at things in the short term, but if the Football Association and the governing bodies of sport generally are prepared to forgo the long term for short-term financial gains, that is very sad. I think that there will be some serious problems over the way in which football has been treated in a short-term way, how the money is being used, and how it is not trickling down to the lower divisions as it used to. To return to the pyramid mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, if we do not have a broad football base at local park and school level, the Premier league will ultimately suffer.

Last January I called in the House for an independent inquiry into the state of our national game and, particularly, the allegations of corruption, bungs, alleged match fixing and greed. I think that the Minister responded then by expressing his complete confidence in the Premier league's own inquiry. I hope that he will return to that point. I wonder whether he still has complete confidence in the Premier league inquiry getting to the bottom of the matter.

It will be two years next week—4 November—since the Premier league commission was set up to inquire into allegations of undercover payments during transfer deals and into the role of agents in an attempt to restore the public's faith in the propriety of football. So far there has been one report on the transfer of John Jensen from the Danish club, Brondby, to Arsenal, which resulted in George Graham being banned from football for 12 months.

[Miss Hoey]

There is now a system of licensing agents. The FA kindly sent me a list of agents who have been registered. Some 16 agents are registered and have all put up £100,000, which is a measure of their confidence that they will not break the rules. But some agents who have registered are already beginning to ask: what is the point of registering if other people who still deal with players in this country have not registered? It is important that the FA requires FIFA to strengthen that system, or it will be brought into disrepute. Many clubs are still involved in transfers using agents who are not registered. Although the penalties in the documents seem to be severe, I am not confident that the FA will carry out the penalties. I shall not mention some of the agents involved who are not registered, but one or two of them certainly need investigating.

The original reason for setting up the Premier league commission of inquiry was to investigate the allegations of wrongdoing and bribes involving the transfer of Teddy Sheringham from Nottingham Forest to Tottenham. As we all know, it involved the England team manager, Terry Venables, and the former Nottingham Forest manager, Brian Clough. Some two years later there has still been no report on the subject. Terry Venables has not been cleared and new evidence has recently come to light.

Those of us who read *The Daily Telegraph*—I read the sports pages in particular—will have seen that on 30 September its sports correspondent, Mihir Bose, produced new evidence about the controversial Teddy Sheringham transfer in 1992. In a long article which, for legal reasons, does not contain everything, it was made clear that *The Daily Telegraph* had seen documents suggesting that the original invoice involved in the transfer might not have been the only invoice. I have also seen those documents.

It seems that, for some reason, two days before the invoice relating to the £50,000 payment to First Wave Sports Management was presented to Tottenham, another invoice was drawn up by another company. That was three days before Sheringham was transferred from Nottingham Forest to Tottenham in August 1992. That company specialised in naughty knickers—that was the description in *The Daily Telegraph*, not *The Sun*. That invoice, which was presented to Tottenham, was for the same amount and used the same wording as the invoice from First Wave Sports Management. Frank McLintock, who was at that time a partner in First Wave, presented the invoice to Tottenham and was paid £50,000 plus VAT in cash. Tottenham did not pay on the invoice from the Naughty Nighties company and knew nothing about it until very recently. *The Daily Telegraph* published it, and the Silver Rose International Ltd. invoice states:

"For the assistance in arranging a distribution and merchandising network on behalf of THFC in the USA, to include travel and all consultancy work involved in the project—£50,000."

No one denies that the First Wave one was paid. It states on that invoice:

"For the assistance in arranging a distribution and merchandising network on behalf of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club in the United States, to include travel and all consultancy work involved in the project."

Obviously, someone somewhere was trying to launder money and, let us be blunt, launder it out of Tottenham. Because of the work by *The Daily Telegraph* and particularly Mr. Bose on this matter, Rick Parry, who is in charge of the Premier league commission, has stated:

"The evidence The Daily Telegraph has uncovered is interesting and very significant. It points the inquiry in a new direction and our lawyers are looking at it very closely. It is too early to say where it will lead to but we may have to recall some of the people we have already questioned."

I am delighted that Rick Parry is saying that because this is a serious issue and all those who have been involved from day one know that there is much more to come.

It may be difficult for the Premier league commission to accept that it does not have the power to get to the bottom of this matter. It cannot subpoena witnesses and it took over a year for it to get Brian Clough to turn up. Nobody is on oath and that makes it difficult to elicit evidence. Much of the story came out afterwards when people in the media asked questions.

We may have to accept that this issue is too big and cosy for the football authorities to investigate. I do not think that there is any secret about the fact, although it may not yet be public knowledge, that the Department of Trade and Industry investigation division is currently looking into an allegation that Terry Venables may have committed an offence that is contrary to section 47 of the Financial Services Act 1986 in that he may have made a misleading, false or deceptive statement in an offer document. I understand that other matters are being investigated and that there may soon be some developments.

I do not want to go into the business side of these issues because I am interested only in what is happening in football. However, such matters leave a big question mark over who is in charge of football, and who is our national coach. We are soon going into the European championships and we must get to the bottom of this. The Minister must waken up to the fact that large amounts of public money are going into football and that ultimately he and Parliament have a responsibility to make sure that such things do not happen.

As I said in January, the problems in our national game are far too close to home for the football authorities to cope with by themselves. Football culture has traditionally turned a blind eye to wrongdoing. Can we really expect those inside the game to do other than keep quiet and hope that all these problems will go away? They will not go away, and unless the Minister and Parliament take an active interest, such back-hander deals will continue, no matter what changes are suggested or how much the Premier league and the FA say that they are all being sorted out. They will not be sorted out unless someone is prepared to take an interest.

I started on a positive note because I appreciate that what the Minister has said is a great step which allows scope for all-party support. There is huge support for sport in Britain but I am sorry to say that if we cannot get our national game right and sort out the mess, it will not bode well for the future of football or any other sport.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, may I point out that unless the succeeding speeches are somewhat shorter there will be some disappointed Members?

1.29 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I shall endeavour to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker. With regard to the previous speech, I simply say that as a London Member of Parliament I support the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) in her strong support for retaining Wembley as this country's central stadium. Its name is well established and, rebuilt, it will be a fine stadium. The Olympics can go nowhere but London. I supported the last bid for the Olympics to come here and I am supporting the next one.

Without disrespect to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), the Labour party's spokesman on sport, whom I regard highly, I must say that he did not give me anything like satisfaction when I invited him to support me in my endeavours to keep the important playing fields of Dormers Wells high school, which the Labour council in Ealing is determined and doing its damnedest to sell for housing development. It is no use talking about what a Labour Government would do; I should be more impressed with a commitment now to the effect that the council is behaving outrageously in its efforts to sell school playing fields. If Labour policy is as the hon. Gentleman suggests, why does the Labour party not come out and condemn that Labour-controlled council and support me in my strong efforts to save those playing fields for the children in that part of Ealing?

It is not just that I could do with support, if Members really believe in sport and in saving playing fields, but the same council rightly opposed an application by British Rail to develop housing on the Great Western Railway sports playing fields, which have been there for nearly 100 years. I worked up a public meeting of 400 to 500 people to oppose British Rail on that. Ealing council's chairman of planning came running in at the last minute, when I had got the meeting and the whole region 100 per cent. behind me, and said that the council would refuse planning permission. However, the council's action in refusing planning permission in relation to privately owned playing fields while pushing for the sale of its own publicly owned playing fields has given British Rail the right and the arguments with which to appeal for the destruction of those lovely playing fields in west Ealing.

In a double whammy of the nastiest kind, therefore, we could lose both Dormers Wells playing fields and the GWR playing fields, which are in a very built-up part of west Ealing. If those playing fields go as a result of the devious behaviour of Ealing Labour council, playing facilities will be taken from hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children and older people. I cannot understand how the Labour party can stand by and say, "We oppose the sale of playing fields—give us the credit and give us your votes," while behaving like that: it does not wash and we do not like it.

I have been to the GWR playing fields, which British Rail is trying to dispose of, a number of times recently and found all the tennis courts, rugger and soccer pitches, and bowling greens—all the facilities that one could imagine—packed with people of all ages. It was a thrilling sight to see every inch of those playing fields taken up and used, but for the reason that I have given they are in danger.

If the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde would join me in writing to the Department of the Environment saying that those fields should not be developed, I would be grateful. It would be helpful and would add ballast to what so far have merely been pious sentiments. I do not say that in a mean spirit as I regard the hon. Gentleman as a friend, but I ask him to do that.

Ealing Labour council set out to privatise public facilities which have been running for many years and has laid down such severe criteria that developers are coming in with bids that will give that council lots of money. It already has £17 million in reserve and is not short of money. The criteria on which it is encouraging bids are so severe that my constituents will be priced out of using the facilities. The Ealing northern sports centre is to be privatised in such a severe fashion that my constituents will have to pay £50 when until now they have paid £10. What does that Labour council think that it is doing? At the same time, the Opposition say how keen they are on sport. The same will happen to Northolt Swimerama, which is in an area where it is much needed, and to the Gurnell pool in west Ealing. There again, the developers have been set such tight criteria that their bids will price many of my constituents out of using those facilities. Rich people will be drawn in from around and about, but I do not see the future in that. I do not know what the Labour party thinks it is doing.

Less controversially, or perhaps more controversially, but in a different field, I must say a word or two in support of boxing as that great sport has been so severely attacked. There is no one who does not regret damage to a boxer and there is no question but that the death of Jim Murray moved and hurt the nation. It was especially stirring when his father said on television two days after his tragic death that Jim would have wanted the sport to continue and that he himself would continue to support it.

I speak as vice-chairman of the all-party parliamentary friends of boxing group. I do not believe that any legal process could succeed in outlawing the sport of boxing. It would go underground and be pursued in rough forms in all sorts of undesirable places and money would change hands. Whether we like the sport or not, we have no alternative but to live with it and to try to enhance it.

Boxing is the noble art of self-defence, not of knocking your opponent's block off, damaging his brain and all the rest of it: that is not the object of the sport. While I warmly welcome the recently announced proposals of the British Boxing Board of Control to make the sport more supervised, both medically and while fights are in progress, I would go further and give the medical authorities the right to stop a fight, as they can in America. I hope that that right will be conceded.

I want the sport of boxing to be encouraged in schools—it is still practised in some, but far fewer than formerly—as a suitable sport for boys. If it is felt that there is far too much readiness on the part of those teaching it to young boys to encourage them to go for the head, I should like it to be made illegal for the head to be punched at schoolboy level. If boxers were simply attacking or defending their own bodies and the head were left out, one could continue with the sport, as it would be acceptable to parents and thus the practice would increase in schools.

Boxing is a useful sport in schools. I was a schoolmaster for 23 years. If there was an altercation between two boys and they could not settle their argument in any other way, I could say, "I don't want you fighting outside school or anywhere else, but you can get in the ring and be properly supervised—would you like to do

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

that?" Sometimes they would say, "No, we've finished," and sometimes they said yes. It was a way of resolving nasty differences between boys in a properly supervised manner.

Due to pressure of time I shall not speak for much longer, but I must point out that some other sports are much more dangerous than boxing. Riding, for example, is one of my best loved sports. No one loves horses and riding more than I do. I have ridden the horse that Mark Davies, a famous event rider, used to ride and, indeed, trained. I saw Mark Davies die while event-riding. It was an accident that could have happened to anyone. I have tried to get this message across before, but more people died in the Cairngorms last winter than have died in 50 years of boxing. That should be remembered. Motor racing can also be lethal, but one cannot stop the adventurous spirit of men and women or their wish to compete in sometimes dangerous activities. We should seek to minimise the danger while maximising that adventurous spirit and giving it full reign.

I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that team games in school are crucial and that we should bring them back where they have been abandoned because they develop the character. I also know from my own experience that sixth formers in particular gain a great deal from competing in individual sports against themselves or against an environment, as happens in mountaineering. There is certainly a place for that approach and I commend it.

1.40 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): One cannot underestimate the significance of sport and sports people in the lives of youngsters, especially those in the inner city. In my area of Hackney, sportsmen and women are considered far more important and heroic than mere Members of Parliament.

As the Minister said in his introductory address, one of the important things about sport is the values that it can teach. The document "Raising the Game" states early on:

"Sport can provide lessons for life which young people are unlikely to learn so well in any other way."

One of the values that sport, the administration and practice of sport and the behaviour of spectators should demonstrate is a commitment to equality and anti-racism. My remarks deal with the experiences of some black sportsmen and women and with racism in sport.

In many ways, sport is multiracialism in action. Since the war, it has been noticeable that an ever-increasing number of black Britons have represented this country with dignity and a remarkable degree of success: 50 per cent. of Britain's athletics squad is black, 50 per cent. of current British boxing champions are black, and 25 per cent. of our professional footballers are black. There are rising ethnic minority stars in many sports.

At many levels, however, there is still evidence of racial discrimination, whether in the attitude of those at the top of the sport or in that of spectators. That is the experience of sportsmen and women. Despite the central role that sport plays in our life—the many hours devoted to sport in the media and the number of Members of Parliament who enthuse about it—there is almost a conspiracy of silence about racism in sport.

Racism in sport can deter black spectators from attending sporting events. We have been talking about how to increase involvement and participation in sport, but the fact that some people still feel unable to attend a football match because of the atmosphere and some of the chanting does not help to make them more sports-minded. Racism can put great pressure on young black sportsmen and women and cut off their career opportunities. In some sports, it can deter inner-city young people from getting involved. For instance, although there may be a great many black participants in football, young black people and people from the ethnic minorities are noticeable by their absence from sports such as tennis, swimming and even some club rugby union and club cricket.

Racism operates at many levels. One of the problems is still the attitude at the very top. One of the most disgraceful recent incidents, which shocked many people, was the article in *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, which tried to make out that black people—simply because of their colour—could not play cricket for England with the same commitment, determination or passion as people with white skins. As recently as yesterday, Philip de Freitas was awarded damages for that article, as was Devon Malcolm. I want to say, on behalf of anyone who is a cricket lover, whatever the colour of their skin, that that article was a tremendous slur on black and Asian people who play for England at a national or county level and I am surprised that that publication ever considered it worth publishing.

Friends and colleagues who are more familiar with the world of football than me say that, in many ways, attitudes of managers have moved on in recent years. However, not so long ago, even in football, where black footballers have excelled, managers had some very prejudicial attitudes to black players.

I recall Jim Smith, who was then manager of Queen's Park Rangers, saying that black players use very little intelligence and get by on sheer natural ability. It used to be very common for football managers to say that black footballers may have had flair but that they did not have the work rate, did not want to work and did not like the cold. I do not hear that so often now, but it was not so long ago.

Sadly, racist chanting and the flinging of bananas on the pitch continue. When I hear, from people who are now friends of mine, what they had to put up with as young black professionals going on to the pitch, I wonder at their nerve, determination and courage. How many of us could go on to a sports pitch and stand thousands of people chanting abuse at us because of the colour of our skin? Thankfully, that has lessened in recent years, as many of the top teams have star black players. However, as recently as last season, Derby County was forced to take its two black players off the field during a match against Millwall as a result of the racist chanting of Millwall supporters.

Football spectators are not the only offenders. Martin Offiah, who is a rugby league star, has said:

"Black players still get taunts at nearly every game, and occasionally you can still get banana skins thrown at you."

A recent survey found that every black and Asian player in professional rugby league has suffered racial abuse at some time.

Club cricket and club rugby were mentioned earlier. I have not played sport since I was at school, but I have friends and relatives who are enthusiastic players of

cricket and rugby. When they were at school and occasionally went out into the home counties or the shire counties to compete against some of those clubs at rugby or cricket, they did not meet—at least in the club room afterwards—a positive attitude which would have encouraged them, as young men from inner-city Brixton or Hackney, to continue playing those games once they left school.

We must consider some of the social attitudes surrounding club rugby union and club cricket if we want to find the answer to the question why fewer young black people and fewer inner-city young people than we would like remain involved in sports once they leave school.

The issue in relation to race that is most controversial is the incidence of racism and fascism among supporters. Everyone in the House was ashamed by the display put on by supporters of England at the match in Dublin last year. We read regularly about the incidence of organised racism, about Combat 18 and—more frighteningly—about the extent to which small but organised fascist groups of supporters throughout Europe are linking up to abuse and attack players when our English national team goes abroad. I want, and I know that many black sportsmen want, the Football Association and many football clubs to take a strong position on that. It is difficult for black sportsmen and sportswomen to speak out about that issue because, if they do so, they are thought of as whingeing and not showing a British stiff upper lip. That is partly why I welcome the opportunity to raise the issue in the House.

In Italy, where there was especially bad racist abuse of two young Dutch players, there was a day of action, and a banner reading "No to racism" was worn by all the players. I and many people, including some of our sportsmen and sportswomen, want the clubs, organisations and officials to be much more vocal and more definite and to play much more of a leadership role in making it clear to spectators that racist abuse and racist chanting are unacceptable in football and other games. Specifically, I want the Football Association to support more strongly the Commission for Racial Equality campaign, "Let's Kick Racism out of Football." Some clubs have done a great deal. Sheffield Wednesday, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is director, has played a leading role but there is more to be done. The fact that individual black men and women in football and other sports cannot speak as openly about it as they would like does not mean that it is not still an issue.

One cannot play sport as a competitor for ever, so some thought should also be given to how possible it is for black sportsmen who leave active sport to move on to coaching and management. Strangely, there is not one black coach or manager in the football league at present. If we are good enough to play, why are we not good enough to manage or coach?

I have already said how significant sport and sportsmen are for our young people, especially the type of young people in Hackney whom I represent. On issues such as racism, sportsmen can play a leadership role and encourage values. It is time to end the conspiracy of silence, and time for people with influence in sport, such as the sports administrators and some of my colleagues in the House, to take a more positive lead. When apartheid was still in place in South Africa, it used to be fashionable among Tory Members of Parliament to say that we should not mix sport and politics. But sport has always played a role in society—setting standards, inculcating values and demonstrating what society believes in.

Not everyone in the House remembers the 1936 Olympics, but we all know what happened there, when Jesse Owens, the black American sprinter, won four gold medals and said more by his performance than anyone could have said in words about the shame and indignity of Nazism and about segregation in his own country, the United States of America. If sporting administrators and people of influence in sport—important people such as Members of Parliament—took racism and racist abuse more seriously and gave a lead, that would say more than mere words and speeches ever could about what we as a society think about equality and justice for all people, regardless of their colour.

1.51 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I am sorry to have to follow the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), because I profoundly disagree with what she said. The Minister of State picked up on an item this morning in the "Today" programme—I do not know whether the hon. Lady heard it—about Devon Malcolm in Soweto encouraging young black Africans to take part in sport. They are turning up in their thousands to see the English cricket team, and trying to emulate them.

Surely that is a classic example of how sport can start to break down the ethnic and social barriers. People who play team sports and other sports have to rub shoulders with each other. Sometimes they win, sometimes they lose. It seems to me that that breaks down ethnic and social barriers more quickly than almost anything else.

Ms Abbott *rose—*

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I shall give way to the hon. Lady, but time is short.

Ms Abbott: Time is short, but I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman was listening to what I said. The question I asked about what happened to Devon Malcolm was: why should someone who plays with such courage for England, and who is doing good work in South Africa, have to read the sort of slur that he saw in *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, implying that simply because of the colour of his skin he was not playing his heart out for England? That was my point, and the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) could not have been listening to it.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I hear what the hon. Lady says. Nevertheless, probably 25 per cent. of our cricket team are now from ethnic backgrounds. I remember when Basil d'Oliveira was one of the first ethnic people to play in our cricket team, but now we are becoming a multi-ethnic sporting nation, and we are all the better for it. We should play up those advantages rather than always emphasising the divisions in our society.

I warmly welcome the policy and the document issued today. The Prime Minister wrote in the preamble:

"My ambition is simply stated. It is to put sport back at the heart of weekly life in *every* school."

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

He also said that he wanted

"to bring every child in every school within reach of adequate sporting facilities by the year 2000."

That is an exemplary goal for which to aim.

Many hon. Members have said that throughout our history we have not been especially well equipped with sporting attributes. We have forgotten the lessons that the Greeks and Romans taught us about the necessity for physical fitness and sporting competition as part of a complete education. We forgot that during the 1960s and 1970s, when so many other ills affected our education system. The nation was deemed to be very unfit during recruitment for the second world war, and that is why the training and recreation legislation stated that sport should be given a greater priority.

My hon. Friend the Minister pointed out that television and other media aids have resulted in children today spending far too much time in a sedentary way of life, instead of a physical way of life in which sport is the primary activity. I have thought for a long time that the school day of 8.30 am to 3.30 pm is far too short, and I welcome the teachers who are good enough to give up their time off for free to teach extra-curricular sporting activities. That is to be welcomed, and teachers should where necessary be rewarded for doing that.

I realise that time is getting on, and I shall make my remarks very brief. I should like to bring to the attention of the Minister a problem with a school in my constituency. It is an excellent school, which caters for children aged from eight to 16 years, and it has built a lavish sports hall. The hall was built following a great community effort and with the assistance of grants from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Sports Council.

The school, which is grant-maintained, has now run into a problem with VAT. It received a grant from the Department for Education and Employment to cover an increase in VAT, but a condition of the original grants from the two bodies was that the school had to use the hall for the local community. That is quite right, and everyone would expect that. But the school has run into the VAT trap. If more than 10 per cent. of the use of the hall is by the community, the school will get clobbered for VAT on the entire capital value—including the grants—of the sports hall. In this case, the VAT would amount to some £40,000 or £50,000.

I have taken the matter up with the Department for Education and Employment and with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, but I have not received satisfactory replies. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister—who knows about the problem as I have spoken to him about it privately—to make representations to the Treasury to see whether we can find a way round the problem. It would be unfortunate for all that community effort to be jeopardised.

I welcome a number of things in the paper, and I shall mention one or two in the time available. I particularly welcome the fact that the national lottery is to put £300 million into sport, of which £100 million will go to a new national academy. I wish to make one or two suggestions for that academy. The sports councils were required to submit a plan, as my hon. Friend said, by September, but it has not been mentioned whether that was adhered to. The tenders are to be let by mid-1996, and we hope that the national academy will be built fairly soon thereafter. I hope that that timetable does not slip too much.

The national academy should be built along the lines of the excellent academies that we have. We must look at them and see which sports are well represented, and we must make sure that other sports that are not so well represented at present are included in the national academy.

My hon. Friend the Minister has been to Adelaide to look at its national academy, and I hope that our academy will provide scholarships to allow our best and most talented sportsmen to go to foreign institutes of sporting excellence. By doing that, we can start to encourage exchange visits to our academy, so that our young sportsmen can mix with sportsmen from other countries. They will gain enormously from doing so.

The policy document encourages all schoolchildren to take a greater part in sport. It also mentions the further and higher education sector, where the greatest improvements could be made. There are 3 million students in further and higher education, yet only 20,000 of them regularly entered college competitions in 1993-94. We should encourage children not only to take part in school sports but voluntarily to continue their sporting activities into further and higher education and throughout their adult lives.

I commend my hon. Friend's actions in respect of the national lottery, which are an excellent way of starting to improve the nation's sporting abilities. The Chipping Campden swimming pool complex in my constituency has just been given a grant of £109,000 to improve its facilities for the benefit of not only that school but the whole community.

Like the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), I am keen that the excellent sporting facilities provided basically by public money through the lottery should be fully utilised. It is no use having a wonderful sports facility that is used only partly, during the day. It should be used during the day, in the evening and before breakfast as well. The lottery is beginning to involve local communities in that way. Deer Park school in Cirencester is an example of a way of encouraging children, adolescents and adults to participate in sport throughout their lives.

The whole nation feels better when we have a great sports triumph. We all remember England winning the World cup in 1966. We all feel joy when one of our football teams takes the European cup or when our sportsmen and women win Olympic gold medals. I hope that we shall win medals in profusion at next year's Olympics in Atlanta. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend's policy document will sow the seeds for the future, so that at successive Olympics—and I hope that we may look forward to the Olympic games being staged in London in 2004—sportsmen and women from all ethnic backgrounds representing the United Kingdom will be well up in the league table of gold, silver and bronze medals. That would be no small tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Minister and of the Government in producing their policy statement.

2.1 pm

Mr. Alan Keen (Feltham and Heston): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) has left the Chamber because his speech filled me with

nostalgia, when he mentioned the disabled and Thornaby. I remember playing table tennis against The Teesside Deaf team on many occasions. We had some great battles. They made up for the disadvantage of not being able to hear the ball bounce and come off the bat by making a tremendous noise throughout the game. I send them my best wishes all these years later.

I do not have time fully to combat the remarks of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), but I know that the Labour group on Ealing council would not be cutting back on sport and sports grounds were it not under such pressure from central Government. It is unfair to attack the council on that basis.

Sport is an integral part of the lives of many people, but many others have dropped it. We must encourage them to participate in sport again. For me as a youngster, sport was my one interest in life when there was little else to do. It is more necessary these days than for many years that people have the opportunity to involve themselves in sport—and not just youngsters. I was delighted to come out of cricket retirement last season, to be rewarded by a place on the Lords and Commons tour of South Africa. We enjoyed ourselves greatly and made some tremendous links. I was pleased to see the England team playing on the same Alexandra Township ground that we used, and at which the Prime Minister opened new facilities earlier this year. The England team opened the pavilion that was being built while we were there. Such links are well worth while.

I shall probably never reach the Opposition Front Bench, and even if I did it would be an anticlimax after sitting on the front bench so often at Premier league football grounds—frequently next to Jack Charlton in my previous life as a tactical scout for Middlesbrough. So I do not mind too much if I never reach the Front Bench here. I am happy to see the Premier league flourishing. Grounds are full, television gives the game great prominence, and the world's best players are coming to England for the first time in ages. All that is good.

We should also give some credit to the press. Good reporting has taken some of the heat and hatred out of games. It is useful to hear people such as Brian Glanville and Patrick Barclay discussing tactics before and after games, letting fans know that there is more to football than just bashing the ball from end to end. In the past, bad reporting gave the impression that a game played in September was the decider for the championship of London. That just gets fans agitated before the game even starts.

The good reporting that I have just mentioned contrasts starkly with the disgraceful—although tongue-in-cheek—article in the *Evening Standard* the other week criticising the transfer of Juninho to Middlesbrough. I welcome him and his family to Britain. He will bring flair, and more, to English football, strengthening our sporting links with other nations. I congratulate Middlesbrough club too.

Bill King, chair of the Vauxhall Conference, addressed those of us who serve on the Back-Bench football committee the other night. It was good to hear his attitude to maintaining the links between schools throughout the country, even in what are not always thought of as footballing areas. The conference provides the links to clubs through the process of relegation and promotion through to the football league. I agreed with the Minister about the need to involve teachers and to take some of the other pressures off them so that they can participate again as they used to when I was a youngster. That will help football to flourish.

I welcome the Minister's commitment to consultations on the centres of excellence. I am not completely comfortable with the whole idea. We do not want youngsters to be isolated from the rest of society. They need to be involved in normal school life and not start to think that they are special—that could harm them more than help them.

I am sorry that it took Mr. Murdoch and Sir John Hall to bring about the new thinking in rugby. I am also sorry that the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) said what he said. I was going to use the words "bone-headed prejudice", but perhaps I will not after all. I understand his views; people have enjoyed the sport as it is for many years and change is always difficult.

As for boxing, I voted against banning it the last time a vote was held. I am finding it hard now to sustain my point of view. As the hon. Member for Ealing, North said, swift moves must be taken to improve the sport; otherwise public opinion against it will become so strong that it will be hard to resist.

No one should doubt the value of sport. The youngsters in the townships of South Africa are in the same position as I was as a young child: sport is the only thing there is. I do not say for a moment that sport is all that is necessary to make South Africa flourish. It needs inward investment as well, but sport is playing a huge part, and I am proud that Britain has played her part in helping the townships of South Africa. I am sure that sport will help South Africa to flourish, to the benefit, eventually, of the whole of Africa.

2.9 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): As the general election reached its climax, I remember knocking on the door of one of my would-be constituents to introduce myself. I was greeted by a rather unhealthy-looking gentleman who said, "I don't have time to talk to you now because I am watching the election on television." That starkly brought home to me my personal lack of appeal and the grip that television has on people's lives. In many instances they seem to prefer to live in the fantasy world that is presented to them on the box than to experience reality. Anything that can be done to get people out of their chairs to engage in a healthy pursuit is a positive move. What can be better than sport?

I very much welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister and the paper that he published before the summer recess. The document sets out many major steps forward. It has been warmly welcomed in my constituency, which is especially well endowed with sporting facilities. For example, there is the national sports centre at Crystal Palace. It has been a centre of sporting activity for about 130 years. The original British Olympian Association was based there. W. G. Grace played there. Cup finals before the first world war were held there. It has been a national sports centre for just over 30 years. There are excellent facilities, including a large stadium, an Olympic-size swimming pool and a large sports hall. It manages to combine the staging of major international events alongside important community provision. It is so large that it is able to keep community provision running even when international

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

events are taking place. The centre is an important facility for my constituents and the borough and for the surrounding parts of London. It is strategically situated at the boundary point of five different boroughs.

Secondly, there is tennis at Beckenham each year. The event has been running since the last century and it is one of the major tennis events in the country. Indeed, it is an international event. It is privately sponsored and attracts the leading world players.

Thirdly, there is a profusion of private clubs and private provision. Some of the most well-known clubs in the country are based at Beckenham. The Park Langley club, for example, recently won a national award. There are also three major sports grounds attached to three international British-based banks. They are all in the small area of my constituency. I have an interest in sport, therefore, as have the majority of my constituents.

Fourthly, there is the role of the local authority. Bromley has a reputation of being one of the leading local authorities for the provision of sport. It carries out best practice. I hope that in the implementation of the policies that flow from my hon. Friend's paper he will take into account best practice and examples of the good provision that already exists. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) most persuasively, along with other valid comments, including the importance of reinvigorating school sport teaching. It is clear that the role of local authorities is important.

Despite the national sports centre's great reputation and past, it has problems, and two specific ones have been identified. First, it is in desperate need of modernisation in parts. An examination of the facilities immediately demonstrates that. The second problem is that it is funded entirely by the Sports Council. It cannot have access to any national lottery money because the Sports Council is a distributor. The centre is missing out when other comparative facilities in the area can attract generous funding. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to find some way of getting round that problem, of rearranging the structure or detaching the national sports centres from the Sports Council, in a way that will enable them to get their fair share of national lottery money. They are not asking for any more than their fair share, but they are in danger of being left behind by an unfortunate anomaly.

The national sports centre has another problem: access. That cannot be entirely solved. It happens, historically, to be in a place that was once very accessible, which is why the Crystal Palace was originally built there and why for many decades it attracted millions of Londoners every weekend, and, indeed, during the week as well. But the way in which transport has developed and the way in which the population has grown makes the area difficult to access now. I hope that means can be found to encourage the five London boroughs involved to work together more effectively to improve the road system that feeds Crystal Palace—it could feasibly be improved—and that the rail operators will consider ways of ensuring better services to the railway station there. I believe that, with co-ordination and encouragement, that could be developed to overcome the problem.

I now return to my comments about local authorities and will give a few examples of the way in which the London borough of Bromley has been so effective. Its own strategy document, "Building Partnerships through Sport", has provided a broad framework for encouraging sporting provision in Bromley and has stressed partnership opportunities. Bromley has a sports partnership fund, which is used to enable that to happen, and in particular an active lifestyles project, which is designed to encourage sport as a means of building health in the community. That has been praised by the Health Education Authority, which has described Bromley as a model borough. There are many examples of partnership with private operators to enable extra money to be put into sport in the borough. The result is that Bromley, which enters a full range of sporting events between boroughs, has succeeded in winning, for example, the swimming championship every year for the past nine years. It also plays an active role in the London youth games, which are held annually at the national sports centre at Crystal Palace.

For all those reasons, my hon. Friend's policies and his Department's policy document have been warmly welcomed in my borough. I hope that in implementing it he will take into account the points that I have made and the importance of the contribution that local authorities are making to sport, and that he will use the policies to encourage best practice to be followed even more, because I think that the entire population will be the beneficiaries from encouraging sport more readily, and my hon. Friend will get the credit that he deserves for giving the excellent lead that he has given in this area.

2.17 pm

Mr. Pendry: With the leave of the House, I begin by saying that this has been a very good debate. I am pleased that everyone who has wished to speak has been able to do so. That means by definition that both myself and the Minister will not be able to reply as much as we would like to the many points that have been made.

I hope that I was not too destructive in my opening remarks. I did not intend to be. I really meant, of course, that there is much in the document that we embrace. I was merely making the point that I recognised some of the parts of it from yesteryear.

Will the Minister clarify the status of the document when he replies? He calls it a consultative document; the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) calls it a White Paper; the Prime Minister calls it a press conference document; and the paper calls itself a policy statement. It would be nice if we knew exactly what it was.

I must say to the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) that I will not talk behind his back. I will not talk about what he said at all, only because of time—no discourtesy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), of course, knows a great deal about soccer, being a director of Sheffield Wednesday, but I concurred much more with my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) on football shirts for youngsters. I think that the pressure is on the families and on the mothers in particular, and that should be looked at.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) raised the question of the national stadium and many hon. Members pitched in with a good deal of passion. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) was rightly concerned about London being the rightful place for the

national stadium. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) was concerned that it should go to Birmingham, and the Sheffield case was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw. The bids that I have seen are all good and I should not like to be the person to have to make the decision.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) always makes a thoughtful contribution to such debates and I always enjoy them because he speaks with experience. I was pleased that he raised the plight of his constituent, an athlete with disabilities. He was right to make that distinction in the definition. The hon. and learned Gentleman, the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and I have written to a number of companies in an attempt to assist the Paralympics competitors to get to Atlanta. We have received some response, but not enough. When a review is made of the lottery, it should consider the hon. and learned Gentleman's case for a trust fund for athletes, not only for those with disabilities, but for young athletes who cannot make some of the meets that they need to attend in order to progress.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall, as well as making a passionate plea for London, made a number of other interesting points, including one about football and sleaze, with which she has been very much involved. She may not receive much satisfaction from the Minister of State, but the Labour party will shortly issue its football charter, which addresses the sort of issues that she has raised.

I think that I may have lost the friendship of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) half way through the debate. The Labour-controlled authority in which his constituency resides faces some difficult choices. It is difficult to pinpoint any particular authority—Labour or Conservative—that makes those difficult choices. I urge him to join me in making representations to the Minister of State to have circular 909 repealed—that would be a much more satisfactory way forward.

The subject of boxing has been placed in context. I declare an interest as a steward of the British Boxing Board of Control and chairman of the safety committee which, only this week, issued new safety guidelines. I am sure that hon. Members will have read them and realised that they are a step forward. I hope that I do not lose my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Keen) in the Lobby—I do not want to ban boxing as that would drive it underground and it would be a far more dangerous sport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington was right to raise the issue of racism in sport. I am pleased to have been associated with the campaign, "Let's Kick Racism out of Football." The FA, the Professional Footballers Association, the premiership and football supporters are all joining together on that issue. The Labour party's document on football clearly tackles that problem.

I knew that my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston used to be a scout for Middlesbrough, and I am pleased that that team is doing so well, but I did not know of his cricketing prowess. I must talk to him more about that. I know that he is a keen sportsman. I would not rule out the possibility of his finishing up on the Front Bench—he is far too modest.

I have a great deal of affection for the Minister of State—it may not always have come through in the debate, but I think that he is a good Minister and cares about sport. He puts in effort and I wish him well in his endeavours. He will have a few battles ahead, not just with the Department for Education and Employment, but possibly with the Treasury as well. I wish him well; we all wish to see a much better deal for sport in this country. The document points the right way on many issues and when the Minister of State faces that battle he can rely on our support.

2.23 pm

Mr. Sproat: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps I may say a few words in reply.

I should first thank the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for his kind words at the end of his speech. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) said that we tried to keep party politics out of this subject and today's debate shows that we succeed, more or less. Having made a long speech at the beginning of the debate, it is right that I have only a short time left in which to reply, and I will not be able to answer all the points raised. I have taken note of the issues relating to revenue funding and the need to support athletes.

I shall set at rest the mind of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde about what the paper is called—not that it matters a cuss what it is called because it is the biggest revolution in sport in 50 years. It is a policy statement and my wise officials tell me that it was not published as a White Paper because a price must be put on such a document and it must be distributed through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

We wanted to send the document free to every school in the country, which is what we did. We originally printed about 70,000 copies but had to print another 15,000. If it had been a White Paper, not a word in it would have been different—except for the price on the front cover.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde was a little grudging when he said that four months had elapsed since the publication of the document. It is actually 15 working days of the House, but whether it is four months or 15 days it is now with us. I want to make it clear that we did not mention the very important needs of the disabled in the paper for the same reason that we did not concentrate specifically on individual sports or matters of gender or race. The policy statement is for people of all abilities. Those are the words that we use in, I think, paragraph 3, although I do not make my defence on that. Of course we realise the importance of supporting the disabled and shall continue to do that. I have taken on board the remarks by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) about Miss Caroline Innes. He had the courtesy to tell me about that case and if he will write to me about it, I shall do everything that I possibly can.

I became so concerned about your predecessor in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, sitting on the edge of his seat after I had been speaking for a mere one hour and seven minutes that I cut my speech and did not say what I should have said about the regional councils for sport and recreation and the important role that I see for ministerial nominees. I want such nominees to continue,

[Mr. Sproat]

but as members of the sports councils in the regions. They will be rather like, although not absolutely the same as, non-executive directors of a subsidiary company. I or whoever makes the choice will choose five of those nominees from the 10 regions to sit on the English Sports Council so that there will always be a proper relationship between what people are thinking in the regions and what they are thinking at the centre.

I want the Sports Council and the regions to play an ever more important role and to concentrate on making certain that schools are doing all that they can for sport and that the links between clubs and schools become closer and more effective. That is why I have said that the Sports Council and the regions should step back from the old regional councils for sport and recreation. Local authorities will still be free to set up their own new forums, but I do not want to have national sports policy twisted and diverted—no doubt in many cases it would be well twisted—to the needs of local authorities.

The Sports Council has the precise aims that I have set out in the policy statement and I want it to concentrate on that and not get tied up in producing yet another strategy paper for sport and leisure in the next five years or for whatever period. I see important roles for the Sports Council, the regions and the ministerial nominees.

School playing fields have been mentioned yet again. I make it clear that the freedom given to schools to dispose in certain cases of their assets, subject to guidance from the Department for Education and Employment, was a good extension of their freedom. But that freedom, which was right in principle, operated badly and resulted in the selling of too many playing fields. We are currently consulting on the matter and I hope that in future the Sports Council will become a statutory consultee on whether a school playing field or any other playing field should be sold. It will be able to say no and its advice will have to be considered when decisions are made.

As well as stopping, I hope, the gratuitous selling of school playing fields we are making national lottery money available to buy back ground—not the same ground, obviously, because if a supermarket has been built on a former playing field it cannot be bought back, but an equivalent amount elsewhere for school playing fields. That is roughly how it will work.

We have here new structures—the United Kingdom Sports Council and the English Sports Council—and the enhanced role of the Sports Council in the regions. We will have new money from the national lottery. I hope that it is not just capital and that we will find a way to give some revenue funding, pace the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. The British academy of sport will be one way of helping top athletes.

We have the structure, the money and the vision, from schools right the way through to international excellence and gold medals. That is what the country has needed for a long time. I hope that the House will feel that it is getting that in this paper and I am extremely grateful—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the Speaker shall—

(1) at the sitting on Wednesday 1st November, put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Secretary Sir George Young relating to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion; and the said Motions may be proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock; and

(2) at the sitting on Thursday 2nd November, put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Parliamentary Procedure not later than two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion, those Questions including the Questions on any amendments to the said Motions which she may have selected which may then be moved.—*[Mr. Ottaway.]*

Solicitors (Complaints)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ottaway.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department to his position and am grateful for his attendance. I have had a brief conversation with him on this subject so that, I hope, his Department is not taken by surprise by the matters that I wish to raise.

In summary, this is what I might call an everyday tale of dissatisfaction with solicitors. It raises, however, important issues, of which the central one is how people should be able to have effective, efficient and speedy remedy against professional inadequacy.

I am conscious of two preliminary matters. First, I have an interest to declare—I am a barrister. I do not practise, although I am a member of chambers, but this matter is not an inter-professional dispute, and has arisen entirely since I ceased to practise regularly, and through my constituency work.

Secondly, all professionals—they include us—are at risk of not doing everything exactly as they should. The question is: where is the accountability, especially of those professionals who are paid money by clients or by the state, in this case, through the legal aid budget, to do a job, and then fail? This case is a good example of a bad case and it comes against the background of increasing dissatisfaction with the way in which complaints against solicitors are dealt with.

I have a constituent called Michael Sullivan who lives in Rotherhithe and who will be listening to this debate. He came to see me earlier this year. In summary, his case is as follows. In 1991, Mr. Sullivan employed solicitors to assist him with an application for a betting shop licence in Enfield. In the event, he did not succeed in obtaining the licence. As a result of instructing solicitors in that matter, he received a bill for £12,500, for what he was generally advised and from his experience believed to be a £2,000 job. He was also told by those solicitors that he had lost the deposit that he had put on the shop.

Mr. Sullivan was advised by those solicitors to take advice when they sued him for the £12,500, and so he went to another firm of solicitors to gain its assistance. It was instructed to represent him in defending the action from the first firm—a St. Albans firm called Brethertons—and was so employed for a couple of years on his behalf. The second firm—the relevant firm for this debate—is called Fraser MacDonald, a Sevenoaks firm.

Fraser MacDonald eventually recovered the £5,000 and costs that were the subject of the deposit. There are other matters that relate to the other solicitors' competence and therefore there is a whole web of issues, but I am concentrating on the one that is most current and relevant. Fraser MacDonald led Mr. Sullivan to believe that it would pass the £5,000 on to him, subject to appropriate deductions. The firm said that it would put £2,000 aside for those deductions and that, therefore, £3,000 was left. That was at the beginning of 1994. Later last year Mr. Sullivan was told, "No. Sorry. You won't get any of that money. It has all been used up."

So, for the second time, Mr. Sullivan changed solicitors and instructed a firm called Needleman Knowles, which has acted for him and, from my reading of the papers, appears to have done a perfectly competent job. Needleman Knowles needed the file held by the previous solicitors and wanted them also, on Mr. Sullivan's behalf, to account for the money that they had received. The evidence from the file is that it had been received—there is no dispute about that.

The story of Mr. Sullivan's complaint is the saga of the time that it has taken to make any progress in getting the file or the money and, therefore, any legal satisfaction. Of course, people can use a range of procedures in such a case and further procedures are open to Mr. Sullivan. He knows that, the Minister knows it and I know it. My complaint is not that he has exhausted his remedies and not been dealt with satisfactorily, but that we have reached this date and still have got only this far. To be honest, the case is one of justice delayed meaning justice denied.

As a Member of Parliament and from my time at the Bar, I know that one sometimes gets litigious and vexatious litigants—all my colleagues know it well, including you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Some constituents are not easy to handle and nor were some clients when I was a practising barrister. I can inform the Minister that I have no reason to believe that Mr. Sullivan is such a person. He has a good case and has sought to conduct it, and have it conducted, perfectly properly. He acted on advice as regards the solicitors he instructed and took advice that those solicitors could deal competently with the matter.

As a result of this saga, Mr. Sullivan has become ill through the mental stress and has effectively suffered a family breakdown, although that is not something that he has asked me expressly to reveal. He has also been out of work. All those problems are not unrelated. If a person becomes embroiled in a huge battle about money with lawyers, they can drain him dry and leave him in a very bad state indeed. It is to his credit that Mr. Sullivan has managed to pick himself up; he now has some work and, I hope, will be much better again if and when this matter is out of the way.

I will be selective about the chronology, but it is important. I shall quote from the letter sent by Needleman Knowles to Mr. Sullivan on 13 April. It sets out the chronology as follows:

"8-10-94 Letter from Fraser MacDonald stating that 'in the next day or so I shall be preparing my legal aid bill, whereupon I shall let you have the same, together with all of the papers . . .'

12-10-94 Legal Aid Certificate showing transfer of legal aid to ourselves

18-10-94 Letter to Fraser MacDonald requesting the delivery up of the file

20-10-94 Letter chasing up Fraser MacDonald for the file

28-10-94 Second chase up letter to Fraser MacDonald for the file

15-11-94 Third chase up letter to Fraser MacDonald for the file

28-11-94 Fourth chase up letter to Fraser MacDonald and putting them on notice that we will be writing to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau

28-11-94 Letter to Solicitors Complaints Bureau

05-12-94 Fifth chase up letter to Fraser MacDonald

05-12-94 Letter from Solicitors Complaints Bureau stating that they have written to Fraser MacDonald requesting that they deliver up the papers to us within seven days

14-12-94"—

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

two days past the seven days—

"Letter to Solicitors Complaints Bureau from us stating that we have not received the papers and asking them what is the next step

18-12-94 Sixth chase up letter to Fraser MacDonald

06-01-95 Letter to Legal Aid Board requesting an extension of the legal aid certificate to sue Fraser MacDonald

09-01-95 Letter from Legal Aid Board stating that our letter has been registered as a Stage One Complaint

09-01-95 Letter from Solicitors Complaints Bureau enclosing letter they sent to Fraser MacDonald stating that if he does not deliver up the papers within 7 days they shall consider referring the matter to the Conduct Unit of the Bureau

13-01-95 Letter from Legal Aid Board stating that they have written to Fraser MacDonald for a report . . .

25-01-95 Letter to Solicitors Complaints Bureau stating that no papers have been forthcoming

25-01-95 Letter to Legal Aid Board stating that nothing has been heard from Fraser MacDonald

31-01-95 Letter from Legal Aid Board stating that they have written to Fraser MacDonald again requesting that they respond to the LAB within 14 days".

I remind the House that initially a response had been asked for within seven days some two months before.

The letter continues:

"15-02-95 Letter to Legal Aid Board stating that no papers have been forthcoming

27-02-95 Letter to Legal Aid Board stating that still no papers have been forthcoming

02-03-95 Letter from Legal Aid Board stating that they are referring the matter to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau."

At this stage, I made an attempt to find out what was going on, but the Solicitors Complaints Bureau said that it could not find the file. That may have been because of a change of address; for this I am not blaming the bureau.

To its credit, the Legal Aid Board then made its attitude clear. The manager of its office in Brighton, David Keegan, wrote on 20 April to the director of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau. He said:

"I write to report to you the unsatisfactory service provided by Messrs. Fraser MacDonald in relation to the transfer of Mr. Sullivan's legal aid certificate in that,

a) They have to date failed to transfer the case file of Mr. Sullivan, delaying his defence against claim. The delay so far has been 26 weeks . . .

b) They have failed to respond to the five letters sent by the Legal Aid Board over the past three months.

c) Mr. MacDonald has declined to accept numerous telephone calls from the Board.

d) On 8th March 1995, Mr. MacDonald left a telephone message stating that 'the problem has been solved' and that he would ring the Area Manager the next day. This did not happen, neither was the problem solved.

The appalling performance of Messrs. Fraser MacDonald must be considered as unsatisfactory professional conduct and may lead to a professional negligence claim if the client is disadvantaged.

In my time as Area Manager I have not come across such a flagrant disregard for the needs of the client and the duty of a solicitor under legal aid. May I suggest that if Mr. MacDonald does not comply with the requirements promptly he should be struck off to protect clients and the legal aid fund."

The Solicitors Complaints Bureau sent a letter to Fraser MacDonald dated 13 May, asking for an explanation within eight days and setting out a series of complaints and its advice as to what he should do. Mr. Sullivan then wrote a letter to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau dated 19 June effectively making a series of allegations which I shall not repeat but which reveal his complete dissatisfaction with the system. His letter ends:

"I have been comprehensively raped by the Legal System in this country, suffering an assault spanning seven years and am asked to accept that this is a glorious establishment envied the world over by an unnamed person at your bureau.

I am outraged that I have had to fight against such a corrupt establishment alone, suffering financially, mentally and physically, as confirmed by a letter enclosed from my consultant at Guy's Hospital.

I am sending a copy of this to my M.P. . . . who is carrying my fight to the House of Commons."

The SCB's proposed remedy was the draft report by the adjudication and appeals committee stating that Mr. Fraser MacDonald should be rebuked. Indeed, the committee decided on 30 August, via its conduct committee

"To rebuke Mr. F. MacDonald . . . severely for his delay in failing to transfer Mr. Sullivan's file of papers"

and stated that it expected him

"to reply to Mr. Sullivan's outstanding queries regarding monies paid within 21 days . . . of the decision".

Twenty-one days passed. Nothing had been heard within 28 days, which was the period for appeal. Then, the SCB recently said to my constituent that it would "send a reminder". That is the saga so far. It is entirely unsatisfactory.

The SCB is one of three legs of complaint, the disciplinary tribunal and the ombudsman being the other two. The SCB says in its advertising material, entitled "100 Facts at a Glance":

"This is how the profession's money is spent on a service in which both the public and the solicitors' profession may have confidence."

Well, I say to the Minister, the public do not. The Solicitors Complaints Bureau advertises, in a further leaflet headed, "What To Do If You Are Dissatisfied With Your Solicitor", that it is an organisation

"set up by the Law Society to investigate impartially complaints".

I do not think that that can be true either, given that it is run by solicitors.

As set out in the leaflet, what the bureau can do, and the maximum power that it has, is, where appropriate, to

"Reduce a solicitor's bill in whole or in part.

Order compensation of up to"—

wait for it—

"£1000"—

there are qualifications on that—and

"Order a solicitor to correct a mistake at his/her own expense."

You can go to the solicitors disciplinary tribunal eventually, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you believe that there has been unfitting conduct and breaches of the rules of negligence, and if, at the end of your Solicitors Complaints Bureau pursuit—which in Mr. Sullivan's case has now taken about a year so far and has got as far as a rebuke—you are dissatisfied, you can go to the ombudsman.

The ombudsman can make quite strong recommendations, but he cannot make anyone do anything. The ombudsman is—wait for it—a lawyer.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: In that case, I beg his pardon. The ombudsman is not a lawyer. Nevertheless, he cannot make

anybody do anything. He can make recommendations and publicise the fact that people have not acted on them, but he cannot take action personally.

I have described a specific case. However, in the past few weeks there has been the publication of a controversial Consumers Association report dated 2 October, entitled "Solicitors—advice you can't trust". It sets out a litany of complaints about solicitors and suggests that the present complaints procedure is entirely unsatisfactory.

Then, on 10 October, there was a very effective article in the law section of *The Times*, headed "Shoddy firms and a cranky complaints system ruin clients, says Gary Slapper". Dr. Slapper is principal lecturer at the law school at the university of Staffordshire. He says about the 600 complaints a week that land on the desk of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau:

"This level of dissatisfaction is quite alarming, especially as complaints can go to the SCB only if the complaints procedure at the firm . . . has been exhausted."

Dr. Slapper goes on to show how our legal system still appears entirely like a system in which, in any legal quarrel, whoever loses, the lawyers always win. I commend anyone who reads *Hansard* to read Dr. Slapper's article, which tells another unhappy tale.

We need to tackle those issues. Given that the Government and the profession are considering a better complaints system, we need to come up with a far better system of speedy and effective complaint, and to do so soon. We need to end self-regulation and ensure that solicitors are not seen to be dealing with solicitors. We need to correct the ombudsman's lack of power to act and give him or her that power.

We need a much speedier system of complaint and redress. We must have objective criteria for showing that it works. We must ensure that we have a professional, one-step—or at most, two-step—process, which everyone can understand and which works.

If reform were a matter of funding, let us fund it. However, I believe that it is more than that. Lady Thatcher said that she was going to take on the professions. We still need to take on the solicitors profession, because it often ruins people's lives, and that is unacceptable.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): First, I express my sympathy to Mr. Sullivan and I commend the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on securing the debate, which gives us an opportunity to discuss the important subject of the conduct and regulation of the solicitors profession. It is an important subject, not least because it is often in times of distress and difficulty that people turn to solicitors for help and it is only right that citizens of this country should be able to expect a lawyer to provide a service worthy of his or her professional standing. I commend the hon. Gentleman for the cogency and fairness of his presentation and for the good that he had to say about the Legal Aid Board.

I am a solicitor, although I have not practised professionally since 1988—when some of my friends were unkind enough to say that I had gone straight—and I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I outline the Government's position on the regulation of solicitors. The Government look to self-regulation as the most effective way of maintaining standards in business life in general. It is especially important that citizens with disputes against other citizens, against institutions or even against the state or the Government, should be able to turn to a completely independent legal profession. That is why the Government are committed to the principle that in the first instance the maintenance of professional standards among lawyers should be one of the responsibilities of the professional body concerned.

As a result, therefore, neither my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor nor I have the power to intervene in or comment upon individual cases, or to respond directly to criticisms about the profession's disciplinary and complaints machinery. The professional practice, conduct and discipline of solicitors are regulated by statute. I do not, therefore, intend to comment upon the details of the hon. Gentleman's constituent's case.

As the hon. Gentleman has said, the Law Society has delegated its powers to deal with complaints of misconduct and inadequate professional service to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau. Allegations of misconduct and inadequate professional service are dealt with by the bureau in different ways, and it has different sanctions in respect of each.

In cases involving inadequate professional service, the Law Society is empowered to provide redress for clients. It can order a solicitor to reduce a bill—if it has not been taxed—waive the right to recover any fee whatever, refund money already paid, correct any mistakes, or take any other necessary action. The Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 increased the sanctions available to the Law Society by allowing it to direct a solicitor to pay compensation of up to £1,000 to the client. That maximum is under review.

Allegations of misconduct—for example, breaches of the solicitors' practice rules—are dealt with separately, and if misconduct is revealed, the case may be referred to the bureau's conduct committee. That committee can rebuke the solicitor, institute disciplinary proceedings or order intervention in a solicitor's practice. However, it does not have the power to fine, although that arrangement is currently under review. It is important to recognise that the Law Society's powers, as exercised by the bureau, to deal with misconduct are disciplinary in nature. Serious breaches of the rules of professional conduct may lead to disciplinary proceedings against the solicitor concerned. Such proceedings are dealt with by the solicitors disciplinary tribunal, which is wholly independent of the Law Society and was established under the Solicitors Act 1974.

The Government responded to growing public disquiet about the effectiveness of the profession's procedures for dealing swiftly and effectively with alleged failures in professional competence by creating, in the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990, the office of the legal services ombudsman. The ombudsman provides an independent check on the complaint-handling procedures of the General Council of the Bar and the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, as well as the Law Society.

It may be helpful if I explain to the House the terms and conditions under which the legal services ombudsman operates. His office, which came into being on 1 January 1991, was established to be independent of both the legal profession and the Government. He is uniquely placed to

[Mr. John M. Taylor]

compare systems and standards across the profession and his knowledge, experience and independence lend a strong weight to his judgment.

Once the ombudsman has completed his investigation, he can make recommendations. Here again, I restrict reference to solicitors, with the bureau exercising the powers on behalf of the Law Society. The recommendations are: that the complaint be reconsidered by the bureau; that the solicitor complained of—or the bureau—pay compensation of an amount specified by the ombudsman to the complainant for loss, inconvenience or distress caused to him as a result of the matter complained of; and that the bureau pay compensation of an amount specified by the ombudsman to the complainant for loss, inconvenience or distress caused to him as a result of the way in which the bureau handled that complaint.

It seems to me that Mr. Sullivan has suffered loss, inconvenience and distress. As the hon. Gentleman concedes, in this case the available avenues have not yet been exhausted. The hon. Gentleman's constituent is still in time to take his complaint to the ombudsman. If he seeks further redress, I can only recommend that he contact the ombudsman's office as soon as possible.

It is not open to me or to the Lord Chancellor to intervene in a decision of the ombudsman or to comment on its merits any more than it would be proper for us to do in relation to a case before a court of law. I have described the existing procedures and, as the House will appreciate, they have been strengthened considerably in recent years. I do not believe that they can fairly be described as toothless. However, it is important that the regulatory framework should adapt to changing times and secure the confidence of both public and profession.

It is true that there has been much recent criticism of the bureau by the profession, the public and bodies such as the National Consumer Council. In December 1994, the NCC published a report, "The Solicitors Complaints Bureau: a consumer view". The report proposed the abolition of the bureau and suggested that the Law Society's complaints-handling function should be transferred to an independent legal services complaints council.

At the press conference to launch his annual report in June of this year, the ombudsman commented:

"I believe it is premature to talk of abandoning self-regulation at the present time. A great deal of experience and money has been invested by the Law Society on behalf of solicitors and the public in the Solicitors Complaints Bureau. It would be foolish to throw it all out and go over to a completely different system without a good deal more information about complainant satisfaction levels, and without first seeking to strengthen the Bureau's operation by giving it a greater degree of independence."

In the nature of things, it is perhaps unlikely that a body dealing with thousands of complaints a year will get bouquets rather than brickbats, but the Law Society in general and the bureau in particular have nevertheless been considering the future direction of complaints in respect of solicitors for several months now. In July, the Law Society issued a consultation paper, "Supervision of Solicitors: The Next Decade", which proposed significant changes to the way in which complaints are handled.

The deadline for responses to the consultation paper has been extended until Tuesday next, 31 October. The responses will then be analysed and collated and a final paper suggesting the way forward will be considered by the Law Society Council in either December this year or January next year. As well as in this debate today, therefore, the issue is being actively addressed both inside and outside the profession.

At the same time as a replacement for the bureau is being considered, my officials are in discussion with the Law Society and others about a Solicitors (Amendment) Bill. While that covers the whole range of the statutory framework of solicitors, it is nevertheless expected that the Law Society will be putting forward proposals, once the future of the bureau has been settled, which will deal with those matters. I have said that the consultation period expires on Tuesday, but if the hon. Gentleman wishes to write to the president of the Law Society with his proposals I am sure that they will be given full consideration.

This is, then, an opportune moment for the hon. Gentleman to raise the issue. In any regulatory system, there is bound to be a difficult balance between championing the rights of the consumer and not overburdening the service provider. The Government see an effective and approachable complaints system as the best way to ensure that a client's grievances can be dealt with without causing the profession unnecessary burden or unnecessary interference from the public sector.

It is difficult to strike the right balance. Although we do not yet know the outcome of the Law Society proposals, the Government will consider carefully any proposals requiring legislation and will support such proposals as strike the right balance. While it is now for the Law Society to get it right, I agree with the ombudsman that proposals to abandon self-regulation are, at best, premature.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 October 1995

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Small Claims Cases

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce measures to reduce the delays which occur at small claims courts; what research he has conducted on the cost of these delays to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [36948]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mr. Peter Atkinson, dated 16 October 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department has asked me to reply to your Question about delays in the small claims courts.

The Court Service is pursuing a range of initiatives designed to reduce delays in all types of case in the civil courts, including plans to computerise the county courts to increase both speed and efficiency in the handling of paperwork and the production of orders and notices. It is also working with the Lord Chancellor's Department on consideration of procedural reforms following Lord Woolf's interim report on access to justice.

At present, over the Court Service as a whole, 94% of administrative work is dealt with within the target of five days or less in the Charter for Court Users. New targets have been set for hearing civil cases. Cases expected to last less than 15 minutes should be heard within 30 days of the court being asked to arrange a date; for longer cases the target is 40 days. At present District Judges hear 98% of short cases and 71% of long cases within target. I am not aware of significant delays in small claims cases but would be glad to investigate any particular instances.

No research has been conducted on the cost of any delays in small claims cases to public funds.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what research his Department has conducted into the effects that increasing the small claims limit to £3,000 will have on the small claims procedure; and if he will name the courts where pilot schemes have been conducted. [36949]

Mr. Taylor: An increase in the small claims limit would not affect the nature of the small claims procedure. No pilot schemes have been conducted. However, if the small claims limit is increased, the effects of this will be closely monitored, as recommended by Lord Woolf.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to introduce measures which will allow people to choose to opt out of the small claims procedure if the limit is increased to £3,000; and if he will make a statement. [36950]

Mr. Taylor: Under the rules of court, district judges have discretion to order a case to be referred out of the small claims procedure if it meets certain criteria. The judge can order this after considering the defence, either on application by a party or of his own accord.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the level of weekly disposable income below which *(a)* free legal aid and *(b)* contributory legal aid was available in (i) 1979, (ii) 1993, (iii) 1994 and (iv) 1995; what was the percentage of the adult population eligible for *(a)* and *(b)* in each of those years; and what is the present-day value in real terms of these disposable income levels. [35545]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member will recall that I was unable to provide him with an answer to his question earlier this year. I am now in a position to do so and it is set out in the tables. It is not possible to calculate figures to show the percentage of the adult population eligible for *(a)* free legal aid and *(b)* contributory legal aid so I have shown eligible households instead. All figures are annual ones.

Table 1—Levels of annual disposable income for non-contributory and contributory civil legal aid

Year	Non-contributory	Contributory	PI
1979	7,500	3,600	—
1993	2,294	6,800	7,750
1994	2,382	7,060	7,780
1995	2,425	7,187	7,920

Table 2—What is the present day value in real terms of these disposable levels

Year	Non-contributory	Contributory	PI
1979	3,816	9,138	—
1993	2,403	7,126	7,860
1994	2,439	7,229	7,935
1995	2,425	7,187	7,920

Note:
1979 figures have been uprated from the retail prices index: "All items excluding Housing" series since 1979.

Table 3—Percentage of households eligible for non-contributory and contributory civil legal aid (figures given are combined totals)

Year	Contributory	PI
1979	77.2	-
1993	48.17	50.66 (PI)
1994	48.45	51.25 (PI)
1995	47.26	49.67 (PI)

Note:
In 1979 the percentage eligible for non-contributory legal aid was 28 per cent. It is more difficult since 1993 to accurately estimate the percentage eligible for non-contributory legal aid. We believe that the figure is in the region of 20 per cent. to 25 per cent.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in respect of how many cases the legal aid fund has reimbursed the costs of a successful opponent in each of the past five years. [37158]

Mr. Taylor: It is not possible to identify exactly the number of cases in which the legal aid fund has reimbursed the costs of a successful unassisted party

under the terms of section 18 of the Legal Aid Act 1988; the Legal Aid Board records the number of payments made but not the number of cases in which section 18 costs are reimbursed. The number of payments made each year was:

1990–91: 119
1991–92: 134
1992–93: 171
1993–94: 186
1994–95: 158

Although it is possible that more than one payment may be made in a small number of cases, costs are usually reimbursed by way of a single payment.

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current annual expenditure on legal aid in Britain; and what are the equivalent figures in other EU countries. [37215]

Mr. Taylor: Annual net provision for legal aid expenditure in the United Kingdom, excluding administration, for the current financial year is as follows:

	£m
England and Wales	1,457
Scotland	133
Northern Ireland	22

In the time available it has not been possible to obtain equivalent figures for other EU countries.

Personal Injury Cases

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor plans to implement Lord Woolf's recommendation that small personal injury claims under £1,000 should be exempt from the small claims procedure; and if he will make a statement. [36951]

Mr. John M Taylor: In his interim report on access to justice Lord Woolf recommendation that all personal injury cases up to £10,000 should be dealt with in the fast track. Lord Woolf is presently developing his detailed proposals for the fast track.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of similarities shared by road traffic accident cases and personal injury cases in the area of assessing liability and quantum, and if he will make a statement. [36944]

Mr. Taylor: Insofar as the damages claimed are for personal injuries, road traffic accident cases are treated in the same way as other personal injury claims.

Financial Penalties

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he has taken or intends to take to monitor the delays by those found guilty of criminal actions in payment to their victims of sums ordered by the courts; and if he will make a statement concerning the efficacy of such arrangements. [37333]

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has set up a working group under the chairmanship of a senior official to identify and promote good practice in the enforcement of financial penalties—including compensation to victims—and recommended procedural, administrative or legislative changes which would improve the enforcement of such penalties. The group is considering what modifications and improvements may be made to management information systems in the magistrates courts to secure better monitoring of arrears. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 19 July, *Official Report*, columns *1300–01*—the working group is expected to continue for at least a year but it hopes to be in a position to issue guidance to the courts as and when conclusions are reached during that period.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Anderson Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36995]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Chief Executives of the Land Registry and the Public Record Office will respond on behalf of their agencies. The chief executives of the Public Trust Office will also respond on behalf of this agency for expenditure from 1 July 1994.

For my Department, including the Court Service agency, two outsourcing contracts have been granted since 1990, one to Capita—the parent company of Telecom Capita—for specific research work at a value of £40,851 in the financial year 1992–93 and one to Digital Equipment for system development and implementation at a value of £429,362 in the financial year 1993–94. Additional work for the latter contract came to £16,346.

Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 16 October 1995:

I have been asked by the Lord Chancellor's Parliamentary Secretary to reply to your question about outsourcing contracts.

The Public Record Office granted no outsourcing contracts to any of the companies which you list. It did, however, grant a turnkey contract for the supply of hardware, software, specially written software and services to Logica in December 1991. The value of this contact, as published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, was £1,318,265. Two further small contracts for enhancements were awarded to Logica in 1994 and 1995. The value of these is restricted on commercial grounds.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 16 October 1995:

I have been asked by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, to reply to your recent question concerning outsourcing contacts granted since 1990. HM Land Registry has granted no such contracts during the period to the 16 organisations specified.

Letter from Julia C. Lomes to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 16 October 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary has asked me to reply as part of the Lord Chancellor's Department's response to your Parliamentary Question, listed on 20 July 1995, regarding outsourcing contracts awarded each year since 1990.

The Public Trust Office became an Executive Agency on 1 July 1994 and since that date no outsourcing contracts have been awarded by this office. The Public Trust Office will be covered by the Lord Chancellor's Department reply in respect of the period from 1990 to 30 June 1994.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36967]

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office has granted no contracts to the companies in question in the last five years. I am not responsible for any agencies.

TREASURY

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyn/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36999]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I regret that information prior to 1991 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HM Treasury has not let any outsourcing contracts with the companies listed.

HM Treasury did not have any agencies in the period reported above.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue that would be lost if principal private residences were excluded from asset valuation for the purposes of inheritance tax liability. [36440]

Mr. Jack: The full-year cost in 1996–97 of excluding principal private residences from asset valuation for the purposes of inheritance tax liability, is estimated at around £300 million. This estimate takes no account of any consequential behavioural changes.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on house prices of exempting principal private residences from inheritance tax liability. [36441]

Mr. Jack: It would be inappropriate to comment on tax matters at this stage in the Budget cycle.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their vehicles for official business. [36351]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The current rates of travel allowance that staff in the Treasury may claim when using their vehicles for official business are as follows:

Standard rate (pence per mile)

Cars with engine capacity	*Up to 1500 cc*	*1501–2000 cc*	*Over 2000 cc*
Up to 5,000 miles	35.7	40	43
Over 5,000 miles	17	21	27

Motorcycles with engine capacity

	Up to 125cc	*Over 125cc*
First, 4,000 miles at:	15.4p	24.7p
Over 4,000 miles at:	5.5p	8.1p

Public Transport Rate (pence per miles)

For use of private motor cars and motorcycles not meeting the insurance, ownership and economy and efficiency rules for payment of the standard rate of allowance

Rate per mile: 22.3

Pedal Cycle Allowance (pence per mile)

Rate per mile: 5.6

Dr. Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36352]

Mrs. Knight: The total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in the Treasury in the last five years is as follows:

	£000
1995–96	7
1994–95	21
1993–94	23
1992–93	32
1991–92	29

[1] To date.

The saving in the last full year can only be estimated, as the records on mileages travelled on individual trips by individual officials are currently held manually and it would involve disproportionate cost to work through those. Of the £21,000 shown for 1994–95, only £7,700 was reimbursed at our maximum rates. The saving had reimbursement been at our lower rate in that year is estimated to be approximately £2.900.

EDS

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the savings to the Inland Revenue over 10 years of the contract between the Inland Revenue and EDS; when the contract was *(a)* awarded and *(b)* revised. [36702]

Mr. Jack: When the Inland Revenue signed a 10-year outsourcing contract with EDS in May 1994, the estimated value based on the work load identified in the invitation to tender was £1 billion, which represented a potential saving of £225 million over the in-house costs.

The Inland Revenue is in the process of updating the original estimates to take into account the actual changes to the work load identified in the first year of the contract and revising forecasts for the remaining life of the contract.

This work is not yet complete and therefore revised figures are not yet available.

Earnings

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the distribution of earnings and of ages of households having a first child. [36971]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The table shows the breakdown of households by range of total gross weekly earnings and age of eldest dependent child as estimated from the winter 1994 labour force survey. Benefits are excluded.

	Age of eldest dependent child				
	0–5	*6–10*	*11–15*	*>15*	*Total*
<£200	6	6	10	5	27
£201–£300	4	4	4	2	14
£301–£400	4	4	5	2	16
£401–£500	4	4	4	2	13
£501–£600	2	2	3	2	9
£601–£700	2	2	2	2	7
£701–£800	1	1	1	2	5
£801–£900	1	1	1	2	3
>£900	2	1	2	1	7
Total	26	25	31	18	100

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate his Department has made of the hourly average rate of pay in manufacturing in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in each of the members of the European Union; [30074]

(2) what estimate his Department has made of the average hourly rate of pay in food retailing. [37005]

Mrs. Knight: Estimates of manufacturing hourly earnings for manual and non-manual workers in the United Kingdom and the other member states of the European Union are published by Eurostat in "Earnings—Industry and Services 1994". This report is available in the House of Commons Library.

More recent information on hourly earnings by industry of full-time adult workers in Great Britain, is shown in tables X2.1–X2.7 of part A of the April 1995 new earnings survey report, also available in the House of Commons Library. Table X2.1 gives date for all manufacturing, and food retailing is shown in table X2.5.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate of the number and proportion of the work force in *(a)* each county and *(b)* the United Kingdom that are employed in the agriculture and fishing sector. [36722]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The table shows regional estimates from the spring—March to May—1995 labour force survey of the number in employment in agriculture and fishing industries and the proportion they represent of the work force. Estimates for each county are not available.

Spring 1995

	Agriculture and fishing	
	All in employment Thousands	*As a proportion of the work force[1] Per cent.*
United Kingdom	517	1.8
Northern region	22	1.5
Yorkshire and Humberside	47	1.9
East Midlands	46	2.2
East Anglia	36	3.3
Greater London	n/a	n/a
Rest of South East	70	1.3
South West	79	3.3
West Midlands	51	2.0
North West	27	0.9
Wales	41	3.2
Scotland	56	2.3
Northern Ireland	36	5.1

Source:
Labour Force survey.
n/a Not available; estimate less than 10,000.
[1] Work force is defined as those who are economically active (in employment or ILO unemployed).

Small Shops (Security Equipment)

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average increase in rateable value for small shops caused by the installation of security equipment; and if he will make a statement. [36947]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Information is not available on the average increase in rateable value for small shops caused by the installation of security equipment.

The effect that security equipment may have on the rateable value of small shops will depend upon its nature and extent. This will vary but, in general, relatively minor security devices fitted in small shops are unlikely to increase the value significantly and in many cases they may not increase the value at all.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidelines his Department has issued to local valuation offices regarding the rateable value of security devices in small shops. [36945]

Mrs. Knight: No specific guidelines have been issued with regard to the rateable value of security devices in small shops, but valuation officers will consider the rateability and value of such items in line with general guidelines on the rateability of plant and machinery.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's estimate of central Government expenditure per head to each English region in each of the last five years. [36726]

Mr. Waldegrave: Identifiable general government expenditure per head by region and function for 1992–93 was published in "Public Expenditure"; Cm 2821, table 7.9. An exercise to collect regional figures for general government expenditure for one financial year only is carried out annually. Figures for the central Government component are not collected separately, nor is a time series available on a consistent basis.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what approvals have so far been made under the European Investment Fund for guarantee of loans made for projects within member states of the European Union; and if he will give for each case the purpose of the investment, the amount guaranteed and the financial agency concerned. [37007]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The full list of projects signed is:

Name	*Country*	*Sector*	*Amount (mecu)*	*Lender guaranteed*
Panafon, SA	Greece	TEN[1] telecoms	54.74	EIB
Groupe Banque Populaire (GBP)	France	SME[2]	75.91	GBP
Telecom Italia	Italy	TEN telecoms	101.38	EIB
SNAM Trans-mediterraneo	Italy	TEN energy	100.49	EIB
Aeroporto di Malpensa	Italy	TEN transport	[3]75.59	EIB
Transgas	Portugal	TEN	[4]107.22	EIB
Total			515.33	

Notes:
[1] Trans-European networks (TEN).
[2] Small-and medium-sized enterprise (SME).
[3] 1st tranche of 25.9 mecu signed.
[4] 1st tranche of 46 mecu signed.
Source:
European Investment Fund Annual Report 1994.

For 1995, the fund's business plan provides for a total volume of guarantees of between 1.2 billion ecu and 1.5 billion ecu, taking into account both business prospects and the recent enlargement of the Union by the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. It is expected that the proportion of guarantees on loans granted by the European investment bank will reduce to between 60 per cent. and 75 per cent. of total activity and that the mix between TEN and SME operations will be more in line with the business plan projection of 80:20.

Single Currency

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what expenditure has been incurred by the European Monetary Institute in respect of preparation for possible designs banknotes or coinage for a common currency; and on whose authority such expenditure was made. [37269]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The European Monetary Institute has the responsibility of supervising the technical preparation of single currency banknotes under the terms of article 109f(3) of the EC treaty, as amended at Maastricht, which has been ratified by all member states. The accounts published by the European Monetary Institute do not separately identify expenditure incurred in fulfilling this responsibility.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being taken to ensure taxation of trading at car boot sales. [37147]

Mr. Jack: Those who trade at car boot sales are liable to investigation by the Inland Revenue in the same way as any other trader. The Inland Revenue continuously evaluates all areas where there might be under-declaration of taxable profits.

Privatised Utilities

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from privatised utility regulators suggesting extra taxation to take account of hidden values in respect of the regulated companies. [37071]

Mr. Jack: I receive many representations on a wide variety of tax issues in the run-up to the Budget, but it is not my practice to comment on them individually.

European Union (Convergence Criteria)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which EU countries are currently achieving the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty. [37210]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The question of which countries meet the Maastricht criteria will be decided by the European Council on recommendations from the Commission. On the basis of the latest Commission forecast, Luxembourg, Germany and the UK are likely to have budget deficits below 3 per cent. of GDP and debt ratios below 60 per cent. of GDP by 1996.

Regulated Monopolies

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals for a special one-off tax on

gains made by regulated monopolies where the regulator certifies that the gains were unexpected. [37062]

Mr. Jack: It would not be appropriate for me to comment on tax measures in the run-up to the Budget.

Taxation (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors underlie immunity from United Kingdom tax arrangements in respect of the Kuwait investment office in London; and if he will list the other Kuwaiti commercial operations in the United Kingdom to which this immunity extends. [37068]

Mr. Jack: The normal rules of tax confidentiality preclude the provision of information about the affairs of named individuals or entities.

Embassy Staff (Salaries)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are in place for the disclosure for tax purposes of salaries and benefits in kind paid to British employees of foreign embassies in London. [37072]

Mr. Jack: Some embassies voluntarily operate the "pay as you earn" scheme on the salaries of their British staff. Where the embassy does not do this, it is approached at the end of each tax year by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—acting on behalf of the Inland Revenue—for details of the emoluments which it has paid during the year to its staff who are liable to tax. Those staff are also under the normal obligation to declare their emoluments in the returns of income which they make to the Inland Revenue.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

India

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of United Kingdom funded projects in India in each of the past six years have been in the states of *(a)* Kashmir and *(b)* Punjab. [37105]

Mr. Hanley: One project in Kashmir—hydroelectric power—is currently being funded under the aid and trade provision at a total cost of £17 million. Apart from this, the ODA has not given any bilateral aid for projects in either Kashmir or Punjab in the past six years.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many requests for overseas aid assistance have been made by the Indian Government for projects in *(a)* Kashmir and *(b)* Punjab states in the past 10 years; and how many of these were approved. [37107]

Mr. Hanley: A hydroelectric power project on Kashmir was approved under the aid and trade provision in 1989. No other British bilateral aid projects have been approved in the past 10 years in Kashmir or Punjab. Information on requests during that time from the Indian Government for assistance for projects in Kashmir and Punjab is not readily available, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the major projects in India funded by United Kingdom overseas aid in the past six years. [37103]

Mr. Hanley: Projects over £5 million funded by UK overseas aid in India in the past six years are:

Maharashtra Water (1990) £16m
Calcutta Slum Improvement Project (1990) £13m
Orissa Health and Family Welfare 2 (1991) £20m
Vijayawada Slum Improvement Project (1991) £17m
Programme Aid Grant (1991) £30m
Coal Project Grant (1991) £11m
Andhra Pradesh School Health (1991) £6m
Programme Aid Grant (1992) £20m
Western Ghats Environmental Forestry Project (1992) £25m
High Voltage Interconnector, Chandrapur, (1993) £65m
Hirakud Hydro (1993) £20m
Heat Treated Rails (1993) £15m
Regional Engineering Colleges (1994) £7m
Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project (1994) £8m
Andhra Pradesh Energy Efficiency (1994) £43m
Maharashtra Earthquake (World Bank Programme) £15m
Gomti River Pollution Control Project (1995) £4m (initial phase)
Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education (1995) £46m

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount of United Kingdom bilateral aid in India in each of the past six years. [37104]

Mr. Hanley: UK bilateral aid to India was:

1989–90: £75.851 million
1990–91: £88.260 million
1991–92: £128.144 million
1992–93: £94.719 million
1993–94: £79.231 million
1994–95: £82.652 million

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on respect of granting overseas aid assistance to India; and to what extent this takes into account geographical location of projects. [37106]

Mr. Hanley: Priorities for United Kingdom aid are discussed and agreed with the Government of India at annual talks, taking into account priorities of both Governments.

For management reasons, major new projects are increasingly being focused in a smaller number of target states, including West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

Overseas Aid Expenditure

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made to fulfil the statement made by his predecessor at the Overseas Development Institute that Her Majesty's Government had plans to increase annual expenditure on overseas aid. [37363]

Mr. Hanley: In his speech to the Overseas Development Institute on 15 February 1995, the then Foreign Secretary reiterated the Government's plans for

increased aid spending announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement on 29 November 1994.

In common with all other areas of Government expenditure, these plans are reviewed each year during the public expenditure survey.

Twa People, Rwanda

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the fate of the Twa people of Rwanda, and those of them presently refugees in Zaire; and what plans he has to take any special action to protect these victims of the situation in Rwanda. [37286]

Mr. Hanley: We have little specific information about the fate of the Twa people, other than reports by bodies such as the Unrepresented Peoples and Nations Organisation. An UNPO mission to Rwanda in late 1994 estimated that 10,000 Twa were killed in the genocide and civil war of 1994—representing one third of that community in Rwanda—and that a further 8,000 to 10,000 Twa had fled the country.

Other reports indicate that the Twa form a particularly vulnerable group among the refugees, often living outside the established camps and meriting special attention from UN agencies and non-governmental organisations. The Red Cross and Christian Aid have organised separate food distribution and shelter provision for groups of Twa refugees. Inside Rwanda, the Twa have traditionally been a disadvantaged group, subjected to discrimination. A Christian Aid rehabilitation programme has assisted the Twa, and further programmes targeting the Twa as a group are planned. The UK has contributed to these programmes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36836]

The Attorney-General: Although none of the Departments for which I am responsible uses the private finance initiative for the funding of any services or projects at present, use of the PFI is being considered for future projects where appropriate. It is not expected that use of the PFI would affect the rights of individuals to complain to an ombudsman.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

EU Documents (Parliamentary Scrutiny)

Ms Quin: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for providing additional opportunities for parliamentary scrutiny of policies under *(a)* the second and *(b)* the third pillar of Maastricht.

Mr. Newton: The procedures for parliamentary scrutiny of documents emerging under the inter-governmental pillars work well and are kept under review. I await with interest the publication of a report from the Select Committee on European Legislation on the arrangements for the scrutiny of EU documents, which is planned for the autumn. The Government will consider the report carefully together with any proposals the Committee may have for improving the current arrangements.

Members' Car Allowance

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), 17 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *914*, how many of the Members who claim only one rate of car allowance have cars in each of the three categories.

Mr. Newton: There are six Members who submit claims for one rate of vehicle but who have cars registered in all three categories.

SCOTLAND

Advertising

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those daily and Sunday newspapers used by his Department for advertising purposes in 1994–95; and what was the total expenditure in each case. [36340]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Publicity advertising undertaken by my Department for the period 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995 was as follows:

	£
The Scotsman	9,176
The Herald	8,770
Dundee Courier and Advertiser	6,543
Press and Journal	7,167
Daily Record	51,138
Scottish Daily Express	1,876
The Sun (Scottish)	8,882
Daily Mirror	361
Glasgow Evening Times	296
Scotland on Sunday	9,724
Sunday Times Scotland	6,881
Sunday Mail	47,795
Sunday Post	49,761
News of the World (Scottish)	2,100

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of his Department's advertising budget has been allocated to local weekly newspapers in Scotland in each of the past 10 years. [36341]

Mr. Forsyth: The figure for 1993–94 was 5.7 per cent. and for 1994–95, 7.3 per cent. Details for previous years are not held centrally.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all Forestry Commission land sold so far during 1995. [36983]

Mr. Kynoch: I have arranged for a list to be placed in the Library of the House.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Departments. [36827]

Mr. Kynoch: Under the private finance initiative, Departments or relevant public bodies may contract with private organisations for the supply of services to specified standards. The rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen are not affected assuming that the responsibility to provide services lies with the public authority concerned.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or Agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36957]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I can confirm that no outsourcing contracts were let to any of the named suppliers during the period in question.

Population Census

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to include a question on the use of Scots in the next census in 2001 on the same basis as the existing question on Gaelic. [36987]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The General Register Office for Scotland, together with the Census Office for England and Wales, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, has started to consult users of census information about their needs from the next census of population, planned for 2001. A number of letters have been received expressing support for a question on the Scots language. Needs have also been expressed for information about various other languages and other topics.

The census offices and users will consider whether these requirements can be met by a set of simple questions without the census form imposing an undue burden on the public. For each topic a preliminary assessment will be made on whether the census is the most appropriate means of collecting the required information. Questions for which there is likely to be a good case will be tested to see if the public find them acceptable and can provide answers of a quality adequate to meet user's needs. Business cases for such questions and previously proven questions will then be considered. The Government's proposals will be pubished in 1998, and the final selection of questions will be approved by Parliament.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now specify the quantity and nature of the drugs found in the debris near Lockerbie after the destruction of Pan Am flight 103. [37394]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member is referred to the answer given on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *87.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance the Crown Office gave to the deputy chief constable of the Dumfries and Galloway police in responding to the letter from the former Bradford police surgeon, Dr. David Fieldhouse, regarding the failure to make further inquiry of him about body DCF12, labelled by Dr. Fieldhouse at a hillside north-east of Shawhill farm, Lockerbie, on 22 December 1988. [37460]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Communications between the prosecuting and Investigating authorities are confidential.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration the Crown Office has now given to the advancing age of those witnesses whom the prosecution proposes to lead in court in relation to the Lockerbie case. [37446]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *90,* and have nothing to add except to note that a further seven months have passed.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now reveal on what dates Scottish police interviewed Dr. David Fieldhouse, Bradford police surgeon, in connection with his work in the Lockerbie area in December 1988; what knowledge he now has of body DCF12, male, hillside north-east of Shawhill farm, found at Lockerbie by Dr. David Fieldhouse, and if the Crown Office has endorsed the apology given in his written report by Sheriff John Mowat to Dr. David Fieldhouse for overlooking his information about Lockerbie body DCF12, male, hillside north-east of Shawhill farm, and for the undeserved criticism of his activities. [37459]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* columns *89* and *90.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has anything to add to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report,* column *90,* regarding the likelihood of a trial of the Lockerbie suspects taking place. [37464]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Adam Busby

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to secure the extradition of Adam Busby from Dublin. [37364]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Arrangements for the backing warrants in Ireland are the responsibility of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and the police. There is a warrant in force for the arrest of Adam

Busby and it is not the policy of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate to discuss the steps which might be taken to enforce such a warrant.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their vehicles for official business. [36355]

Mr. Hanley: FCO—diplomatic wing and ODA—staff can claim the following rates when using their private vehicles for official business in the United Kingdom:

Private cars	*Per mile*
Public transport rate	22.3p
Standard rate (up to 4000 miles per year)	37.0p
Standard rate (over 4000 miles per year)	21.0p

Motor Cycles

Public Transport rate	*Up to 125cc*	*Over 125cc only*
(Up to 4000 miles per year)	14.1 per mile	21.8 per mile
(Over 4000 miles per year)	5.8 per mile	8.6 per mile

The standard rate for private cars is payable only when public transport is unavailable or impractical.

Overseas mileage rates are calculated by individual diplomatic missions using a formula set by the Treasury and agreed with the Inland Revenue.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36356]

Mr. Hanley: The FCO—diplomatic wing and ODA—processed over 20,000 travel and subsistence claims during the financial year 1994–95. Information on payments made to staff who use their private vehicles for official business in that year and preceding years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [37000]

Mr. Hanley: None.

Pitcairn Island (Nuclear Tests)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of French nuclear testing on the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island; and what her Majesty's Government's obligations to the Pitcairn Islanders. [36761]

Mr. David Davis: We remain committed to the protection of United Kingdom dependent territories. We do not believe that the French nuclear tests should cause any danger to the inhabitants of Pitcairn.

Food Poisoning, South Pacific

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will commission a study of the increased incidences of the food poisoning strain called ciguatera in so far as it relates to the residents of British dependent territories in the South Pacific, in the context of nuclear weapons tests in the region. [36754]

Mr. David Davis: The incidence of ciguatera in the South Pacific is monitored locally. It depends on a variety of factors. We see no need to commission any separate study.

Middle East

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest assessment of progress in the middle east peace process. [36897]

Mr. Hanley: The interim agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was signed in Washington on 28 September. This represents a major achievement in the peace process, which we warmly welcome. The interim agreement paves the way for Palestinian elections in the west bank and Gaza. We will be making a substantial contribution to the EU-organised observation of the elections. Negotiations between Israel and Syria remain suspended for the time being. We hope that they will resume soon.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the source documents which comprise the scientific evidence at Her Majesty's Government's disposal on the environmental risks posed to coral atolls by nuclear tests to which the Minister of State made reference in the adjournment debate on 19 July. [36839]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The scientific evidence is drawn from a number of sources. Copies of key documents will be available in the Library of the House shortly.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36832]

Mr. Hanley: Members of the public have the right to make representations to the appropriate ombudsman about any service or project provided by the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office—diplomatic wing or Overseas Development Administration—including those funded under the private finance initiative.

Abdel Ghadanfar

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on what date Her Majesty's Government was informed by the German Government of the decision to free Abdel Ghadanfar in November 1994; [37454]

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government was informed of and consulted about the release of, and the decision to free, Abdel Ghadanfar, by the German Authorities in November 1994; and if he will make a statement. [37453]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *9*.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) following the court case Air Malta v Granada Television and pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *332*, what evidence has now been found to substantiate a Maltese connection with the Lockerbie bombing; [37406]

(2) what information he has sought since March 1995 from Juge Brugiere in France, in relation to the UTA case, with particular reference to a Libyan connection for Lockerbie. [37423]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995, *Official Report* column *5*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) for what reason Her Majesty's Government supported the US decision that the Montreal convention, requiring attempts at conciliation and arbitration, should not be applied in relation to Pan Am 103 and Lockerbie; and that the preferred action was through the UN Security Council; [37435]

(2) what consideration has now been given to evidence involving officials of countries other than Libya in relation to Lockerbie; and what efforts her Majesty's Government have made to obtain such evidence concerning nationals of countries, other than Libya, as undertaken on 20 January 1992, *Official Report*, column *159*. [37436]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995. *Official Report*, column *6*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Amro Musa, Foreign Minister of Egypt, to discuss the Lockerbie situation; and what contact he has had since. [37448]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs saw the Egyptian Foreign Minister on 27 September, and expects to meet him frequently in future.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs following his undertaking given in Glasgow on 3 February, to look into the claims made by the Bradford police surgeon, Dr. David Fieldhouse, what further action he has taken to verify Dr. Fieldhouse's claims about the body count at Lockerbie on 21, 22 and 23 December 1988. [37438]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995. *Official Report*, column *5*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *7*, regarding his assertion on 3 February at the Scottish Oils Clubs Annual Dinner that a trial in relation to Lockerbie would be prejudiced by a public inquiry. [37463]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: No.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will now enter into discussions with Dr. Esmat Abdel Maguid with a view to resolving the Lockerbie case; [37442]

(2) what representations he has now had from Esmat Abdel Maguid on the issue of Libya's position in relation to the Lockerbie case. [37443]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: At his meeting with Dr. Maguid on 5 April, the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) discussed a range of matters, including Lockerbie.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice has now been sought from her Majesty's Government by the German Government on the reply that they should give to the letter to Bundeskanzler Helmut Kohl, in German from a German national, Elizabeth Mosey, mother of a Lockerbie victim, of 23 January 1995; and what advice was given by her Majesty's Government. [37447]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: None

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his letter of 9 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, if he will now discuss with the German Government the visit to Germany of the Iranian Intelligence Minster, Mr. Fallahian, and subsequent visits by Iranian Ministers at which the destruction of Pan Am 103 was discussed. [37449]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *1*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had from Adnan Omran, assistant secretary-general for political affairs of the Arab League, following the meeting between the League and the United Nations in Vienna in July 1995 about the Lockerbie situation. [37455]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: None.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's communications with the solicitors of Pan Am, Windels, Marx, Davies and Ives, regarding aspects of the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, since May 1995. [37440]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *8*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he was last in contact with the Government of Finland about the identity of a caller to the United States embassy in Helsinki on 5 December 1988, warning that within two weeks a bomb would be carried on to an American airliner from Frankfurt, destination New York. [37450]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Grantham on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *8*.

European Legislation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the judgments of the Court of the European Community which have required retrospective amendment of any United Kingdom Acts of Parliament or related instrument arising from *(a)* a Community directive and *(b)* a Community regulation stating in each case the relevant United Kingdom amended instrument and its principal effect. [37257]

Mr. David Davis: We are not aware of any judgment of the European Court of Justice which has required the United Kingdom to amend retroactively legislation arising from a community Directive or Regulation. Some judgments of the Court may have significant retrospective effects without the need for amending legislation, especially in the pensions and social security fields. We intend to address this issue at the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his letter of 12 July, what contribution Her Majesty's Government have made to the international programme set up under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency to consider the implications of past dumping operations; and what requests he has received from the Russian Government for technical help in relation to the Lepse in Murmansk harbour. [37396]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: We continue to participate in the international programme established to assess the risks to human health and the environment from radioactive wastes dumped in the Kara and Barents seas, to examine possible remedial actions and to advise on whether any are necessary and justified. This project, managed by the IAEA in co-operation with the Norwegian and Russian Governments, is expected to report in 1996. No specific request to provide technical assistance for the Lepse has been received from the Russian Government. The European Union is, however, proposing to assist the relevant Russian authorities by funding a feasibility study into the options for dealing with the Lepse and the radioactive material stored on board.

Kashmir

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 May, *Official Report*, columns *313–14*; what contribution he has made to the recent discussions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. [37108]

Mr. Hanley: We continue to encourage both the Indian and Pakistani Governments to resolve their differences over Kashmir through bilateral negotiation.

Iranian Airbus

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will put in the Library a copy of the recent statements by the Government of Iran, in the possession of his Department, that the skies would rain blood on America, as a result of the shooting down of an Iranian Airbus by the USS 'Vincennes' [37444]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *8*.

Mr. Prazak

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has now given to the death of British subject, Mr. Prazak, on 22 December 1992, on a Libyan airliner on an internal flight, in the light of approaches from Mrs. Felicity Prazak, a British citizen. [37437]

Mr. Hanley: We have helped Mrs. Prazak arrange a visit to her husband's grave in Libya and we are pressing the Libyan authorities to provide a crash report. We are not empowered to launch our own inquiry because the crash involved two Libyan aircraft inside Libyan air space.

PRIME MINISTER

Self-governing Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to his press statement of 24 August concerning his hopes for education, what procedures, flexibilities and diversity will potentially be available to future pupils, or parents, not already available at schools currently under local management arrangements, if they become directly funded under conditions laid down by Her Majesty's Government; and by what means in those circumstances Ministers will ensure that the options now preferred, or currently available, will be maintained under such arrangements. [37358]

(2) pursuant to his press statement of 24 August concerning education, which freedoms, flexibility, and additional diversity will potentially be available to future parents and pupils in schools now under local management arrangements in England and Wales if they became directly funded under conditions laid down by

Her Majesty's Government; and by what means Ministers will ensure that options currently available will be maintained. [37383]

The Prime Minister: Self-government is a significant and logical step beyond local management. A self-governing school controls its total budget, not just the proportion delegated by an LEA. It is also free to preserve its existing character or to propose changes without reference to the local authority.

This gives self-governing schools greater flexibility to innovate, and to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve.

I believe that the benefits of grant-maintained status should be extended to all schools. This option is currently being examined.

Sports Facilities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will require all relevant Government Departments to maintain a register listing sporting facilities in receipt of public funds *(a)* closed after 1 September 1995 and *(b)* proposed for closure; and if he will then instruct his Minister for Sport to investigate and report to him on relevant reasons for closure. [37336]

The Prime Minister: The sports policy statements issued during the summer recognised the important role which sports facilities, including those provided by public funds, play in the development of sport. The documents detail the measures that have taken and will be taking to safeguard and improve the current level of facilities provision. We will also shortly be consulting on a proposal that the Sports Councils should be given statutory consultee status on planning proposals affecting all playing fields. Additionally, the Government will retain statutory area standards to protect school playing fields. The Government do not see a need for a register of publicly funded sports facilities of the kind that the hon. Member suggests.

Breast Cancer Campaign

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Prime Minister how many postcards he has received expressing support for the national postcard campaign for breast cancer; and how many of these have been answered. [37051]

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Prime Minister how many postcards he has received in response to the recent campaign on breast cancer. [37481]

The Prime Minister: I have received a substantial number of representations regarding this campaign.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 25 January, what strategy, other than demanding a trial of two junior operatives, Her Majesty's Government now have for obtaining justice for all the victims of the crime of Lockerbie. [37461]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *79.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now place in the Library a copy of the memorandum from No. 10 Downing street in 1989 adducing the reasons why Her Majesty's Government would not allow a public inquiry into the Lockerbie crime; and at what level the decision on the public inquiry was taken. [37458]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *78.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minster what reports the United Kingdom and United States authorities in Cyprus have now received from Dr. David Lovejoy, an employee of the United States Government, directly or through other sources, on the movement of the United States hostage rescue team, including Matthew Gannon and Major Charles McKee, subsequently killed at Lockerbie, before the destruction of Pan Am 103; and if he will discuss with President Clinton the reasons why these reports were sought. [37456]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *80.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government were informed by the US authorities on or around 19 December 1988 of the travel plans of Major Charles McKee. [37405]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *79.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his letter of 30 August 1994 to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what examination has recently taken place of the Toshiba and Helsinki warnings in relation to Lockerbie, since the fatal accident inquiry. [37457]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *78.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 26 January, *Official Report,* column *300,* in what month of what year allegations were first made to the effect that Ali Akbar Mostashemi had paid $10 million to have the Lockerbie bombing carried out; who were the competent authorities to whom the Prime Minister refers; and how much of the alleged contradictory material came from Abdul Meged Jiacha. [37434]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* columns *80–81.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have now made of the role of Khaled Jaafar, a Lebanese victim of the Lockerbie bombing. [37407]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *79.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now discuss with President Clinton the implications regarding Iranian links and baggage being onloaded on Air Malta 180, destination Frankfurt airport. [37445]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *78.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now discuss with Chancellor Kohl the prima facie evidence that a German-based terrorist organisation used their knowledge of a covert US drugs operation to switch an unaccompanied bag containing drugs with an identical bag containing a bomb which destroyed Pan Am Flight 103. [37441]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *78.*

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what information has come recently to Her Majesty's Government about approaches by members of the Jaafar family offering precise testimony about Hezbollah and Achmed Tibril and their role in using a member of the Jaafar family to get a bomb on board Pan Am flight 103. [37395]

The Prime Minister: So far as I am aware, no such approaches have been received.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with Chancellor Kohl the reasons why the Justice Department of the German Government have challenged Anglo-US explanations of the Lockerbie crime. [36747]

The Prime Minister: The German Federal Ministry of Justice has not challenged the basis on which charges have been brought against the two individuals accused of having carried out the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *571*, if he will identify the partners to whom he referred in relation to discussions about Lockerbie and UTA 772. [37452]

The Prime Minister: No.

Intergovernmental Panel on the Oceans

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his letter of 9 March to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what recent consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to the recommendation of the Government's panel on sustainable development on the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on the oceans. [37291]

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is organising an international workshop from 30 November to 2 December to consider the machinery by which global decisions on the oceans take place. The Government will be putting the conclusions of this workshop, with their own views, to the next meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

East German Security Service

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have had recently, since 15 July, from the German Government about their interrogation of Edward Bollier's Stasi control, and the sale of timing devices to the Stasi. [37408]

The Prime Minister: So far as I am aware, none.

Trafficking in Fissile Materials

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his letter of 2 May to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what progress has been made on the plan of action agreed by the European summit at Essen in December 1994 to improve co-operation between member states of the Union on how to develop programmes of assistance to third countries in relation to illegal trafficking in fissile materials; and if he will make a statement. [37288]

The Prime Minister: The Essen report on Illicit Traffic in Radioactive Substances and Nuclear Materials recommended a plan of action to improve co-operation with countries which were potential sources of illicit nuclear material. Since then, EURATOM has promoted a number of projects, the primary aim of which has been to provide assistance on improving nuclear materials accountancy and control. Three projects involving co-operation with Russia are currently under way and five are planned for 1996. The United Kingdom has been pursuing bilateral projects in Russia and Kazakhstan to assist those countries in a range of safeguards-related areas.

Libya (Extradition)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if the United Kingdom now has an extradition treaty with Libya. [37462]

The Prime Minister: No.

DEFENCE

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the number of ships for service in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; and if he will make a statement. [36439]

Mr. Soames: The Government will maintain the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at the level needed to meet the Royal Navy's requirements. There is at present no requirement for an increase in the number of ships in service.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many public interest immunity certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36693]

Mr. Soames: I am unable to provide any details before April 1992. Since that date public interest immunity certificates have been signed by Ministers in this Department to cover a number of individual subjects and, in the event not all the certificates have been used. Total numbers for each year are as follows:

1992: 3
1993: 5
1994: 2
1995: 3

Submarines (Allowances)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what extra allowances are currently paid to those employed on submarines. [36335]

Mr. Soames: Apart from submarine pay, the details of which I gave to the hon. Member in my answer of 18 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *1184*, no extra allowances are paid to personnel because of their specific service aboard submarines. However, all service personnel who are serving in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines who are in receipt of United Kingdom rates of pay and who have served a minimum of two years at sea are eligible for longer service at sea bonus, providing they are serving in a qualifying unit, such as the submarine flotilla. Additionally, in recognition of their sea service they receive a waiver of food and accommodation charges and extra travel warrants on return to the United Kingdom.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36365]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The rates of travel allowance currently in payment are as follows:

Type	*Engine cc* / *Cars*	*Full rate p/mile* £	*Lower tier p/mile* £	*Rate effective date*
Standard Rate Motor Mileage Allowance (SRMMA)	*Cars*			
	0–1000	0.27	0.15	6 April 1995
	1001–1500	0.34	0.19	
	1501–2000	0.43	0.23	
	2001 and over	0.60	0.32	
	Motorcycles			
	0–125	0.158	0.062	6 April 1995
	126 and over	0.242	0.090	
Public Transport Rate Motor Mileage Allowance (PTRMMA)	All cars	0.238		6 April 1995
	Motorcycles			
	0–125	0.158		6 April 1995
	126 and over	0.238		
Candidates for Employment	All cars and motorcycles	0.10		1 April 1989
		0.05		
Bicycle		0.062		6 April 1995

Note:
Under current regulations SRMMA may be claimed at full rate to a limit of 4000 miles (1995–96 financial year). Any additional mileage travelled is restricted to the Lower Tier rate.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36366]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The total costs of mileage allowances claimed by Ministry of Defence civilian staff using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five year is as follows:

1990–91: £11,960,000
1991–92: £11,800,000
1992–93: £11,840,000
1993–94: £11,230,000
1994–95: £10,710,000

The estimated savings in the last year—1994–95—if the mileage rate which could be claimed was set at the lowest rate is:

£1,680,000 (= 15.7 per cent. of the actual cost).

Overseas Troops

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of British troops in the various countries where they are stationed. [36350]

Mr. Soames: The number of British Army troops stationed at permanent overseas garrisons is as follows:

	Number
Germany	26,500
Hong Kong	2,600
Brunei	680
Cyprus	2,700
Falkland Islands	300
Gibraltar	60

In addition, about 74,000 Army troops are stationed in the United Kingdom.

Officers and soldiers from these permanent garrisons are deployed on short-term operational and other tours in a further 77 countries including as defence and military attachés.

Civilian Projects

Ms Roseanna Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times each of the armed services has been *(a)* used and *(b)* requested to carry out civilian projects for private individuals in the last five years. [36974]

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. A large number of requests for military aid to the civil community are for work of a minor nature and are handled on a local basis.

Some training projects are carried out on private land in Scotland from time to time.

Ms Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish details of the guidelines and regulations by which the armed services can be used to carry out civilian projects for private individuals. [36975]

Mr. Soames: Instructions on the conduct of military aid to the civil community, whereby service personnel and equipment can be provided either in emergencies or as a routine activity, are contained in a joint service publication and are summarised in a pamphlet which is available to civil authorities and others. I am placing a copy of the pamphlet in the Library of the House. Examples of routine assistance on special projects are construction, demolition, repair and rehabilitation work. Tasks must be of social value to the community and of good training value to the services.

Separate regulations exist to cover circumstances in which Royal Engineer or other service units perform tasks of material benefit to a landowner which offer unusual or exceptional training value, the opportunity for which is not readily available on Ministry of Defence property. Such tasks may be undertaken on the basis that the landowner pays for all materials consumed, while we do not seek to recover the labour, plant and transport costs. These regulations are contained in "Army General and Administrative Instructions", which are classified documents.

Ms Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times, by whom and what was the cost of using *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Royal Navy to carry out civilian projects for private individuals in Scotland in the last five years. [36976]

Mr. Soames: There are 31 recorded cases of Royal Engineer units of the Army carrying out projects in Scotland in the last five years in the course of training on private land, although the costs are not kept separately from those of the cost of normal training. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have no records of such activities over the last five years.

Research (Radiation Tests)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the research projects his Department has undertaken since 1965 involving radiation tests on humans. [36729]

Mr. Arbuthnot: This information in the form requested is not available, but the subject has been investigated and no evidence has been found of any MOD involvement in unethical radiation experiments on humans.

Duke of Atholl

Ms Roseanna Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to the public funds of the use of armed forces personnel by the Duke of Atholl to shore up the bank at Glen Tilt. [36973]

Mr. Soames: The work carried out on the River Tilt presented an exceptional opportunity for a Territorial Army unit to undertake tasks of major training value. The work was primarily of benefit to householders living outside the Atholl estate. No significant extra costs to public funds were incurred as the Duke of Atholl paid for all materials consumed.

Hawk Weapons

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his Answer of 3 May, *official Report,* column *525,* what studies he will conduct about long-term arrangements to support Hawk detachments at RAF St. Athan; and what is his estimate of the long-term cost of making permanent provision for them. [36963]

Mr. Soames: A number of options have been identified to meet the Hawk weapons detachment requirement at RAF St. Athan. An independent option study has been commissioned to examine these options and to determine the most cost-effective permanent arrangement. It is not our practice to publish assessments of the long-term costs of possible options within the defence forward programme.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyn/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net,

(g) Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [37003]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is not held centrally in the form requested, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, such information as is available is detailed in the table.

We have no records of any MOD contract in this time scale with the following companies:

Datasolve
ITN Net
Centre File
Telecom Capita

Number and value of contracts per financial year per group of companies

£ million

Company Group	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995 to July*
Anderson Consulting	<5	<5	>5	>5	<5	<5
	2.6	0.5	6.5	1.4	1.5	0.1
AT and T Istel	nil	<5	<5	25	>5	<5
		0.1	0.4	3.0	0.2	0.1
BIS Info Systems	nil	<15	10	nil	nil	nil
		1.1	1.0			
CFM Group	nil	<5	<5	nil	nil	<5
		0.1	0.1			4.7
CMG Group	<5	<5	>5	<15	<5	<5
	0.1	0.1	2.2	2.2	0.7	0.1
Digital Equipment Group	422	257	281	183	80	28
	8.3	7.4	8.2	9.8	6.4	7.7
EDS Group	<5	nil	62	79	62	17
	0.1		22	26	17	4.9
Hoskyns/CAP Gemini	12	9	28	20	14	nil
	1.1	0.2	1.0	8.3	0.1	
ICL Group	169	189	158	202	139	38
	19	27	16	31	17	1.0
Logica Group	25	26	29	23	18	4
	4.2	2.8	3.7	4.3	0.9	1.2
Nixdorf Computers	<5	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
	.03					
Sema Group (excluding the BAe-SEMA joint venture)	18	10	6	5	4	nil
	2.1	3.0	0.1	0.1	<0.1	
Siemens Group	194	213	223	246	181	101
	48	16	52	101	90	41

[1] Nixdorf data is included within Siemens, as Siemens Nixdorf Information.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36837]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The parliamentary ombudsman has, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, jurisdiction to investigate complaints from members of the public about the way they have been treated by Government Departments, other public sector bodies engaged in the work of central Government, and those acting on their behalf. The ombudsman can investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by or on behalf of a Department or public body within their jurisdiction, that is those bodies which are listed in schedule 2 of the 1967 Act.

Market Testing (Health Services)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what personnel implications will follow from market testing health services for British forces; and if he will make a statement. [36979]

Mr. Soames: It is not possible at this time to say what the personnel implications of the market test of health services in British Forces Germany will be. The winning tender by the Health Alliance is subject to further detailed contractual discussions as well as consultation with the staff and their representatives in UK and Germany. Any proposals will, however, be in full compliance with the terms and conditions of service, and appropriate British or German legislation.

Jobs

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of jobs are defence-related in *(a)* all England and Welsh counties, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland. [36782]

Mr. Arbuthnot: This information is not available in the form requested."UK Defence Statistics 1995", a copy of which is in the Library of the House shows that, in 1994, the deployment of service and MOD civilian personnel, and the estimated number of jobs directly associated with my Department's expenditure on equipment, were as follows:

	England	Wales	Scotland
Service personnel	156,000	4,800	18,400
MOD civilian staff	95,000	4,900	11,200
Jobs directly dependent on MOD equipment spending	93,000	1,000	8,000
Total	344,000	10,700	37,600

The relevant tables in "UK Defence Statistics 1995" [1.9 and 2.4] break down the figures for England by standard region, but not by county. The figures for jobs in industry do not include jobs dependent on non-equipment expenditure, or on defence exports; nor do they include jobs at subcontractors and other suppliers to MOD contractors. Within the UK as a whole, such jobs are estimated to amount to an additional 280,000, but no breakdown of this UK total is available.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to protect defence-related jobs in the south west in the coming year; and if he will make a statement. [36781]

Mr. Arbuthnot: My Department's objective is to obtain the best value for money possible for the defence budget, rather than to protect employment in any particular area though, as an employer, we naturally have regard to the employment implications of our decisions. As a customer of industry, we believe that where companies locate, and where they choose to carry out work on our contracts, are matters for the companies themselves to decide. They may of course be eligible for regional assistance, but this is not the responsibility of my Department.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total British work force is employed in defence-related jobs. [36784]

Mr Arbuthnot: The proportion of the United Kingdom workforce employed in defence-related jobs was approximately 3 per cent., based on the following figures.

	Number
Strength of Armed Forces on 1 April 1994	254,500
MOD UK-based civilian staff on 1 April 1994	121,600
Estimated UK employment dependent on defence expenditure in 1993–94 (the latest year for which an estimate is available)	395,000
Total	771,100
Average UK workforce in employment 1993–94	25,412,000

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the number of defence-related jobs in Devon and Cornwall. [36783]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Such information as is available is compiled by region rather than by county. The "UK Defence Statistics 1995", a copy of which is in the Library of the House, shows that, in 1994, some 39,700 service personnel, and some 24,800 MOD civilian staff were deployed in the south-west region. In addition, some 18,000 jobs in the region were estimated to be directly associated with my Department's expenditure on equipment. This last figure does not include jobs dependent on non-equipment expenditure, or on defence exports; nor does it include jobs at subcontractors and other suppliers to MOD contractors. Within the United Kingdom as a whole, such jobs are estimated to amount to an additional 280,000, but no regional breakdown of this figure is available.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has changed his policy about the future of the runway at RAF Chivenor since 3 May; and what information about the future of the runway he communicated to a delegation from north Devon. [36985]

Mr. Soames: There has been no change in the policy about the future of the runway. I confirmed to members of the delegation from north Devon, whom I met on 26 June 1995, that the runway at Chivenor would not be broken up as a consequence of any relocation of Royal Marine units there, and that the long-term civil aviation needs for north Devon were a matter for the Department of Transport.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now commission an investigation into possible joint uses of the runway at RAF Chivenor by any elements of the armed forces, in order to maintain the runway's viability in the long term. [36986]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 10 May, *Official Report*, column 526.

Health Services, Germany

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the statement of requirements for the procurement of community, primary, secondary and dental health services for British forces in Germany. [36977]

Mr. Soames: A copy of the statement of requirement is being placed in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the companies that tendered for, and those that have been shortlisted for, the procurement of community, primary, secondary and dental health services for British forces in Germany indicating non-profit-making organisations. [36978]

Mr. Soames: Tenders for the provision of primary, community and secondary health care to the Army and community and secondary health care to the RAF in Germany for five years from 1 April 1996 were submitted by three potential providers:

a. The Health Alliance—an in-house bid in partnerships with a consortium headed by Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Trust and including the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association.

b. BMI Health Care in Association with Bradford Community Health NHS Trust.

c. Synapse—a consortium including Trafford NHS Trust, Lakeview Learning and Independent British Health Care.

BMI Healthcare and Lakeview Learning were the only private sector organisations involved.

RAF Valley

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 May, *Official Report,* column *525,* what progress has been made in introducing contractorising of support services at RAF Valley; and what bids have been received from the RAF itself in these contracting processes. [36962]

Mr. Soames: An invitation to tender was issued on 14 September, leading to a planned contractor award in April 1996. Following consultation with the trades unions and other interested parties, it has been decided not to proceed with an in-house bid.

Aberport Range

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the sources of income for the Aberport range under agency status. [36984]

Mr. Arbuthnot: This is s a matter for the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Nick Harvey, dated 16 October 1995:

Your Parliamentary Question (No 36984) dated 20 July asked the Secretary of State for Defence for the sources of income for the Aberporth range under agency status. Your letter has been passed to me since I am responsible for the day to day running of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency which now includes the Defence Test and Evaluation Organisation's site at Aberporth.

Under agency status, all but a small percentage of Aberporth's income will come from the MOD. The most important customers are the Armed Services (the RAF are forecast to provide about 54% of Aberporth's income and the RN about 5%) and the next most important is the MOD's Procurement Executive with about 33 per cent.

I hope that this is helpful.

Sea Dumping (Munitions)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken in regard to the reply H–0293/95, by the European Commission to Christine Crawley MEP, in question No. 87 at Question Time in the European Parliament on 17 May, that it is up to European Union member state authorities to provide information on the nature and quantities of munitions disposed at sea and their location, and to investigate the prospective environmental risks arising in order to minimise them. [36763]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 31 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *875.* Current scientific evidence indicates that dumped munitions present no significant risk to human health or the marine environment.

Trident

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates were made of the cost of the work to be undertaken at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston in support of the Trident programme before the work started. [37145]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Estimates were made of the manpower and materials costs that would be involved at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in the design, development and production of the UK Trident warhead. These were reflected in the budget for the establishment. It was also recognised that, as well as utilising existing AWE facilities, the programme would in due course make use of new facilities, coming on stream, in the normal course of renewal.

Tornado

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* by squadron, air base and contracted company details of the efficiency of Tornado maintenance contracts since they were first contracted out and *(b)* by squadron and air base details of the efficiency of Tornado maintenance in the five year period prior to contracting out. [37039]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The level of contractor involvement in Tornado maintenance and rectification at squadron and air base level is minimal. RAF personnel undertake almost all of this work and there are no plans significantly to increase the level of contractorisation.

Royal Naval College, Dartmouth

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of hiring from abroad diesel powered submarines for training by the Royal Naval Training College, Dartmouth. [37095]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We do not hire diesel powered submarines from abroad for training by the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

Defence Agreement

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a list of all papers released since 1988 by the Public Records Office that refer specifically to the 1958 US/UK mutual defence agreement. [37146]

Mr. Soames: No. The information requested can be obtained through examination of the lists at the Public Record Office, Kew.

Submarines

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many diesel powered submarines are owned and operated by the Royal Navy. [37094]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Royal Navy owns four upholder class diesel powered submarines. These are not in operation and we are continuing to examine options for their sale, lease or long term storage.

Small Arms Ammunition

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the failure rate of small arms ammunition ordered by his Department from Portugal. [37148]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The competition to supply the 7.62mm sniper ammunition for the National Rifle Association for use at its Bisley tournaments in 1995 and 1996 was won by INDEP of Portugal. Following representations from the association about the misfire rate of the ammunition, the Defence Test and Evaluation Organisation carried out extensive tests of the ammunition on standard service issue sniper rifles. No misfires occurred in these tests. It is therefore likely that the misfires reported by the association were a result of using the ammunition in non-standard weapons.

Gurkhas

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the pension arrangements for the Gurkhas serving the Crown are the same as for other members of the armed services. [37096]

Mr. Soames: No. Pensions received by ex-British Gurkha pensioners are governed by the 1947 tripartite agreement, between the Governments of the United Kingdom, India and Nepal. Under the terms of this agreement, which requires British Gurkha personnel to be discharged in their homeland of Nepal, pension provision is governed by the rates paid to Indian Army pensioners. All British Gurkha personnel have to serve a minimum of 15 years before they are eligible to receive a service retirement pension.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to share nuclear weapon designs or nuclear weapon technology with the French Government. [37144]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We maintain contacts with France on a range of issues relating to nuclear weapons. These contacts include some technical matters and exchanges between scientists. It is not our practice to reveal further details.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been his responses to the communication sent by Colonel James Sullivan of the office of the Secretary of the US Air Force on 17 November 1994, concerning the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie. [37439]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 6 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *11*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Brent Spar

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department received copies of the reports produced by Smit Engineering and Heeremac prior to the decision to approve the sea dumping of Brent Spar. [36447]

Mr. Eggar: The reports submitted by Shell to my Department are listed in the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 4 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *152–54*. They included studies by McDermott Engineering (Europe) Ltd. and Heerema Engineering Services (UK) Ltd. These studies addressed the fulls cope of work necessary for onshore disposal and showed the cost of that option to be significantly higher than the preliminary assessment by Smit Engineering. The McDermott and Heerema studies contributed to the decision that deep-sea disposal was the best practicable environmental option for the Brent Spar.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research his Department has commissioned into the cumulative environmental impact of sea dumping 50 to 60 production facilities prior to the decision to approve the sea dumping of Brent Spar. [36448]

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 18 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *1215*.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what research his or any other Government Department had commissioned and received on the environmental impact of sea dumping Brent Spar on the deep ocean ecosystems prior to approving the sea dumping of Brent Spar; [36449]

(2) what was the conclusion of the AURIS report on the proposed sea dumping of Brent Spar relating to the possibility of the Brent Spar breaking up immediately after or during the sea dumping operation; [36451]

(3) what research drew his Department to the conclusion that the contents of the Brent Spar would disperse slowly over thousands of years. [36450]

Mr. Eggar: The Brent Spar Impact Hypothesis by Rudall Blanchard Associates Ltd. dated December 1994 succeeded earlier work carried out by Aberdeen university. The later study concluded that the most likely scenario was that the structure would remain largely intact after its impact with the seabed and would corrode very slowly, probably over the next 4,000 years, in the deep waters of the north-east Atlantic. Government scientists also considered the possibility that the Spar would break up during its descent, or on impact with the seabed. They concluded that, in any of those scenarios, the consequences in terms of risk to the food chain, human health and potential environmental impact would have been insignificant.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if the samples taken from the contents of the Brent Spar were analysed before the decision to approve the sea dumping of Brent Spar was made; on what date they were analysed; and when the results were notified to his Department; [36455]

(2) what samples were taken from the contents of the Brent Spar by his Department, the Ministry of Fisheries and Food or Aberdeen university prior to the decision to approve the sea dumping of Brent Spar. [36454]

Mr. Eggar: Independent surveys were carried out which enabled Shell to assess the contents of the Spar and to satisfy Government that deep-sea disposal was the best practicable environmental option. The Norwegian certifying authority, Det Norske Veritas, has been

commissioned to undertake a further independent assessment of the structure and contents of the Spar. I understand that the results of that study will be available on 18 October.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department was aware of a memorandum dated 6 December 1993 from W. McMinn, an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on the toxicity of the waste water in Brent Spar and recommending the prohibition of discharge prior to the decision to approve sea dumping of Brent Spar. [36452]

Mr. Eggar: My Department was not aware of the internal MAFF memorandum prior to the decision. Comments made in that memorandum about the discharge of the contents of the storage tanks were made in the context of removing the oily sludge and ballast water as part of an onshore dismantling option and dumping them in shallow coastal waters. That was totally different to the disposal of the entire structure in over 2,200 m of water in the north-east Atlantic. MAFF issued a statement on 20 June 1995 which it made clear that the concerns expressed in the leaked paper did not apply to deep-sea disposal of the Brent Spar.

Research Council Funding

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of grants and their value for responsive mode funding for chemistry and materials by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council for the current funding year and comparable figures for the Science and Engineering Research Council in the previous three years. [36408]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The number of grants and their value for repsonsive mode funding in the chemistry and materials programme of the EPSRC, and figures for SERC in the previous three years, are given in the following table:

	Chemistry		*Materials*	
Year	*Number*	*Value £ Million*	*Number*	*Value £ Million*
SERC (September–August)				
1991–92	110	6.1	205	20.6
1992–93	180	12.5	330	44.2
1993–94	309	25.2	256	29.9
EPSRC[1] *(April–July)*				
1995	115	9.1	100	10.1

[1] The EPSRC came into effect on 1 April 1994 and introduced new procedures for awarding grants from April 1995. The period from September 1994 to April 1995 was an interregnum period in which no significant awards were made.

Non-fossil Fuel Option

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1011*, when he now expects to make an initial announcement about the timetable for NFFO-4 bids. [37277]

Mr. Page: I hope to be able to make an initial announcement shortly on arrangements for the fourth round of bidding for electricity from renewable sources of energy, known as NFF0-4. My expectation is that further details will be given in Renewable Energy Bulletin No. 6, REB-6, to be published soon after the initial announcement.

British Catalogue Exhibition, Yemen

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the letter of 4 April from the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), if he will make a statement on his Department's efforts to stage a British catalogue exhibition in Yemen [37290]

Mr. Nelson: My Department is planning to run four catalogue exhibitions in the Republic of Yemen during the first six months of 1996. The exhibitions will be held in the capital, Sana'a and in Taiz, Hodaidah and Aden. Possible dates and venues are being discussed with the local chambers of commerce.

Trade Promotion (Uzbekistan)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's efforts to promote trade between Britain and Uzbekistan. [36555]

Mr. Nelson: Promotion of trade between the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan is spearheaded by a separate section in my Department dedicated to the southern republics of the former Soviet Union. Set up in 1993, following the break-up of the Soviet Union the previous year, the DTI's central Asia and Transcaucasia section is supported by an export promoter for central Asia seconded from the private sector. Its work is complemented by more specialist parts of the DTI such as the oil and gas projects and supplies office, which advises British companies on opportunities in the energy sector, and the projects export promotion division, which assists UK companies in their pursuit of capital projects overseas.

My Department's trade promotion effort for Uzbekistan is assisted by the Uzbek-British Trade and Industry Council, UBTIC, a high-level forum of senior business men and trade promotion officials from both sides, whose role is to facilitate bilateral trade and investment by British companies in Uzbekistan. The DTI provides two permanent members of UBTIC and also acts as the UK secretariat. UBTIC is chaired on the Uzbekistan side at deputy prime ministerial level while the UK chairman is Geoffrey Bray, a retired senior British business man and former chairman of the BSCC, previously the British Soviet Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to its day-to-day work advising British companies on business opportunities in Uzbekistan the DTI is actively involved in high profile events such as overseas trade missions, VIP inward visits and seminars and conferences. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy led a trade mission of 25 leading business men to Uzbekistan in May 1994. In March this year, my Department provided financial support to the BSCC's trade mission to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Last month, the Viscount Goschen, Minister for Aviation and Shipping, led a trade mission of British companies in the transport sector to Uzbekistan and elsewhere in central

Asia; the DTI, in conjunction with the British embassies in Tashkent and Almaty, provided the administrative and briefing support for this mission.

Here in the UK, the DTI supported the "Doing Business in Uzbekistan" conference in London organised by IBC Financial Focus and will provide support for a similar conference, also organised by IBC, next month. With a number of senior Uzbek Ministers and officials coming to the UK for the conference, the DTI hopes to organise the next meeting of the Uzbek-British Trade and Industry Council around that time. The DTI also supported seminars on central Asia at the Government office in Nottingham in June and at the London chamber of commerce and industry in July. The export promoter for central Asia spoke at both these events.

Officials in my Department are conscious that, while the overall level of UK trade with, and investment in, Uzbekistan is satisfactory, our commercial success there is largely attributable to the activities of just a few major companies. The DTI is accordingly reviewing its strategy for central Asia and Transcaucasia with a view to increasing the awareness among UK companies of the opportunities which exits both in Uzbekistan and elsewhere in the region.

Radiation Experiments

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 July column *1221*, what are the ethical guidelines relating to radiation experiments on humans. [36755]

Mr. Ian Taylor: As early as 1953, the MRC defined an explicit requirement that informed consent should be obtained by clinical investigators from participants in research. This was complemented in 1963 by a comprehensive statement, "Responsibility in Investigations on Human Subjects", which outlined the standards relating to the use of volunteers in medical research. These guidelines are kept continually under review, and in 1991 strict MRC guidance was drawn up relating specifically to the conduct of research on the mentally incapacitated.

The MRC does not carry out experiments on human volunteers without obtaining their written permission, and without providing them with detailed information about the purpose of the study and nature of their involvement. Furthermore, such volunteers can withdraw at any time.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations the Medical Research Council had with the parents of children whose body parts were used for radioactivity-related studies from 1965 to 1970. [36445]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Under the Human Tissue Act 1961, consultation with the parents of the children involved would have been the responsibility of the person in lawful possession of the body. This would have been a member of the hospital staff where the post mortem took place, not the Medical Research Council researchers. As far as can be ascertained, it is believed that appropriate consultation took place and that body parts were removed in compliance with the Act.

Mr. Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research the Medical Research Council undertook involving the removal of bones from the corpses of children in Clwyd between 1965 and 1970. [36446]

Mr. Taylor: Nationwide studies looking into the concentration of strontium-90 in human bones were carried out between 1955 and 1970 under the joint auspices of the Medical Research Council and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. For the purpose of this research, pathologists in various parts of the UK supplied samples of fresh bones obtained at autopsy from the bodies of subjects of different age groups, including infants and children.

From 1959 onwards, results of this study incorporated regional breakdowns by domicile of the people whose bones were used. Information is available for the former county of Denbighshire which roughly corresponds to the present county of Clwyd. This shows that between 1965 and 1970 samples were taken from 18 children who had died aged three months to 17 years.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Medical Research Council on radioactivity experiments conducted on civilians under the direction of the Medical Research Council without the knowledge of the subjects concerned. [36760]

Mr. Taylor: The Medical Research Council does not carry out experiments on human volunteers without obtaining their written permission, and without providing them with detailed information about the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement. Volunteers are given the opportunity to withdraw at any point. There are strict MRC guidelines relating specifically to the conduct of research on children and the mentally incapacitated.

Public Interest Immunity Certificate

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, how many public interest certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36688]

Mr. Lang: My Department's records show that, since April 1992, 21 public interest immunity certificates have been signed by Ministers of this Department, five of which did not need to be deployed. No central record is kept of certificates signed before that date.

Jaguar X200 Project

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he examined the costings before agreeing to subsidise the building of the new Jaguar in the United Kingdom; what considerations led him to decide that the subsidy was necessary; and if he will publish the detailed evidence leading him to his conclusion. [36215]

Mr. Eggar: DTI Ministers and officials had long and detailed discussions with Ford and Jaguar to evaluate the X200 project.

The conclusions reached was that there was a strong and genuine commercial case for supporting the project. Moreover, the project will create a significant number of jobs at Jaguar and in the components supply base. The X200 project will also help secure the long-term future of Jaguar's manufacturing operations in the UK.

The information provided by Jaguar to enable the valuation to be carried out was commercially and market sensitive and given in confidence to the Department.

Outstanding Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many outstanding contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36997]

Mr. Lang: Such information is not readily available for the whole Department and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. However, major contracts let through the DTI's central IT purchasing section relating to the companies listed are as follows:

Company	*Period of contract*	*Value*	*Comment*
1. Hoskyns	November 1994—November 1997	Dependent on volume of work but estimated to be in the region of £15 million–£25 million	Contracting out of IT Service provision.
2. ICL	April 1994–April 1997	£25 million approximately	Project OSPREY—to introduce office automation facilities throughout DTI Headquarters and Regional Offices.
3. SEMA	1994–97	£612k	In each case, the figure quoted reflects the aggregate value of a number of contracts let during the first year of a framework agreement.
CMG	1994–97	£1,469k	
LOGICA	1994–97	£95k	

Economic Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the Government's monetary and exchange rate policies have had on the demand for British-produced cars at home and abroad. [36205]

Mr. Eggar: The Government's monetary policy is to deliver low inflation and this has been around 3 per cent. for two years. This gives businesses the confidence to invest in the UK. Along with a competitive pound, increases in productivity over the years have allowed British-based manufacturers to operate much more effectively.

Continuing healthy demand for British cars was reflected in 1994 total car production figures of 1,466,800, of which 618,700—42 per cent.—were for the export market. This represents a 6.3 per cent. increase in production and 38.7 per cent. in exports over 1993.

Company Mergers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received urging referral of the bids for Southern Electricity, Midlands Electricity and NORWEB by National Power, PowerGen and North West Water to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. [37482]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Department has received a number of letters concerning these proposed mergers. In line with standard practice, all correspondence has been forwarded to the Director General of Fair Trading, who will, in due course, advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on whether he should refer the proposed mergers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Plutonium Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the French authorities have informed his Department or the British nuclear authorities of the research use for which the plutonium exported to France from the United Kingdom was put, to which reference is made at footnote 3*(a)* of his departmental press release P/95/455 of 13 July on plutonium figures. [36762]

Mr. Page: The plutonium exported to France was material for fast reactor research purposes and is subject to Euratom safegards.

International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals were put by the United Kingdom to the 39th session of the International Atomic Energy Agency general conference in Vienna in September; how were they received; how the United Kingdom responded to or voted on proposals put by other member states of the IAEA; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom submission and final decisions and declarations from the conferences. [37255]

Mr. Page: The UK delegation to the 39th general conference of the IAEA played a full part in the drafting and submission by the European Union of resolutions covering the strengthening of IAEA safeguards, illicit trafficking in nuclear materials, the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq. These draft resolutions were in some cases amended slightly in negotiation with other delegations, but all were eventually adopted by consensus. The UK delegation also participated fully in discussions concerning other resolutions and decisions of the conference.

A copy of the document produced by the IAEA containing resolutions and other decisions of the general conference will be placed in the Library of the House when it becomes available.

Minors (Credit Facilities)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the extent to which banks, and other commercial institutions may, within current statutory provisions, make direct approaches to juveniles under the age of 18 years offering immediate credit; and if he will make a statement. [37357]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Lenders tend not to provide credit to minors because generally their debts cannot be legally enforced.

Under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 it is an offence knowingly to invite a minor to borrow money, or to take credit.

The Government have no plans to investigate.

Mobile Fresh Water Tanks

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what statutory or other requirements have been made by Her Majesty's Government to require water companies to have available a given number of mobile fresh water tanks, wheeled or otherwise, related to the numbers of population served; and what national arrangements it has made for supply of such equipment in emergencies. [37304]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to this question by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment today at column *162*.

Nuclear Industry (Privatisation)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what public consultation process he intends to undertake in connection with the proposal to transfer the licenses for nuclear sites to private operators; [36336]

(2) what public consultation he intends to undertake in connection with the proposal to split ownership and licensing of certain nuclear sites between private and public ownership. [36337]

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for licensing of nuclear sites rests with the independent Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate. I understand that the HSE has used its discretionary powers under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, as amended, to direct licence applicants to carry out a public body consultation which will last for a period of three months.

BMARC

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has anything to add to his answers of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *725*, and 20 June, *Official Report*, column *175*, or to the answers of the Secretary of State for Defence of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *488*, 20 June, *Official Report*, column *237*, 27 June, *Official Report*, column *601* and 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *1188–89*, on BMARC. [37318]

Mr. Nelson: I can only comment on the two answers which were given by my Department. I have nothing to add to those answers.

Industrial and Provident Societies

Mr. Keen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if action is being taken to bring the scale of fees for industrial and provident societies into line with those now established for limited companies; what efforts his Department is making to ensure that the deregulation initiative guarantees a level playing field between industrial and provident societies and private companies; and if he will make a statement. [32424]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I have been asked to reply.

As part of the Government's deregulation initiative, we intend to bring audit requirements for industrial and provident societies broadly into line with those for companies. This will involve a relaxation of the requirement to prepare and submit accounts and an increase in the audit thresholds. A consultation exercise on these and other deregulatory changes to the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts was carried out earlier this year. The measures will be implemented through an Order under section 1 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. The draft order will be laid early in the next session.

The Government have no plans to bring the fees for industrial and provident societies into line with those for limited companies. The higher fees in part reflect the more detailed registration procedure for societies, which is needed to ensure that they are either bona fide co-operatives of that they operate for the benefit of the community and so do not need to be registered as companies. However, the Government keep societies' fees under annual review.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

38. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with civil service trade unions concerning market testing. [35893]

Mr. Horam: Market testing has been a regular subject for discussion at meetings between Ministers and the civil service trade unions.

Ministerial Responsibilities

39. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on how he has exercised his new responsibilities. [35894]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Competitiveness

40. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what role the Cabinet Office will play in enhancing the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry during the next 12 months. [35895]

Mr. Freeman: The Cabinet Office takes forward the competitiveness agenda within Government and with industry. The Deputy Prime Minister regularly discusses competitiveness issues with Cabinet colleagues in the ED(C) Committee, and maintains a close dialogue with business. We will produce a third report on national competitiveness next year.

Civil Service Morale

42. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement on morale in the civil service since 5 July. [35897]

Mr. Horam: Morale in the civil service is best maintained at a high level by allowing staff to perform to the best of their abilities in their chosen career. This Government's civil service reforms enable staff to focus their attention on delivering high quality public services efficiency and effectively.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their vehicles for official business. [36357]

Mr. Horam: The current rates of travel allowance which may be claimed by civil servants in the Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Service and its agencies, Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information, are listed. The rates payable in the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service, are being reviewed.

Cabinet office, OPS and agencies

Motor Cars

Miles travelled in a financial year	*Up to 1500 cc*	*1501–2000 cc*	*Over 2000 cc*
Standard rate mileage			
First 5,000	35.7p	42p	46p
Over 5,000	18p	22p	30p
Public transport rate		23p per mile	

Motor Cycles

Miles travelled in a financial year	Up to 125 cc	Over 125 cc
First 4,000 miles		
Third Party Insurance	14.6p	22.1p
Comprehensive Insurance	16.2p	25.3p
Over 4000 miles (all)	6.1p	9p
Pedal cycles	6p per mile	

COI

Motor Cars

Standard Rate Mileage—37p per mile up to 4,000 miles in a year and 21p thereafter.

Public Transport Rate—23.8p per mile.

Motor Cycles

Miles travelled in a financial year	*Up to 125 cc*	*Over 125 cc*
Up to 4,000	14.5p	22.8p
Over 4,000	6.2p	9.0p
Pedal Cycles	6.2p per mile	

HMSO

Motor cars

Unified Rate—38p up to 4,000 miles and 21p thereafter.

Public Transport Rate—25p (up to 20,000 miles)

Motor Cycles

Miles travelled in a financial year	*Up to 125cc*	*Over 125cc*
First 4,000 miles		
Third Party Insurance	14.5p	22.8p
Comprehensive Insurance	17.2p	26.8p
Over 4,000 miles (all)	6.2p	9p
Pedal Cycles	6.4p per mile	

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36358]

Mr. Horam: This information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36835]

The Deputy Prime Minister: Members of the public would have the same rights to make complaints of alleged maladministration to the relevant ombudsman concerning a project funded through the private finance initiative on behalf of my Departments as they would if the project were publicly financed.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the average and median civil service pension in payment, indicating the highest and lowest figures; and if he will provide the same information in respect of dependants' pensions. [37138]

Mr. Horam: The average annual rate of civil service pension in payment to retired officers is £4,325; the median is £3,015. The amounts of individual pensions range from £62,460 to £2.87.

The average annual rate of pension in payment to dependants of former pension scheme members is £1,820; the median is £1,202. The amounts of individual dependants' pensions range from £26,334 to £2.21.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net,

(g) Andersen Consulting *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36966]

Mr. Horam: The nature of current outsourcing contracts let by my Department and agencies since 1990 with the firms listed is set out in the table. Individual contract values, representing the total anticipated cost of the contracts, have been aggregated to preserve commercial confidentiality. The estimated total value of the contracts is £5,239,149. Further information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Firm	
(a) Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti	Management of project risk Software services
(b) AT and T Istel	Software, connection and training, and line rental Viewdata information service
(d) Sema	Maintenance and support for hardware
(i) BIS	Training call-off contract

HOME DEPARTMENT

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/CAP Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* SEMA Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre file, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36998]

Mr. Howard: Since 1990 my Department has let one outsourcing contract to SEMA Group for the provision of IT support. The contract was let on 1 November 1994 and was worth approximately £50 million over five years, excluding VAT. There has been no additional work added to the contract.

Convicted Prisoners Inquiry

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on action he has taken since the receipt of new evidence on 8 June 1993 in the case of convicted prisoners Michael Hickey, Jim Robinson and Vincent Hickey. [37476]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Merseyside police were asked to make inquiries into some of the matters raised in the petition of 8 June 1993. These inquiries were subsequently widened to take into account further representations submitted during 1994. A report from the police was submitted to us in May 1995 and we are considering it along with all other information about the case in order to decide whether there are grounds for any action.

Immigration Detainees

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females whose identity is in doubt are currently being detained; and what is the longest current period of detention. [37479]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the total number of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 whose identity is in doubt is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate costs. The longest current period of detention for such a person is nearly 16 months.

National Lottery

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will show for each month since money started to flow from the national lottery how much has been *(a)* disbursed to charities and voluntary organisations, *(b)* spent on the establishment, administration and running costs of the National Lottery Charities Board and *(c)* spent, disbursed or deducted for any other purpose. [37485]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information is not immediately available in the form requested; I will write to the hon. Member. To date, £493 million has been awarded to good causes by 10 of the 11 distributing bodies. Over 70 per cent. of those organisations which have been awarded funds are charities or voluntary organisations working in the fields of national heritage, sports and the arts. I understand that the National Lottery Charities Board will be announcing its first grant awards on 23 October.

By then, the board will have spent some £6.5 million—less than 3 per cent. of the money currently available to it—on one-off start-up costs and on administration. This compares favourably with other major grant-giving operations. The board expects to have some £300 million to distribute to the voluntary sector next year and subsequent years.

The National Lottery etc. Act 1993 provides for expenses incurred by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the Home Secretary, the Office of the National Lottery and the distributing bodies to be recouped from the National lottery distribution fund. To date these have amounted to £18.9 million out of the £1 billion income from the lottery.

Firearms

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the incidence of the use of firearms in the pursuit of crime in each of the last 20 years. [36442]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is published annually in table 3.1 of chapter 3 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which can be found in the Library.

Information for 1994 will be published during November.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36363]

Mr. Howard: There are two classes of reimbursement of cost for staff who use their own vehicles for official business.

"Public Transport Rate" is currently 23.8p per mile for motor cars, 12.9p per mile for motor cycles with an engine capacity of up to 125cc and 23.8p for cycles over 125cc.

Standard rate of motor car allowance

cc engine capacity	*Up to 5,000 miles per annum (pence per mile)*	*Over 5,000 miles per annum (pence per mile)*
Up to 1500	35.7	19
1501–2000	43	23
Over 2000	46	31

Standard rate of motor cycle allowance

cc engine capacity	*Up to 4,000 miles per annum (pence per mile)*	*Over 4,000 miles per annum (pence per mile)*
Up to 125	16.2	6.2
Over 125	26	9

Pedal Cycle allowance may also be claimed, at 6.2 per mile.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the least year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36364]

Mr. Howard: The Department's computerised travel claims payment systems do not separately record travel expenses claimed by staff for using their own vehicles. To provide the information requested would entail disproportionate cost.

Liquor Licensing

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to remove unnecessary liquor licensing regulations. [36557]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Licensing (Sunday Hours) Act 1995, which extends the times at which public houses, clubs and off-licensed premises may sell alcohol on Sundays, came into force on 6 August 1995.

The draft Licensing (Sunday Dancing) Order, which is currently subject to Parliamentary consideration under the order making procedures in part 1 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 includes relaxations of the provisions of the Licensing Act 1964 relating to extended hours orders and special hours certificates. These relaxations will permit the sale of alcohol after the normal licensing hours at dances taking place on a Sunday.

We have also recently completed public consultation on other reforms to rationalise certain procedural aspects of the special hours certificate system, which allows the sale of alcohol beyond the normal permitted hours at places licensed for music and dancing.

In addition we plan to repeal section 165 of the Licensing Act 1964, which makes it an offence for a licensee to serve more intoxicating liquor than a customer asks for.

We are also considering the scope for deregulating other aspects of the liquor licensing system.

Somali Exceptional Leave Holders

Mr. Tony Lloyd : To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Somali exceptional leave holders who had not completed four years of status were allowed to be joined by their spouse and children in each year since 1990. [36693]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the number of Somlis who have been joined by their spouse and children within four years of being granted exceptional leave to remain is not available.

Information on the number of Somalis granted exceptional leave to remain in each year since 1986 is given in table 3.2 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1994", issue 15/95, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Violent Crime (Compensation)

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about changes in compensation to victims of violent crime. [36588]

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill currently before Parliament provides the framework for an enhanced tariff scheme under which the compensation payable annually to victims should rise from £175 million to £260 million over the next five years. The scheme will continue to be the most generous in the world.

Police Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are currently serving in each British constabulary. [36733]

Mr. Maclean: The information is set out in the table.

Police force	*Police officer strength As at 31 March 1995*
England and Wales	
Avon and Somerset	3,000
Bedfordshire	1,126
Cambridgeshire	1,261
Cheshire	1,932
City of London	885
Cleveland	1,438
Cumbria	1,167
Derbyshire	1,797
Devon and Cornwall	2,877
Dorset	1,288
Durham	1,353
Dyfed-Powys	976
Essex	2,921

Police force	Police officer strength As at 31 March 1995
Gloucestershire	1,163
Greater Manchester	7,037
Gwent	997
Hampshire	3,256
Hertfordshire	1,703
Humberside	2,029
Kent	3,117
Lancashire	3,212
Leicestershire	1,839
Lincolnshire	1,199
Merseyside	4,659
Metropolitan Police	27,480
Norfolk	1,395
Northamptonshire	1,156
Northumbria	3,606
North Wales	1,366
North Yorkshire	1,300
Nottinghamshire	2,319
South Wales	3,014
South Yorkshire	3,040
Staffordshire	2,231
Suffolk	1,191
Surrey	1,676
Sussex	2,931
Thames Valley	3,854
Warwickshire	1,013
West Mercia	2,046
West Midlands	7,019
West Yorkshire	5,050
Wiltshire	1,261
Scotland	
Central Scotland	656
Dumfries and Galloway	391
Fife	789
Grampian	1,194
Lothian and Borders	2,539
Northern	649
Strathclyde	7,014
Tayside	1,091
Northern Ireland	
Royal Ulster Constabulary	8,448
Reserve (full-time)	3,176
Reserve (part-time)	1,507

Crime Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes against property and crimes against people were *(a)* reported to each constabulary and *(b)* successfully prosecuted by each constabulary in the last three years. [36734]

Mr. Maclean: The available information is given in the tables. Table A gives the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police and table B gives the number of offenders found guilty at all courts. These tables are not directly comparable as it is not possible to match the number of offences committed against offenders convicted: court proceedings can occur in a different year from the crime; one crime could involve more than one defendant being found guilty; and some offenders convicted of one crime may have also committed other crimes for which they have not been caught or successfully prosecuted. A wider measure would also include cautions and informal action taken by the police, both of which do not result in a court appearance.

Table A: Notifiable offences recorded by the police 1992–94

	Offences against property[1]			Offences against the person								
				Violence against the person			Sexual offences			Robbery		
Police force area	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994
Avon and Somerset	167,699	166,672	157,409	5,151	5,772	6,791	586	894	1,091	1,320	1,863	1,715
Bedfordshire	56,427	55,648	49,135	1,900	1,936	1,965	254	417	417	605	543	580
Cambridgeshire	62,428	61,861	57,588	2,777	2,821	3,030	437	393	421	291	308	242
Cheshire	74,560	75,293	69,283	2,784	2,975	3,245	459	465	543	320	345	278
Cleveland	80,820	75,174	78,267	2,651	2,227	2,359	268	216	236	289	336	466
Cumbria	42,818	41,097	39,622	1,945	1,935	2,153	168	246	250	100	91	74
Derbyshire	83,098	85,829	80,248	3,973	4,097	3,984	418	478	493	345	357	421
Devon and Cornwall	108,923	114,344	102,147	3,926	4,114	4,603	665	985	892	310	423	403
Dorset	49,441	49,037	52,081	1,505	1,736	1,877	345	319	442	164	135	146
Durham	63,803	63,417	60,949	2,447	2,406	2,665	412	495	510	153	164	149
Essex	108,874	108,291	99,579	4,334	4,188	4,505	620	709	549	530	430	423
Gloucestershire	58,005	58,148	57,136	1,646	1,759	2,140	269	314	466	268	303	319
Greater Manchester	376,695	345,332	319,832	10,128	10,049	9,281	1,409	1,357	1,228	4,310	5,424	5,361
Hampshire	145,051	138,396	132,393	5,245	5,328	5,705	1,121	1,406	1,056	605	564	585
Hertfordshire	56,181	53,989	51,976	1,882	1,919	1,996	294	275	305	349	273	264
Humberside	122,091	134,258	128,921	4,950	4,955	5,054	773	798	695	419	526	547
Kent	151,025	152,558	144,724	5,736	6,185	7,127	1,100	942	1,099	605	631	635
Lancashire	126,860	129,453	121,870	3,196	3,134	3,230	420	469	502	530	540	546
Leicestershire	92,028	94,089	91,952	3,490	3,749	4,855	559	471	617	864	1,039	1,158
Lincolnshire	46,087	49,253	44,222	2,229	2,282	2,319	316	313	393	119	158	119
City of London	6,381	5,226	5,004	230	238	125	29	23	23	62	51	29
Merseyside	137,970	130,350	124,682	7,134	7,359	7,678	705	768	808	2,036	2,204	2,035
Metropolitan Police	869,057	832,936	770,119	37,667	39,586	46,788	5,876	6,400	6,972	23,555	24,486	25,764
Norfolk	64,088	61,216	52,706	1,833	2,044	2,187	384	366	370	212	217	186
Northamptonshire	56,091	56,176	53,980	2,466	2,633	2,498	295	291	367	293	301	306
Northumbria	215,436	204,666	194,921	6,348	6,358	6,185	766	713	746	1,064	1,227	1,213
North Yorkshire	52,105	55,089	59,142	1,921	1,993	2,082	226	266	263	129	123	187
Nottinghamshire	153,348	148,191	141,771	8,314	7,690	7,718	1,083	1,167	1,141	1,065	1,202	1,193
South Yorkshire	129,912	149,775	148,984	4,896	4,815	5,027	593	638	664	716	943	1,062
Staffordshire	90,763	91,384	86,256	5,452	5,731	6,089	446	520	551	391	414	416
Suffolk	41,502	39,967	36,083	2,087	2,116	2,140	375	380	392	150	117	118
Surrey	50,497	49,293	42,827	2,025	2,175	2,716	395	377	463	224	213	165
Sussex	113,568	106,099	101,104	3,134	3,269	3,420	845	693	747	542	546	589

Table A: Notifiable offences recorded by the police 1992–94

Police force area	Offences against property[1]			Offences against the person: Violence against the person			Offences against the person: Sexual offences			Offences against the person: Robbery		
	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994	1992	1993	1994
Thames Valley	189,930	192,620	177,106	4,762	4,702	5,564	845	787	870	1,011	911	1,130
Warwickshire	43,086	43,312	40,411	1,275	1,461	1,411	237	332	288	128	131	136
West Mercia	74,504	78,399	79,053	3,429	3,298	3,438	505	420	473	246	260	284
West Midlands	309,202	309,792	295,031	11,637	10,980	10,407	1,583	1,504	1,354	5,008	5,978	7,028
West Yorkshire	289,113	285,571	273,139	9,605	9,189	9,414	1,361	1,465	1,504	2,761	3,174	2,968
Wiltshire	38,624	37,977	34,631	2,570	2,621	2,495	475	385	364	135	147	137
Dyfed-Powys	25,624	21,956	18,605	2,188	2,031	2,192	389	361	250	49	31	41
Gwent	37,775	36,742	34,687	2,394	2,385	2,533	334	313	270	117	116	79
North Wales	45,757	44,172	39,846	2,611	2,857	2,612	336	556	352	113	117	100
South Wales	160,887	158,019	149,261	5,904	6,004	6,141	552	597	550	391	483	419
England and Wales	5,268,135	5,191,067	4,898,683	201,777	205,102	219,744	29,528	31,284	31,987	52,894	57,845	60,016

[1] Includes offences of burglary, theft and handling stolen goods, fraud and forgery and criminal damage.

Table B: Number of offenders found guilty at all courts by police force area 1992–94

Police force area	Offences against property[1]			Offences against the person: Violence against the person			Offences against the person: Sexual offenders			Offences against the person: Robbery		
	1992	1993	[2]1994	1992	1993	[2]1994	1992	1993	[2]1994	1992	1993	[2]1994
Avon and Somerset	4,359	3,923	4,130	753	586	613	105	80	90	99	100	102
Bedfordshire	1,655	1,596	1,600	316	286	295	30	42	48	50	40	44
Cambridgeshire	2,273	2,362	2,143	596	621	510	75	50	60	70	56	53
Cheshire	3,653	3,615	3,499	917	915	878	146	80	73	55	108	104
Cleveland	3,111	3,159	3,099	777	569	500	47	39	34	54	60	69
Cumbria	2,484	2,534	2,467	660	609	592	27	40	33	25	37	31
Derbyshire	3,160	3,075	3,013	1,161	994	751	87	88	79	66	72	55
Devon and Cornwall	4,591	4,264	4,222	931	842	839	103	110	134	73	53	66
Dorset	2,190	1,984	2,024	356	405	312	76	62	69	25	44	24
Durham	2,368	2,259	2,329	555	563	554	58	59	57	39	53	27
Essex	4,626	4,291	3,816	878	833	688	70	72	85	101	73	63
Gloucestershire	1,865	1,630	1,730	411	369	347	45	36	46	23	24	23
Greater Manchester	13,574	12,548	12,951	2,847	2,565	2,472	298	227	244	440	506	504
Hampshire	6,156	5,341	5,421	1,174	1,052	1,048	165	225	245	84	83	71
Hertfordshire	2,454	1,979	1,884	394	334	292	45	34	51	37	59	36
Humberside	3,967	3,721	3,621	903	758	682	102	77	71	68	72	44
Kent	4,112	3,828	5,064	643	502	691	125	78	115	91	86	74
Lancashire	7,398	6,647	6,737	1,089	847	938	127	108	137	126	105	115
Leicestershire	3,023	2,835	2,456	664	620	547	64	63	59	105	96	73
Lincolnshire	2,253	2,230	2,153	627	643	530	44	53	48	15	22	24
City of London	413	352	306	50	43	30	7	4	7	9	6	5
Merseyside	7,635	7,552	6,605	1,209	1,091	973	147	139	110	163	180	132
Metropolitan Police	27,349	26,328	29,121	4,569	3,846	4,650	818	644	634	1,239	1,191	1,249
Norfolk	3,126	2,684	2,601	549	415	397	54	51	82	58	41	30
Northamptonshire	1,926	1,986	1,969	524	488	337	49	53	44	59	61	41
Northumbria	7,086	6,764	6,338	1,486	1,398	1,454	180	154	158	152	152	177
North Yorkshire	2,675	2,653	2,501	641	610	547	54	47	47	50	27	43
Nottinghamshire	5,651	4,714	4,911	1,713	1,302	1,083	168	122	122	141	125	132
South Yorkshire	5,628	4,840	4,774	1,178	993	901	121	95	107	129	113	117
Staffordshire	3,739	3,708	3,648	1,092	1,011	1,019	81	96	113	74	57	74
Suffolk	2,272	2,057	2,036	589	599	579	53	65	59	36	23	27
Surrey	1,825	1,627	1,505	405	357	354	33	41	31	38	25	28
Sussex	4,933	4,417	4,049	556	536	503	89	107	85	72	77	66
Thames Valley	5,603	5,341	4,956	1,130	1,041	970	128	80	86	121	113	89
Warwickshire	1,415	1,375	1,365	346	368	398	40	43	45	33	34	23
West Mercia	3,566	3,255	3,159	1,050	1,066	1,001	96	63	72	49	54	78
West Midlands	11,757	10,387	9,735	3,190	2,677	2,681	405	311	329	512	501	495
West Yorkshire	10,672	9,950	9,246	2,483	2,265	2,054	242	203	224	298	326	312
Wiltshire	1,854	1,694	1,521	495	361	346	54	43	41	14	23	13
Dyfed Powys	1,533	1,547	1,430	536	419	422	47	42	44	21	14	11
Gwent	2,251	1,904	2,059	651	560	603	40	45	43	41	30	27
North Wales	2,727	2,793	2,777	763	874	739	56	69	71	28	39	34
South Wales	7,056	7,041	6,979	1,706	1,643	1,505	155	188	150	99	133	97
England and Wales	201,964	188,790	187,950	43,563	38,876	37,625	4,956	4,328	4,482	5,082	5,094	4,902

[1] Includes indictable offences of burglary, theft and handling stolen goods, fraud and forgery and criminal damage.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many females aged *(a)* 10 to 14, *(b)* 14 to 17, *(c)* 17 to 21 and *(d)* over 21 years were cautioned or found guilty by magistrates' or crown courts in 1993 and 1994 in total and for (i) violence against the person, (ii) sexual offences, (iii) robbery, (iv) burglary, (v) fraud and forgery, (vi) criminal damage, (vii) theft from the person, (viii) theft from a shop, (ix) theft of motor vehicle, (x) theft from motor vehicle, (xi) theft of a pedal cycle, (xii) handling and (xiii) other theft; [36247]

(2) how many offenders were cautioned or found guilty by magistrates' or crown courts in 1993 and 1994 in total and for *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* sexual offences, *(c)* robbery, *(d)* burglary, *(e)* fraud and forgery, *(f)* criminal damage, *(g)* theft from the person, *(h)* theft

from a shop, *(i)* theft from the person, *(j)* theft from motor vehicle, *(k)* theft of a pedal cycle, *(l)* handling and *(m)* other theft; [36249]

(3) how many males aged *(a)* 10 to 14, *(b)* 14 to 17, *(c)* 17 to 21 and *(d)* over 21 years were cautioned or found guilty by magistrates' or crown courts in 1993 and 1994 in total and for (i) violence against the person, (ii) sexual offences, (iii) robbery, (iv) burglary, (v) fraud and forgery, (vi) criminal damage, (vii) theft from the person, (viii) theft from a shop, (ix) theft of motor vehicle, (x) theft from motor vehicle, (xi) theft of a pedal cycle, (xii) handling and (xiii) other theft. [36248]

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the tables.

Table A—Number of female known offenders, those cautioned or found guilty at all courts, for selected indictable offences by age 1993–94[1]

England and Wales

Offence description		*Aged 10 to under 14*	*Aged 14 to under 18*	*Aged 18 to under 21*	*Aged 21 and over*	*All ages*
Indictable offences						
Violence against the person	1993	641	3,064	1,139	4,553	9,397
	[1]1994	726	3,311	1,087	4,536	9,660
Sexual offences	1993	4	9	11	115	139
	[1]1994	13	12	8	72	105
Robbery	1993	44	206	58	87	395
	[1]1994	55	231	60	95	441
Burglary	1993	283	859	367	653	2,162
	[1]1994	322	772	280	597	1,971
Fraud and forgery	1993	83	553	1,012	5,093	6,741
	[1]1994	81	545	1,000	5,232	6,858
Criminal damage	1993	90	360	143	699	1,292
	[1]1994	124	372	158	683	1,337
Theft from the person	1993	50	111	82	292	535
	[1]1994	38	136	82	316	572
Theft from a shop	1993	5,721	12,394	5,752	22,956	46,823
	[1]1994	7,076	13,453	5,264	21,282	47,075
Theft from a motor vehicle[2]	1993	9	64	22	51	146
	[1]1994	9	59	10	64	142
Theft from a vehicle	1993	30	131	58	92	311
	[1]1994	40	130	71	109	350
Theft of a pedal cycle	1993	26	59	13	27	125
	[1]1994	20	52	12	30	114
Handling stolen goods	1993	183	875	1,092	4,186	6,336
	[1]1994	235	870	963	4,537	6,605
Other theft	1993	520	1,924	1,429	5,378	9,251
	[1]1994	534	1,875	1,198	4,924	8,531

[1] Provisional.
[2] Excludes summary offences of unauthorised taking of a conveyance.

Table B—Number of male known offenders, those cautioned or found guilty at all courts, for selected indictable offences by age 1993–94[1]

England and Wales

Offence description		*Aged 10 to under 14*	*Aged 14 to under 18*	*Aged 18 to under 21*	*Aged 21 and over*	*All ages*
Indictable offences						
Violence against the person	1993	2,058	10,204	8,254	33,067	53,583
	[1]1994	2,227	10,615	7,502	31,197	51,541
Sexual offences	1993	314	1,170	693	5,302	7,479
	[1]1994	301	1,156	552	5,366	7,375
Robbery	1993	392	1,531	1,118	2,362	5,403
	[1]1994	393	1,578	975	2,147	5,093

Table B—Number of male known offenders, those cautioned or found guilty at all courts, for selected indictable offences by age 1993–94[1]

England and Wales

Offence description		*Aged 10 to under 14*	*Aged 14 to under 18*	*Aged 18 to under 21*	*Aged 21 and over*	*All ages*
Burglary	1993	4,044	13,889	11,219	21,779	50,931
	[1]1994	4,122	13,350	10,017	20,031	47,520
Fraud and forgery	1993	136	1,110	2,482	15,103	18,831
	[1]1994	144	1,181	2,339	15,458	19,122
Criminal damage	1993	1,227	2,636	2,085	6,229	12,177
	[1]1994	1,368	2,920	2,041	6,668	12,997
Theft from the person	1993	151	489	491	1,270	2,401
	[1]1994	194	594	462	1,300	2,550
Theft from a shop	1993	7,450	13,816	8,790	42,262	72,318
	[1]1994	7,962	14,553	8,108	37,796	68,419
Theft of a motor vehicle[2]	1993	301	1,367	839	1,635	4,142
	[1]1994	282	1,277	612	1,362	3,533
Theft from a vehicle	1993	1,189	4,333	3,470	3,238	12,230
	[1]1994	933	3,792	3,163	3,176	11,064
Theft of a pedal cycle	1993	620	1,511	646	755	3,532
	[1]1994	549	1,411	561	681	3,202
Handling stolen goods	1993	888	4,426	5,421	18,457	29,192
	[1]1994	915	4,658	5,171	22,358	33,102
Other theft	1993	2,986	11,450	9,817	27,205	51,458
	[1]1994	2,753	11,346	8,824	24,197	47,120

[1] Provisional.
[2] Excludes summary offences of unauthorised taking of a conveyance.

Table C—Number of known offenders, those cautioned or found guilty at all courts, for selected indictable offences 1993–94[1]

England and Wales

Offence description	*1993*	[1]*1994*
Indictable offences		
Violence against the person	62,980	61,201
Sexual offences	7,618	7,480
Robbery	5,798	5,534
Burglary	53,093	49,491
Fraud and Forgery	25,572	25,980
Criminal damage	13,469	14,334
Theft from the person	2,936	3,122
Theft from a shop	119,141	115,494
Theft of motor vehicle[2]	4,288	3,675
Theft from vehicle	12,541	11,414
Theft of a pedal cycle	3,657	3,316
Handling stolen goods	35,528	39,707
Other theft	60,709	55,651

[1] Provisional.
[2] Excludes summary offences of unauthorised taking of a conveyance.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to combat crime in the south west in the coming year. [36735]

Mr. Maclean: There are four policy objectives which underpin our efforts to combat crime. They are:

to do all we can to prevent crime;

to do all we can to help the police catch criminals;

to ensure that when suspects are caught they are tried fairly and speedily; and

to make sure that when courts convict criminals they have the powers they need to deal with them appropriately and effectively.

These objectives apply as much to the south west as to any other part of the country. The latest Home Office crime figures, revealed by my right hon. and learned Friend on 27 September, show a record-breaking fall in recorded crime. They demonstrate the largest ever fall in recorded crime over a two year period; the longest uninterrupted fall in recorded crime since quarterly figures were first recorded and published; the first fall in recorded violent crime for almost 50 years; and falls in burglary of 5 per cent. vehicle crime of 9 per cent., and sexual offences of 9 per cent. In the south west of England recorded crime has fallen by nearly 6 per cent. In the Devon and Cornwall police area, it has fallen by over 8.5 per cent.

Prisons Ombudsman

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners' complaints have been referred to the Prisons Ombudsman in each prison service area; in how many cases he has found in the prisoner's favour; and how many and what proportion of his recommendations have been accepted by the prison service; [36893]

(2) if he will list by category the prisoners' complaints referred to the Prisons Ombudsman, the number and proportion where the ombudsman has found in the

prisoner's favour and the number and proportion of these recommendations which have been accepted by the prison service. [36894]

Miss Widdecombe: The Prisons Ombudsman had received 1,664 letters of complaint by 3 October 1995 of which 448 were eligible for investigation by his office; the eligibility of a further 117 was being considered. Two hundred and ninety three investigations had been completed. Of these, the prisoner's complaint was upheld on 128 occasions. A total of 154 recommendations had been made to the prison service, of which 121—78 per cent.—had been accepted. Twelve—8 per cent.—were not accepted. Four partially accepted and a further 17 were under consideration.

There are 15 prison service areas in England and Wales and as at 3 October 1995 the Prisons Ombudsman had received the following number of complaints about establishments in each area:

Area	*Number of complaints*
Central	99
Chilterns	62
East Anglia	112
East Midlands	144
Kent	131
London North	187
London South	157
Mercia	42
North East	134
North West	80
South Coast	79
Trans Pennine	143
Wales and West	101
Wessex	90
Yorkshire	72

The remaining complaints concerned matters which were the responsibility of prison service headquarters.

The number of complaints received by category were:

Category	*Number of complaints*
Adjudications	159
Assaults	54
Security categorisation	123
Food	26
General conditions	172
Regime activities	55
Links	88
Medical	48
Pre-release and release	237
Property and cash	295
Race	15
Segregation	43
Transfers and allocation	251
Miscellaneous	98

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women from the Ivory Coast who are being held in prisons in England and Wales while they are awaiting decisions on their application for political asylum, as of 17 July; [36113]

(2) what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons in England and Wales while their application for political asylum was being considered as of 17 July; [36115]

(3) what has been the longest time *(a)* a man and *(b)* a woman has been held in a prison in England and Wales while awaiting a decision on their application for political asylum as of 17 July. [36117]

Miss Widdecombe: Information as at 17 July 1995 is not available. However, as at 19 July 1995, 53 men and one woman were awaiting initial decisions on their applications for asylum whilst being detained in prison service establishments. Of these, the longest time a male and female have ben held in detention is 348 days and 114 days respectively.

No nationals of the Ivory Coast were detained in prison service establishments as at 19 July 1995.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department has taken to ensure that failed asylum seekers cannot be identified on their return home. [35826]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Asylum applications are treated as confidential. Where a failed asylum applicant is returned to his country of origin, the fact that he claimed asylum is not disclosed to the authorities of that country.

Mr. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy regarding access of foreign embassy personnel to visit asylum seekers held in detention centres and prison establishments. [35825]

Mr. Baker: Foreign embassy and high commission personnel are allowed to visit an asylum applicant in detention only if he or she specifically requests or consents to a visit.

Mr. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in what circumstances his Department gives the names of the asylum seekers in detention, awaiting removal orders, to their embassies. [35827]

Mr. Baker: An embassy or high commission will not be notified of the detention of an asylum applicant without the consent of the person concerned. When it is necessary to provide an embassy or high commission with a person's details in order to obtain a travel document, the fact that asylum has been sought is not disclosed.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice is given to asylum applicants from Sri Lanka. [35960]

Mr. Baker: All asylum applicants are given details of organisations to which they may turn for legal advice in pursuing their asylum claims.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the political situation in Sri Lanka in determining his policy on asylum; and to what extent this has changed in the last six months. [35962]

Mr. Baker: We keep the situation under continuing review in the light of information from a variety of sources, including the United Kingdom's high commission in Colombo and reports by independent organisations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan asylum applicants have been sent back to Sri Lanka in the last six months. [35961]

Mr. Baker: During the period 1 January to 30 June 1995, 13 Sri Lankans refused asylum and exceptional leave to remain after full consideration have been returned to Sri Lanka.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of places available for 12 to 14-year-olds awaiting trial or sentence in each of the last three years. [36260]

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally by my Department.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number and proportion of cautioned juvenile offenders who had been cautioned on *(a)* a previous occasion, *(b)* two previous occasions and *(c)* more than two previous occasions for (i) 1993 and (ii) 1994. [36254]

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend. the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 13 June, *Official Report*, column *480*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of persistent juvenile offenders identified by his Department in 1993 and 1994, respectively. [36253]

Mr. Maclean: There is no agreed definition of persistent offender. A special study of court appearances resulting in convictions in three weeks of 1993 gave the following estimates for 10 to 17-year-olds:

Estimated number of juveniles[1] convicted in 1993 who have conviction[2] on two or more previous occasions

England and Wales

Number of previous court appearances	*Estimated number of juveniles convicted in 1993 (to nearest 50)*
2	4,350
3	2,850
4	1,800
5–9	3,650
10 or more	550

[1] A few juveniles have more than one appearance in 1993, and will be counted more than once in these figures.

[2] Convictions for a standard list offence, which includes all indictable and triable either way offences plus some of the more serious summary offences.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time elapsed from offence to charge or summons for juveniles in 1993 and 1994; and what was the number and percentage of cases dealt with at first appearance at juvenile court and subsequently at youth court for 1993 and 1994. [36251]

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply. The average length of time elapsed from offence to charge or summons for juveniles in a sample week in June 1994 was 37 days, the corresponding figure for June 1993 was 36 days. This information comes from the magistrates' courts time intervals survey. In June 1994 it collected information on 1,478 juveniles; the cases of 292—or 19.8 per cent. of these were dealt with at first appearance. The corresponding number of juveniles about which information was collected in the June 1993 sample week was 1331, of which 312—or 23.4 per cent.—were dealt with at first appearance.

Financial Penalties

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *398–400*, when he expects the study commissioned by the Home Office on the enforcement of financial penalties to be completed; and if it will be made available to hon. Members. [36208]

Mr. Maclean: The research on financial penalties commissioned by the Home Office research and planning unit is due to be completed by the end of the year. The findings will be published in due course, and will be available in the Library.

Deportees

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the average period of time that a person has been held in prison in England and Wales awaiting deportation after they had completed the prison sentence they had been serving; and if he will make a statement; [36110]

(2) what has been the number of foreign nationals who have been deported immediately from prisons in England and Wales after the completion of their prison sentence in each of the last three years. [36116]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information is given in the table. Information on the delay, if any, between completion of the prison sentence and removal from United Kingdom is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons removed[1] from the United Kingdom under the deportation process

	Following a court recommendation	*On non-conducive grounds[2]*
1992	506	142
1993	410	138
1994	225	104

[1] Including "voluntary" departures after enforcement action had been initiated.

[2] That is, because their continued presence in the United Kingdom was not conducive to the public good, usually following conviction for a criminal offence when the court did not address the question of making a recommendation for deportation.

Probation Service, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were employed in the probation service in Wales in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1994. [36134]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The earliest available comparable information covers 1987 and 1994 and is as follows:

Staff employed by probation services in Wales, in post at 31 December, whole-time equivalent[1]
31 December 1987: 633[2]
31 December 1994: 842

Notes
[1] Whole-time staff plus whole-time equivalent of part time staff. Figures rounded to the nearest whole number.
[2] Figure excludes non-probation grade staff employed in hostels. The 1994 total includes 36 such staff.

Murder Convictions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names, length of sentence served, and number of appeals of each person whose murder conviction was overturned or who was given a free pardon or life sentence remission from 1976. [31730]

Mr. Maclean: The available information is for those originally sentenced to life for murder and where sentences were subsequently reduced, or lifted on appeal or who were given a free pardon or remission whilst serving their sentences in prison service establishments in England and Wales.

To protect individual privacy, a list of names is not provided but the numbers and average time served under a life sentence are tabulated. Information on the number of appeals of each person is not available.

Successful appeals and free pardons/remissions from life sentences for murder. Prison Service establishments England and Wales 1976–1994

	Successful appeal		*Free pardon/remission*	
Year	*Number*	*Time served[1] (years)*	*Number*	*Time served[1] (years)*
1976	2	0.8	—	—
1977	4	0.7	—	—
1978	8	1.1	—	—
1979	4	2.1	1	0.8
1980	5	4.9	—	—
1981	3	1.5	—	—
1982	4	1.3	1	0.6
1983	—	—	1	6.1
1984	6	3.7	1	0.9
1985	9	1.8	1	0.7
1986	9	1.0	—	—
1987	6	1.2	—	—
1988	4	1.1	—	—
1989	15	4.6	—	—
1990	7	1.3	—	—
1991	12	9.1	—	—
1992	16	4.1	—	—
1993	10	2.0	—	—
1994[2]	13	4.3	—	—

[1] Average time served under life sentence, excluding any time spent on remand and any time spent to complete a reduced custodial sentence.
[2] Provisional.

TRANSPORT

Gateshead Western Bypass

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a variable-trip matrix model has been used to assess his Department's preferred route for the Gateshead western bypass. [36233]

Mr. Watts: No, the cross-Tyne study traffic model, updated by additional data from interview surveys carried out at the Metro centre and Town Valley trading estate in 1991, was used.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the environmental assessment for the Gateshead western bypass proposal in accordance with European Council directive 855/337. [36231]

Mr. Watts: The work, which commenced when the scheme was placed in the trunk road programme, will continue to be progressed concurrently with the detailed design of the scheme and the result will be published at the same time as the publication of the orders for the scheme under the Highways Act 1980 in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department's proposals in respect of the Gateshead western bypass have been revised to take into account the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report and associated Government guidance. [36232]

Mr. Watts: Work is currently in progress to consider the implications for the scheme of the most recent SACTRA report.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account the Highways Agency took of the cost to Dr. Whitelegg of supplying copies of all reference documents referred to in his submission to the inquiry into the Birmingham northern relief road; and if he will make a statement. [36155]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Mike O'Brien dated 13 October 1995:

Just before the House rose for the Summer recess you asked the Secretary of State what account the Highways Agency took of the cost to Dr. Whitelegg of supplying copies of all reference documents referred to in his submission to the inquiry into the Birmingham Northern Relief Road. I am sorry it has not been possible to let you have an earlier reply.

All objectors will incur some costs in presenting their case at inquiry. We do what we can to reduce these costs by providing access to a range of official documents and reasonable copying facilities free of charge.

The onus is on an objector to substantiate his own evidence. If he is relying on material contained in other publications to support his case, the Inspector and other parties at the inquiry, including the Highways Agency, will wish to satisfy themselves that the references are accurate and relevant. In practice the only satisfactory way of doing that is to provide the document, or the relevant part of it, to the inquiry. Copies will be made by the Agency where possible.

In the particular case of Dr. Whitelegg, the Agency asked him to provide copies of documents on which he was depending in his proofs of evidence on behalf of a number of residents' groups and societies. In response to representations from two of the groups the Agency did obtain copies of most of the documents. But there were about 14 that we could not readily obtain. Since Dr. Whitelegg was depending on these publications in his evidence we assumed he would have access to them. We offered to make copies for the inquiry. I understand this arrangement has proved acceptable to the groups concerned.

You also wrote to John Watts enclosing a copy of your letter dated 18 July to David Shepperd, the Agency's Project Manager for the scheme. I can assure you that the Agency is not trying to obstruct those opposed to its proposals. It is quite usual for the Agency to ask objectors to supply copies of reference material and the new Highways Inquiries Procedures Rules do enable the Secretary of State to require objectors to submit a Statement of Case and copies of documents referred to. Prior to the opening of the inquiry the Agency placed on deposit a number of documents to which it intended to refer in evidence. More have been placed in the library as the inquiry has progressed.

I hope this is helpful. Ultimately, the decision on whether or not a supporting document should be provided rests with the Inspector.

Deregulation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the measures his Department currently proposes to deregulate under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. [36682]

Mr. Watts: There are currently six measures which the Department proposes to deregulate under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. The first five were published in 1994 in the DTI publication "Cutting Red Tape".

1. Approval requirement for parking equipment (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984): Abolition of the current arrangements whereby local authorities who control parking by means of a traffic order have to use parking equipment of a type approved by the Secretary of State.

2. Vehicle inspection of HGVs (Road Traffic Act 1988): Allows Vehicle Inspectors more discretion about when to undertake a physical inspection of heavy goods vehicles.

3. Advance receipt of MOT certificates (Road Traffic Act 1988): Allows a motorist to obtain their first MOT certificate a month in advance, which will be valid for 13 months.

4. Driving licence renewal (Road Traffic Act 1988): To excuse drivers who held a full driving licence before 1976 (but failed to renew it), from having to retake their driving test, and to introduce greater flexibility governing the issue of British licences in exchange for those issued in other countries.

5. Tuition of the Theory element of the Driving Test (Road Traffic Act 1988): Allows classroom teaching of the new theory elements of the driving test, without the need for teachers to be registered driving instructors.

6. Tolled undertakings: To amend existing legislation for the approval of local authority and privately owned tolled undertakings.

Driving Standards Agency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he was informed of the proposals by the Driving Standards Agency to abandon its market testing proposals; if a Minister in his Department made the decision to abandon the market test; and if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence between the agency management and the Department relating to the decision to abandon the market test. [36679]

Mr. Norris: I received advise from the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency in June that the implementation of the market test should be modified so as to achieve a better integration of the driving test booking services with those of examiner deployment and residual functions. My decision was based on that advice; I have decided that the disclosure of that advice, which was provided in confidence to assist internal discussion, would be inappropriate.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the number of staff likely to be made compulsory redundant as a result of the reversal of the DSA market test, the estimated cost of severance payments and the estimated savings he expects to make by the newly proposed office rationalisation programme. [36680]

Mr. Norris: Under the modified arrangements, which have been the subject of widespread consultation with DSA staff and the relevant trade unions, it was assumed that there would be around 70 redundancies, at an estimated cost of £1.4 million. In practice, the final number of redundancies and consequential cost will be significantly smaller. It is hoped that most of these will be on a voluntary basis. The modified arrangements gave additional savings in the region of £20,000 over 10 years.

Coastguard Stations

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions when a coastguard station has been understaffed by date and station for the last five years. [36695]

Mr. Norris: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

National Air Traffic Services

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to privatise the national air traffic services; and what is the timetable for the proposed sale. [36681]

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State for Transport announced in November 1994 that the Government continued to favour privatisation of the national air traffic services in principle but that further work was needed on a number of important issues. We are currently considering the further work that has been done. I hope that we shall be in a position to make an announcement about the direction of NATS later in the year.

Vehicle Defects

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list, by mechanical defect found, the number of heavy goods vehicles found to have a defect during the last 12 months at spot checks undertaken by his Department; [36706]

(2) if he will list, by mechanical defect found, the number of public service vehicles found to have a defect during the last 12 months at spot checks undertaken by his Department. [36707]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency.

The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Ms Joan Walley, dated 15 August 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions concerning mechanical defects on heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles found at spot checks undertaken by the Inspectorate during the last 12 months.

I regret we do not have the information in the form you requested. Mechanical defects described on roadworthiness prohibitions are categorised and stored on the Inspectorate's Roadworthiness Enforcement Database using the relevant Inspection Manual reference number.

The attached 2 annexes give, for the financial year 1994/95, the number of occurrences of mechanical defects resulting in issue of prohibitions. This information is shown separately for heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles, but it includes inspections done in connection with operator licensing work as well as spot checks. Spot check information alone could not be provided at a reasonable cost. Any Inspection Manual reference number missing from the first column of the annex has not yet been allocated.

Please bear in mind that the total number of occurrences of mechanical defects cannot be related to the number of prohibitions issued over the same period since a single prohibition notice will, in many cases, have been issued for more than one defect.

ANNEX A; Occurrence of defect category on prohibitions (HGV)

HGV inspection manual number	*HGV defect category*	*Occurrence of defect category for all HGVs including trailers*
3	Seat Belts	12
5	Exhaust Emissions	761
6	Road Wheels and Hubs	2,977
7	Size and Type of Tyres	104
8	Condition of Tyres	4,527
9	Sideguards, Rear Under-Run Device and Bumper Bars	254
10	Spare Wheel Carrier	16
11	Tractor to Trailer Coupling	307
12	Trailer Emergency Brake	25
13	Trailer Landing Legs	11
14	Spray Suppression, Wings and Wheel Arches	526
15	Cab Security	66
16	Cab Doors	49
17	Cab Floor and Steps	131
18	Driver's Seat	41
19	Security of Body	158
20	Condition of Body	379
22	Mirrors	84
23	View to the Front	77
24	Glass or Other Transparent Material	125
25	Windscreen Wipers and Washers	239
26	Speedometer	0
27	Audible Warning (Horn)	15
28	Driving Controls	50
29	Tachograph	25
30	Play at Steering Wheel	60
31	Steering Wheel	24
32	Steering Column	97
33	Speed Limiter	15
34	Pressure/Vacuum Warning	47
35	Build up of Pressure/Vacuum	76
36	Hand Lever Operating Mechanical Brakes	69
37	Service Brake Pedal	27
38	Service Brake Operation	225
39	Hand Operated Brake Control Valves	83
41	Condition of Chassis	570
42	Electrical Wiring and Equipment	139
43	Engine Transmission Mountings	27
44	Oil Leaks	2,928
45	Fuel Tanks and Systems	1,532
46	Exhaust Systems	721
48	Suspension Pins and Bushes	1,251
49	Suspensions Spring Units and Linkages	1,929
50	Attachment of Spring Units, Linkages and Sub-frames	1,743
51	Shock Absorbers (Dampers)	242
53	Axles, Stub Axles and Wheel Bearings	316
54	Steering Linkages	1,957
55	Steering Gear	197
56	Power Steering	308
57	Transmission	720
59	Mechanical Brake Components	1,829
60	Brake Actuators	2,835
61	Braking Systems and Components	5,861
62	Rear Markings	8
63	Front Position and Front End Outline Marker Lamps	57
64	Rear Position, Rear End Outline Marker, Rear Fog and Rear Registration	301
65	Reflectors	41
66	Direction Indicators and Hazard Warning Lamps	599
67	Aim of Headlamps	92
68	Headlamps	273
69	Stop Lamps	1,568
70	Trailer Parking Brake	435
71	Service Brake Performance	2,341
72	Secondary Brake Performance	884
73	Parking Brake Performance	1,264

ANNEX B; Occurance of Defect Category on Prohibitions (PSV)

PSV Inspection Manual Number	*PSV Defect Category*	*Occurance*
3	Seat Belts	11
5	Exhaust Emissions	357
6	Road Wheels and Hubs	276
7	Size and Type of Tyres	11
8	Condition of Tyres	319
9	Bumper Bars	6
10	Spare Wheel/Carrier	3
11	Vehicle/Trailer Coupling	3
14	Wings and Wheel Arches	4
16	Passenger Doors, Drivers Doors and Emergency Exits	632

ANNEX B; Occurance of Defect Category on Prohibitions (PSV)

PSV Inspection Manual Number	PSV Defect Category	Occurance
17	Driver's Accomodation	10
18	Driving Seat	11
19	Security of Body	12
20	Exterior of Body Including Access Doors/Flaps, Luggage Compartments	224
21	Interior of Body, Passenger Entrance, Exit Steps and Platform	662
22	Mirrors	9
23	View to the Front	15
24	Conditions of Windows, Glass and other Transparent Materials	45
25	Windscreen Wipers and Washers	100
26	Speedometer	1
27	Audible Warning (Horn)	6
28	Driving Controls	32
29	Tachograph	2
30	Play at Steering Wheel	18
31	Steering Wheel	6
32	Steering Column	13
33	Speed Limiter	17
34	Pressure/Vacuum Warning	6
35	Build up of Pressure/Vacuum	7
36	Hand Lever Operating Mechanical Brakes	10
37	Service Brake Pedal	6
38	Service Brake Operation	10
39	Hand Operated Brake Control Valves	16
41	Condition of Chassis	37
42	Electrical Wiring and Equipment	39
43	Engine and Transmission Mountings	18
44	Oil Leaks	702
45	Fuel Tanks and Systems	632
46	Exhaust Systems	170
48	Suspension Pins and Bushes	87
49	Suspensions Spring Units and Linkages	286
50	Attachment of Spring Units, Linkages and Sub-frames	124
51	Shock Absorbers (Dampers)	31
53	Axles, Stub Axles and Wheel Bearings	28
54	Steering Linkages	205
55	Steering Gear	39
56	Power Steering	76
57	Transmission	82
58	Additional Braking Devices (including Regarders)	4
59	Mechanical Brake Componants	118
60	Brake Actuators	132

ANNEX B; Occurance of Defect Category on Prohibitions (PSV)

PSV Inspection Manual Number	PSV Defect Category	Occurance
61	Braking Systems and Components	354
62	Rear Markings	4
63	Front Position and Front End Outline Marker Lamps	4
64	Rear Position, Rear End Outline Marker, Rear Fog and Rear Registration Lamps	20
65	Reflectors	3
66	Direction Indicators and Hazard Warning Lamps	63
67	Aim of Headlamps	13
68	Headlamps	33
69	Stop Lamps	226
71	Service Brake Performance	206
72	Secondary Brake Performance	94
73	Parking Brake Performance	181

Fish Factory Ships

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) of 27 February, *Official Report*, column *461*, when he expects the consultation document on fish factory ships to be published. [36822]

Mr. Norris: We hope to be able to publish our consultation paper examining the problem of substandard and uninsured shipping in United Kingdom waters next month. The paper will include proposals to deal with the particular problems found with fish factory ships—klondykers. Copies will be made available in the Library.

Railway Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes have been made in respect of the choice of route and permitted break in rail journeys following the privatisation of railway services. [37387]

Mr. Watts: The British Railways Board is currently developing draft proposals for a routing guide which will set out unambiguously the routes over which passengers may travel when holding any particular ticket. The intention is to document and safeguard existing practice. Where a route is currently widely accepted and used it will be included in the routing guide. There has been no change in respect of the right to break a rail journey at an intermediate station.

When ready, the guide will be issued to all operators so it will be clear which route or routes passengers may use for their journey. This will eliminate the uncertainty which can arise currently from different interpretations of ticket validity, and will provide a safeguard against piecemeal erosion of the facility to use alternative routes. The BRB is consulting the Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee on the proposals and guide which will be subject to final approval by the franchising director and the rail regulator.

Driving Licences

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the powers under which he proposed to make changes to the driving licence design; and if he will make a statement on the timetable for introduction. [37109]

Mr. Norris: Section 98 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 provides that a driving licence shall be in such form as the Secretary of State may determine.

A proposed EU directive allowing the introduction of plastic photocard driving licences is at present under discussion; I will make a further statement on the introduction of photocards when these discussions are more advanced.

Bus Service Companies, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the approximate additional sum that will be paid by each of the principal bus service companies in London in respect of the cost of non-rebateable fuel duty to be paid in 1995–96 [37340]

Mr. Norris: It would not be appropriate for the Government to disclose such information about the London bus companies, all of whom are in the private sector.

Utility Street Works

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what obligations are placed on water, gas, electric, electricity or other cable or pipe service providers whose equipment is located beneath public bus stops and pavements, other than in emergencies, to *(a)* inform the police and highway authorities of their intention to excavate road or pedestrian routes and *(b)* to obtain their permission to do so. [37267]

Mr. Norris: Utility street works are governed by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, under which undertakers with a statutory right to execute street works must give advance notice to the street authority of their planned works, other than minor works; in the street, including the footway; the length of notice is prescribed in regulations and varies according to the circumstances. There is no requirement for undertakers to give advance notice of their works to the police but a code of practice issued under the Act sets out circumstances in which the street authority or traffic authority should inform police of planned works.

Undertakers do not have to seek permission of either the street authority or the police, but before executing works in a protected street, the consent of the street authority must be obtained. The Act also empowers the street authority to direct the timing of undertakers' works in certain circumstances. The procedure is set out in regulations.

Bus Fares

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he expects to take to ensure that fares in public stage carriage bus services are no higher than providing a just return on invested capital *(a)* on all routes and *(b)* where competition has been eliminated by an initial period of free travel or heavily subsidised fares. [37329]

Mr. Norris: The setting of fares on bus services is a commercial decision for bus operators. We have no plans to interfere with this process.

Airline Subsidies

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which EU Governments subsidise their airlines; and which subsidies have been ended since January.

Mr. Norris: The Governments of France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain currently give state aid to their national airlines in accordance with approvals granted under article 93 of the treaty of Rome. There is no example of a subsidy which has ended since January 1995.

Driving Tests (Accidents)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish statistics maintained under health and safety at work regulations of the number of accidents involving vehicles during the driving test; and if he will include statistics in respect of *(a)* vehicles written off, *(b)* injuries to examiners and *(c)* absence from work of examiners as a result of injury while carrying out the driving test. [37116]

Mr. Norris: Between 1 April 1995 and 30 June 1995, there were 72 accidents involving vehicles during the driving test which resulted in injury to driving examiners. These were:

	Number
Whiplash—medically diagnosed	19
Whiplash—self diagnosed	16
Cuts/bruises	1
Pulled muscles	6
Back pain	1
Neck pain	18
Headache	2
Shock	4
Multiple	3
Other	72

20 per cent. of these required medical treatment; broken down into:

35 per cent. Hospital treatment

56 per cent. GP treatment

6 per cent. First aider treatment

3 per cent. Physiotherapist treatment

DSA has no details of vehicles written off during the driving test.

As a result of the above accidents driving examiners were absent for a total of 1,320 days during this period.

Aircraft Inspections

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inspections are undertaken by his Department or the Civil Aviation Authority on the mechanical fitness of aircraft; how many aircraft have been inspected in each of the last five years; and if he

will list by airline operator the number of defects found for each of the last five years. [36709]

Mr. Norris: I refer to the Viscount Goschen's letter of 30 August explaining the CAA's policy on aircraft surveys, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The numbers of surveys carried out on aircraft above 5,700 kg maximum total weight authorised—which include all large passenger aircraft—in each of the last five years were as follows:

1989: 1,206
1990: 1,120
1991: 1,096
1992: 1,056
1993: 835
1994: 732

Information on numbers of defects found during surveys could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by defect found the number of aircraft found to have defects during the last 12 months at inspections undertaken by his Department or the Civil Aviation Authority. [36710]

Mr. Norris: The Department does not undertake aircraft inspections. The information in relation to inspections undertaken by the Civil Aviation Authority can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Schemes

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years all the road schemes that have been completed, their projected costs and the actual cost on completion. [31835]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 30 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Road, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to you recent Parliamentary Question concerning road schemes completed in the last 5 years.

You asked for details of projected costs for each of these schemes together with the actual cost on completion. I enclose a list of all schemes completed in the last 5 years together with details of tender costs (works only) and actual cost on completion, where that information is readily available.

It has not been possible to supply the actual cost on completion for many of the schemes concerned because final accounts have not yet been agreed with the contractors concerned. To publish estimates of the final outturn in such cases would undermine the position of the consulting engineers appointed by the Agency to administer those contracts in dealing with claims for extra payment submitted by the contractors and therefore place public funds at risk. Also on some schemes records are not immediately to hand and I will write to you again when further information is available.

Scheme	*Completion date*	*Tender cost works only*	*Outturn cost*
M63 Stage 4 Widening	March 1990	—	—
A43 Peartree Hill—Wendlebury Imp	April 1990	20.16	34.122
A17 Fosdyke Bridge Imp	May 1990	2.72	—
A40 Swakeleys Road Junction Imp	May 1990	10.20	—
A408 Great Cambridge Road GSJ	May 1990	—	—
A19 Peterlee GSJ	June 1990	—	—
A52 Nottingham Outer Ring Road (Abbey Street GSJ)	June 1990	4.59	—
M40 Banbury Bypass Section 2	June 1990	17.91	25.39
M5 Catshill—Lydlate Ash	June 1990	13.52	—
A35 Charmouth Bypass	June 1990	10.73	—
A36 Codford Bypass	June 1990	2.08	—
A14 Catthorpe Interchange	August 1990	—	—
A13 Lakeside GSJ (S278)	September 1990	4.18	—
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge	September 1990	—	—
A896 Woolsington Bypass	September 1990	—	—
A140 Dickleburgh Bypass	October 1990	2.21	—
A435 Alcester Bypass	October 1990	8.81	12.949
A46 Newark Relief Road	October 1990	31.48	—
A47 Guyhirn Diversion	October 1990	3.66	—
A66 Addingham Bypass	October 1990	—	—
A66 Stockton Racecourse GSJ	October 1990	—	—
A11 Thetford Bpass	November 1990	13.05	—
A14 Kettering—Thrapston	November 1990	25.66	—
A41 Bicester Bypass Stage 1 (Ploughley Road—A421 Bicester)	November 1990	4.73	—
M40 Banbury Bypass Section 3	November 1990	52.20	76.75
A1 Newcastle Western Bypass (Contract 3)	December 1990	24.85	39.011
A1 South of Brampton Junction Imp	December 1990	1.40	—
A27 Pevensey Bypass	December 1990	7.71	—
A303 Llchester—South Petherton Imp	December 1990	—	—
A47 East Norton Bypass	December 1990	1.17	—
M40 Banbury Bypass Section 1	December 1990	24.20	33.88
M40 Banbury Bypass Section 4	December 1990	59.52	63.84
M40 Gaydon Section	December 1990	34.00	45.84
M40 Waterstock—Wendlebury	January 1991	64.10	92.484
A14 Thrapston—Brampton (A)	February 1991	14.19	—

Scheme	*Completion date*	*Tender cost works only*	*Outturn cost*
A1079 Market Weighton Bypass	March 1991	3.96	—
A12 Capel St Mary GSJ	March 1991	3.58	6.076
A42 Castle Donnington North Contract 1	March 1991	24.73	27.45
A42 Castle Donnington North Contract 3	March 1991	2.77	3.234
A500 Nantwich Bypass	March 1991	5.09	7.268
M4 J12 Imp	March 1991	1.27	—
A69 Brampton Bypass	April 1991	4.94	6.17
A42 Castle Donnington North Contract 2	May 1991	16.79	19.058
A43 Bilsworth and Milton Malsor Bypass	May 1991	15.08	16.582
M20 Maidstone—Ashford (Contract 1)	May 1991	27.31	50.86
M20 Maidstone—Ashford (Contract 2)	May 1991	28.67	37.969
A14 Rothwell—Kettering	June 1991	4.41	—
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass (Dyke Road-Patchem) Contract 1	June 1991	16.62	20.023
A141 Chester Imp	June 1991	17.50	21.7
A30 Zelah Bypass	July 1991	2.63	—
A31 Picket Post Junction Imp	July 1991	1.79	—
A13 Leamouth Road Junction Imp	August 1991	1.54	—
A16 Louth Bypass	August 1991	5.00	6.621
A30 Plusha—Bolventor Imp	August 1991	10.67	13.718
M40 J4—5 Widening	August 1991	35.92	48.063
A11 Red Lodge Bypass	September 1991	4.84	—
A282 Dartford—Thurrock Crossing Approach Roads, Kent	September 1991	27.69	—
A47 Castor—Allsworth Bypass	September 1991	7.51	—
M45/A45 Dunchurch GSJ	September 1991	1.67	—
A16 Boston—Algarkirk Diversion	October 1991	8.96	11.544
A282 Dartford—Thurrock Crossing	October 1991	—	—
A282 Dartford—Thurrock Crossing Approach Roads, Essex	October 1991	8.32	—
A47 Eye Bypass	October 1991	5.19	6.90
A59 Monk Bridge Imp	October 1991	—	—
A6 Burton Latimer Bypass	October 1991	2.63	—
A6 Quorn and Mountsorrel Bypass	October 1991	31.76	43.329
A14 Kettering Northern Bypass Advance Bridge Works	November 1991	—	—
A14 Kettering Southern Bypass (M1-A1 Contract 5S)	November 1991	30.74	—
A35 Axminster Bypass	November 1991	8.02	10.943
A38 Alrowss—Barton Turn (Dogshead Lane	November 1991	1.88	—
A650 Drighlington Bypass	November 1991	4.99	6.399
M62 J17-18 Widening	November 1991	3.75	5.75
A1 Dishforth—Leeming Imp Phase 1 (Gatenby Lane Junction)	December 1991	2.66	4.653
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ	December 1991	11.84	—
A23 Warninglid-Brighton (Sayers Common-Muddleswood) C2?	December 1991	10.47	—
A27 Brighton and Howe Bypass (Hangleton—Dyke Road) Contract 2	December 1991	8.77	12.998
A30 Penhale—Carland Cross Imp	December 1991	9.14	11.628
A303 Stockton Wood—Chicklade Bottom	December 1991	1.30	1.74
A35 Yellowham Hill—Troytown Imp	December 1991	4.31	—
A585 Hensingham Bypass	December 1991	4.29	4.7
A65 Draughton Bypass	December 1991	2.19	2.79
M3 Compton—Bassett Widening	January 1992	41.60	51.864
A10 Brandon Creek—Southery	February 1992	—	—
A516 Etwell Bypass	February 1992	2.66	—
A59 Mellor Brook Bypass	March 1992	—	—
A13 West India Dock Road Interim Junction Imp	April 1992	1.00	—
A38 Marsh Mills Junction Imp	May 1992	22.48	24.038
A406 Chingford Road—Hale End Road	May 1992	—	—
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass (Patchem-Coldem) Contract 3	June 1992	14.77	19.333
A6 Market Harborough Bypass	June 1992	7.87	9.531
A3 Liphook and Petersfield Bypasess	July 1992	35.84	65.72
A303 Mere—Wincanton Imp	July 1992	15.28	19.404
A41 Whitchurch Bypass	July 1992	8.95	13.716
A423 Southam Bypass	July 1992	2.22	—
A523 Macclesfield Relief Road	July 1992	18.80	25.00
A1 Marshall Meadows Imp	August 1993	—	—
A47 East Dereham—North Tuddenham Imp	August 1992	6.896	8.987
A5/A49 Telford—Shrewbury Bypass	August 1992	63.96	—
A423 Maidenhead Thicket—Burchetts Green	September 1992	8.44	12.73
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 1	September 1992	7.99	14.673
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 2	September 1992	8.59	13.094

Scheme	*Completion date*	*Tender cost works only*	*Outturn cost*
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 3	September 1992	14.75	18.478
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 4	September 1992	29.861	—
A49 Weaverham Diversion	September 1992	4.20	6.33
A16 Stickford Bypass	October 1992	1.01	—
A5 Kilsby Diversion	October 1992	0.83	—
A66 Bowes Bypass to County Boundary Imp	October 1992	9.88	11.795
A16 Ludborough Bypass	November 1992	1.23	—
A2 London Boundary—M2 Imp	November 1992	-	—
A47 Narborough Bypass	November 1992	2.24	—
A11 Thetford—Bridgham Heath	December 1992	2.22	2.363
A14 Thrapston—Brampton (B)	December 1992	7.04	—
A23 Warninglid-Brighton (Muddleswood-Brighton)	December 1992	15.36	—
A3 Milford Bypass	December 1992	7.89	10.77
A38 Bell Bridge—Airewas	December 1992	1.45	—
A420 Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor Bypass	December 1992	4.30	—
A5 Little Brickhill Bypass	December 1992	5.838	8.773
A585 Fleetwood Dock Street Diversion	January 1993	2.20	3.6
A30 Okehampton–Launceston Imp	March 1993	26.81	32.999
A11 Newmarket—Red Lodge	April 1993	4.08	5.083
A339 Bassingstoke Northern Bypass Stage 3 Dualling	April 1993	8.60	11.9
A59 Greengates—Gutteridge Imp	April 1993	—	—
A596 Wigton Bypass	April 1993	4.05	6.324
A27 Crossbush Bypass	May 1993	2.95	4.43
A41/A421 Bicester Bypass Stage 2 (A421 Bicrester—Wendlebury) M4	May 1993	3.90	—
A595 Egremont Bypass	May 1993	6.67	9.169
A23 Warninglid—Brighton (Warninglid Flyover—Sayers Common) C3)	June 1993	14.32	20.95
A39 Wadebridge Bypass	July 1993	8.30	—
A41 Kings Langley Bypass	August 1993	19.97	32.741
A12 Gorieston Relief Road	September 1993	20	—
A14 Thrapston—Brampton (C)	September 1993	16.36	—
A41 Berkhamsted Bypass	September 1993	23.9	—
A1 Brownieside Imp	October 1993	3.49	—
M5 J6-8 Widening (Warndon—Strensham)	October 1993	59.37	79.945
A1(M) Bramham—Wetherby Imp	November 1993	15.71	21.933
A20 Folkstone-–Dover Stage 1 (Folkstone-Court Wood Con 1A)	November 1993	3.858	4.163
A20 Folkstone—Dover Stage 1 (Folkstone-Court Wood Con 1)	November 1993	27.31	35.697
A20 Folkstone-Dover Stage 1 (Folkestone-Court Wood Con 2)	November 1993	11.55	15.884
A27 Westhampnett Bypass	November 1993	6.92	10.118
M20 J5 and 8 Widening (Maidstone Bypass)	November 1993	69.55	—
A20 Folkstone—Dover Stage 2 (Court Wood-Dover Con 3)	December 1993	21.69	39.258
A49 Onibury—Stokesay	December 1993	1.85	—
A590 Dalton in Furness Bypass	December 1993	7.91	11.364
M4 J4B–5 Widening	December 1993	4.97	7.55
A11 Four Wentways—Newmarket	January 1994	10.80	—
A13 West India Dock Road Junction Imp	February 1994	0.28	—
M1 J9–10 Widening	March 1994	9.72	13.416
M25 J15–16 Widening	March 1994	29.8	—
East London Traffic Control System	April 1994	3.71	—
A650 Bingley Relief Road Advanced Bridge Works	May 1994	—	—
A14 Cattorpe—Rothwell (A and B)	July 1994	35.62	—
A23 Handoross—Pease Pottage Imp	July 1994	8.16	11.925
A30 Shallowater Hill Imp	August 1994	1.70	—
A40 Long Lane Junction Imp	August 1994	23.88	—
M62 J14–17 Widening	August 1994	10.20	16.846
M1 J1 Imp	September 1994	4.23	—
A40 Long Lane—West End Road	October 1994	—	—
A52 Ashbourne Relief Road	October 1994	3.19	4.223
A19 Easingwold Bypass	November 1994	4.58	—
A406 Hanger Lane—Harrow Road	November 1994	—	—
A588 Widness Eastern Bypass (North)	November 1994	14.60	26.19
A66 Stainmore—Banksgate Bypass	December 1994	—	—
M3 Bar End—Compton	December 1994	25.88	—
M56 J4–6 Widening	December 1994	11.80	14.248
A17 Leedenham Bypass	March 1995	3.323	3.325

Runway Incursion Incidents

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* runway incursion incidents and *(b)* incidents of runway overshoots there have been at Heathrow and Gatwick airports in each year since 1985. [36685]

Mr. Norris: The number of runway incursion incidents which occurred at Heathrow and Gatwick airports in the years since 1985 are as follows:

Year	*Heathrow*	*Gatwick*
1985	6	3
1986	7	3
1987	2	0
1988	8	2
1989	13	2
1990	0	0
1991	5	0
1992	3	0
1993	2	1
1994	3	1

Statistics for runway overshoots for the whole of the period requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, figures are available for 1994 when there were 406 runway overshoots at Heathrow airport and 332 at Gatwick.

Specialist Vessels (Marine Pollution)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the EC countries which have dedicated and purpose-built surface vessels available for at-sea recovery or dispersal of pollution; and if he will list the vessels. [35743]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Coastguard Agency. The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 20 July 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as the question deals with an operational matter, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

Information from the EC Community Information System 1994 is in the table attached. The EC System does not distinguish between vessels which are purpose-built and solely dedicated for at-sea recovery or dispersal of pollution, and those vessels which are equipped and available for such duties but which may have other roles.

Country	*Vessels available for at-sea recovery or dispersal of pollution*
Belguim	Belgica, CMT x 3 Ter Streep
Denmark	Preserver, Preventer, Promoter, Protector, Gunnar Seidenfaden, Gunner Thorson, Marie Miljoe, Mette Miljoe
France	Citerna
Germany	Bottsand, Eversand, Foline, Jansand, Kiel, Kopersand, Marcus, Marline, Mellum, Mposs, Norderhever, Nordsee, Oland, OS01, OS02, OSKI, Scharhorn, Thor, Transporter, Westensee
Greece	Argo, LS100, Observer
Italy	Cassiopea x 4, Castor, Cavallino, Ecol Spezia x 2, Giovani M, Grecale Primo, Maestrale, Maria Sole, Montoforte x 6, Nichessa x 16, Priamar, Santa Barbara x 6, Santa Ciro, Scavenger, Spazzamare Airone, Spazzamare Impaemare
Netherlands	Barracuda, Cornelia, Frans Naerebout, Ham 310, Hein, Lesse, Mitra, Oilcrab, Orca, Remedie, Rijndelta, Roteb 6, Rotterdam, Sedia, Smal Agt, Terschelling, Zirfaea, Dg Harmsen, Dullaert, Hedinzee, Holland, Roteb 12, Roteb 9
Portugal	CDM 423 Barge, Golfinho Do Sado, LDM 421' Barge, Mar Azul, Mar Limpo, Rio Limpo, Tarambola, Tetis
Spain	Abasco Limpiamar I, Abasco Limpiamar II, Abasco Limpiamar III, Abasco Limpiamar IV, Alonso De Chaves, Cartagonova, Catalunya, Explorador, Golfo De Vizcava, Hispania, L'Albufera, Marinero, Punta Mayor, Punta Salinas, Punta Service, Remolcanosa Cinco, Ria De Vigo
United Kingdom	Oil Recovery: Forth Explorer, Seaspring Oil Dispersal: The following 25 vessels are fitted with marine pollution control unit dispersal systems; Albeit Bightwell, Clandeboye, Deben, Deft, Dextrous, Edengarth, Eskgarth, Fingal, Holmsider, Lady Debbie, Lady Moira, Margam, Norna, Northsider, Oakgarth, Oxcar, Pharos, St. Gluvius, St. Piran, Sulisker, Sun Essex, Sun Kent, Trimley, Westra

Seat Belts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those areas of EC legislation that prevent the British Government introducing the compulsory fitting of seat belts aboard existing coaches and buses. [36684]

Mr. Norris: The Commission has competence to regulate in the area of vehicle standards and, in the case of seat belts in buses and coaches, has introduced standards covering both the seating positions which should be provided with belts and the standards the installations should meet. These requirements are contained in directives 76/115/EEC and 77/541/EEC, both as amended, which cover anchorages and seat belts respectively. Member states may not impose construction standards which go beyond the provisions of those directives.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his proposed scheme for the control of noise of night flights at London's airports incorporates *(a)* the period of 2300 hours to 0700 hours currently defined as "the night period" and *(b)* the period of 2330 hours to 0600 hours currently defined as "the night quota period". [36703]

Mr. Norris: Yes. The hours of "the night period" and "the night quota period" were confirmed in my announcement on 16 August 1995 stating that the night

flying restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted from winter 1995–96 to end of summer 1998 would remain as previously announced on 6 May 1994.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account his proposed scheme for the control of aircraft noise at night in and around London's airports takes of the proposed reductions in the length of the night quota period; and if he will make a statement. [36704]

Mr. Norris: The current hours of night quota period were announced on 6 May 1994 and confirmed by my announcement of 16 August 1995. Both the current movements limits and noise quotas apply to the 2330 to 0600 period but there are also restrictions on the noisiest types of aircraft from 2300 to 2330 and from 0600 to 0700. There are also fewer types of aircraft exempt from the current night restrictions than under the 1988–93 restrictions.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by airline company the number of noise limitation breaches committed over the last 12 months at Heathrow airport. [36711]

Mr. Norris: Penalties for infringements of the noise limits set by my right hon. Friend are imposed by Heathrow airport Ltd. The airport company provides information on the infringements and on the fines collected to the Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee. I have asked the company to send the reports for the last 12 months to the hon. Lady.

Accident and Disaster Reports (Implementation of Recommendations)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which recommendations from the report of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster have not yet been implemented; for what reasons; and what is the target implementation date. [36660]

Mr. Norris: All the recommendations of the court of inquiry into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise have been taken forward. After consultation and consideration, one recommendation was not supported at the time and some others were not developed further in the light of subsequent technical appraisal, or were taken forward in ways different to those recommended by the inquiry for reasons of technical practicality or because of international developments.

Two long-term recommendations of the court of inquiry were not implemented. These were the recommendation that roll-on roll-off passenger ferries should have dedicated pumps capable of stripping at a rate of at least 600 tonnes an hour and that there should be drain valves which must be controlled remotely and operable from the bridge.

Both recommendations were considered, but after consultation were felt to be unnecessary because, in practice, existing drainage arrangements could already cope with amounts of water approaching these levels. Moreover, pumps of the size recommended could not cope with the significantly larger volume of water involved in catastrophic flooding as occurred on the Herald of Free Enterprise and, indeed, on the Estonia. There may also be difficulties in guaranteeing power supplies in situations of catastrophic flooding. Automatic drain valves are now fitted as a matter of course, so there is no need for their remote control.

Two long-term recommendations were implemented in alternative ways. These were the recommendations that the freeboard from the margin line to the vehicle deck should be increased to a minimum of perhaps 1 m, and that attention should be given to recommendations were addressed through an extensive research programme and the subsequent adoption of the SOLAS 90 survivability standard for existing ships.

The Government believe that there are no recommendations left to be implemented. All have been considered and action taken where appropriate.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the Manchester airport disaster in 1986 that have not been implemented, the reasons why and the target date for implementation. [36667]

Mr. Norris: The air accidents investigation branch made 31 safety recommendations in the report into the Manchester airport accident. All of the recommendations were addressed to the Civil Aviation Authority. The CAA reports that only recommendation 4.31, which concerns fire hardening of the aircraft hull, has yet to be brought to conclusion. The research in this area is being carried out jointly by the joint aviation authorities and the US federal aviation administration. It is not possible to predict when action on this recommendation will be complete. The status of AAIB recommendations made to the CAA is contained in "Civil Aviation Publication 652: Progress Report 1995".

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the Kegworth aircrash that have not been implemented, the reasons why and the target date for implementation. [36666]

Mr. Norris: The air accidents investigation branch made 31 safety recommendations in the report into the Kegworth aircrash, all of which were addressed to the Civil Aviation Authority. Recommendation 4.09, to fit indicator warning devices alerting pilots of maximum engine vibration levels, was initially accepted but later rejected following extensive consideration. The CAA reports that only recommendations 4.23 and 4.31 have yet to be brought to conclusion. These relate to passenger seating and overhead storage lockers. Both need to be agreed at an international level before action can be taken. The CAA expects agreement to be reached on these issues by the end of 1995. The status of AAIB recommendations made to the CAA is contained in "Civil Aviation Publication 652: Progress Report 1995".

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the Lockerbie bombing that have not yet been implemented, the reasons why and the target implementation date. [36662]

Mr. Norris: Two relevant reports have been published in the UK into the Lockerbie disaster. These follow the investigation by the air accidents investigation branch and the fatal accident inquiry.

The AAIB made five safety recommendations in its report on the disaster: four related to the CAA and one to my Department. All of these recommendations have been implemented and related research projects are underway.

The sheriff principal made 20 findings in his report on the FAI. Of these, one related to my Department and criticised airline baggage reconciliation procedures. New legal requirements were placed on airlines last year to account for, and to authorise, the carriage of all hold baggage.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations of the Donaldson report that have not yet been implemented, the reasons why and the target date for implementation. [36664]

Mr. Norris: I have placed in the Library of the House a note showing the current position on each of the recommendations of the Donaldson report.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the Marchioness disaster that have not yet been implemented, the reasons why and the target implementation date. [36661]

Mr. Norris: All the recommendations in the marine accident investigation branch's report into the collision between the Marchioness and the Bowbelle have been implemented.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the King's Cross fire that have not yet been implemented, the reasons why and the target date for implementation. [36665]

Mr. Norris: Of the 127 Fennell recommendations aimed at London Transport/London Underground, 112 have been implemented in full. Work is in hand on the remainder, which are of a more long-term nature. Progress is regularly monitored by Her Majesty's railway inspectorate. The expected dates of implementation, where appropriate, are shown in the following table.

Fennel recommendation number	*Recommendation*	*Completion date*
2	Escalator replacement programme	Ongoing
6	Non-inflammable escalator lubricant	Ongoing
8	Line Controller's facilities	By 2001
16	Research on air movement	Ongoing
36	Replacement of wooden treads on escalators	By 2003-2004
49	Station ventilation systems	By December 1995
52	Elimination of VIR cable on trains	By March 1998
69	Hazardous materials on rolling stock	By 2001
74	Occupiers of premises complying with code of practice	Ongoing
93	Rule Book	By December 1996
114	Improvement to CCTV	Ongoing
115	Public payphones	By December 1995
124	Secondary means of escape	Ongoing
125	Control of smoke and ventilation	Ongoing
142	Subway link at Kings Cross	Under consideration in light of CTRL proposals.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the recommendations from the report of the Clapham rail disaster that have not yet been implemented, the reasons why and the target implementation date. [36663]

Mr. Watts: Sir Anthony Hidden's report into the Clapham accident made 93 recommendations, 78 of which related to British Rail and the British Transport Police. Action has been taken on all the recommendations addressed to BR and the BTP. Many of the recommendations are on-going, and BR and Railtrack are monitoring compliance. The position on outstanding recommendations is as follows.

Recommendation 13 related to BR's departmental instructions. BR took immediate steps to ensure understanding of departmental instructions. This did not extend to requiring all staff subject to annual appraisal to sign a statement every two years to the effect that such instructions had been read, because alternative systems for briefing staff on the issue and amendment of departmental instructions were put in place.

Recommendation 23, that the annual appraisal system, albeit in a simplified form, should be extended to senior technician level was included in restructuring proposals for signalling and telecommunications staff, but was not agreed by trade unions. However, the recommendation has been overtaken by a competence-based approach, as required by the Railways (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994.

Recommendation 27 on the non-statutory reporting of wrong side failures of signalling was implemented on 1 January 1990. Legislation making such reporting a statutory requirement will become effective in April 1996, when revised industry-wide incident reporting requirements are planned to come into effect—recommendation 28.

As regards on-train data recorders—recommendation 40—this equipment is specified for new rolling stock.

The major part of the programme to install the national radio network system of communication between driver and the signal man—recommendation 43—was completed by the target date of 1992. Complete fitment of this system is expected by early 1996. A review of this programme led to a decision by BR to install the cab secure radio system in south-east England, which is more appropriate to driver-only operated routes. This system

will be completed by 1997. Technical difficulties and higher priority safety projects have extended completion of this programme beyond BR's original target date of 1995.

Recommendation 46 related to automatic train protection. On 30 March, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) endorsed the view of the Health and Safety Commission that, following extensive work by BR and Railtrack, ATP measures may be justified in parts of the rail network but that the fitment of ATP as developed by BR could not be justified throughout the network. A programme of alternative train protection measures is being developed. Railtrack and BR continue to examine the implementation of these measures.

Recommendation 55 concerned the structural integrity of rolling stock. BR completed its programme of research—recommendation 54—by the target date of April 1991. BR then discussed this with the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate. HSC endorsed BR's conclusion that very few of those vehicles in classes 411, 413, 415, and 416 were projected to remain in service for eight years or over and that it would not be reasonably practicable to carry out structural changes to these or to the remainder of mark I vehicles.

Cowden Rail Accident

Mr Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State when he received, and when he expects to publish, the report of Her Majesty's inspectorate into the Cowden rail accident. [37266]

Mr. Watts: Part I of the inspector's report was published on 9 June by the Health and Safety Executive, and copies were placed in the House of Commons Library. The first report explains how the accident happened and addresses the adequacy of the safety mechanisms and procedures on the line. It was called for in advance of the coroner's inquest in order to avoid delaying publication of the conclusions that were not dependent on the outcome of the inquest. The report concluded that the line was adequately and safely signalled and that the signalling equipment was working as it should be.

Part II of the report will address who was driving the train at the time of the accident, taking into account the additional forensic evidence given at the recent inquest. The inspector's final report will be published by the HSE as soon as possible.

Departmental Role

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the report produced recently within his Department on the future role of his Department and its perception in Whitehall. [36673]

Sir George Young: The Department has not produced a report on its future role and its perception in Whitehall.

River Thames (Injuries and Fatalities)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years the number of serious injuries and fatalities sustained on the River Thames. [36683]

Mr. Norris: Figures for the central area of the Thames, between Staines and Dartford creek are as follows[1]:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Bodies recovered	43	44	51	46	43
Accidents where ambulance called	14	17	11	13	12
Persons rescued from the river	568	855	119	120	175
Attempted suicides	44	60	64	102	111

[1] Figures provided by Thames division, Metropolitan police.

Vessel Inspections

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, by defect found, the number of vessels found to have a defect during the last 12 months at inspections undertaken by the Marine Safety Agency. [36708]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. The hon. Member has already received a reply from the chief executive and I attach a copy.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley

Thank you for your letter of 1 August requesting details of inspections carried out on ro-ro passenger ferries on Dover and on merchant ships in the UK in general.

With regard to your first query, relating to inspections carried out on ro-ro passenger ferries in Dover, I would refer you to the answer given by Mr Norris to PQ 1479 and 1467, which can be found in Hansard volume 258 columns 614 to 615.

Moving on to your second query, relating to inspections carried out by the Marine Safety Agency throughout the country over the last 12 months, a list showing the result of all such inspections by deficiency cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. However, the United Kingdom carries out its port state control inspections in co-operation with members of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (Paris MOU). The results of each inspection carried out in the MOU are recorded on a central database and statistical information is published annually by the Secretariat of the Paris MOU. The number of ships, by deficiency, inspected in the region covered by the Paris MOU can be found in *The Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control Annual Report 1994*, a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons' library.

Air Traffic Controllers

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years the average amount of overtime worked by air traffic controllers and the number of staff in post. [36712]

Mr. Norris: The vast majority of the United Kingdom's air traffic controllers are employed by the Civil Aviation Authority. Data for other air traffic controllers could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

No overtime has been worked by the CAA's air traffic controllers in the last five years.

The following figures give the number of air traffic controllers employed by the CAA since 1992.

1992: 1,298

1993: 1,297

1994: 1,380

1995: 1,428

The figures requested for 1991 can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Tony Lloyd:: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has as to the contribution of the worst *(a)* 10 per cent. and *(b)* 20 per cent. of vehicles to noxious and harmful vehicle emissions. [36640]

Mr. Norris: Vehicle emissions are strongly influenced by operating conditions and driver behaviour. However, in an analysis of exhaust emission measurements, carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory on a sample of 200 cars selected to be typical of the in-service fleet, 10 per cent. were found to contribute 22 per cent. of total carbon monoxide and 27 per cent. of total hydrocarbon emissions under urban driving conditions; similarly, 20 per cent. of cars tested contributed 39 per cent. of CO and 40 per cent. of HC emissions.

Large Vehicle Brake Efficiency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it a requirement that all heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles be driven on a rolling road test installation immediately after work is done on brakes. [36741]

Mr. Norris: Heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle brake efficiency is checked on a rolling road as part of the annual roadworthiness test.

Operators are encouraged through the guide to maintaining roadworthiness to have access to appropriate brake testing equipment as part of their routine safety inspections. I have no plans to make this a legal requirement.

Permitted Vehicle Sizes

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the *(a)* longest and *(b)* largest vehicle allowed to travel on the roads in the United Kingdom. [36737]

Mr. Norris: Regulations specify a maximum permitted length of 18.35 m for drawbar vehicle combinations and a maximum permitted gross vehicle weight of 44 tonnes for both articulated and drawbar vehicle combinations engaged in combined transport.

Vehicles exceeding these weights and dimensions can operate under provisions contained within the Motor Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) General Order 1979. However, for vehicles carrying very large and heavy abnormal indivisible loads the Department authorises each movement by issuing an individual special order to the haulier. Such orders are made under section 44 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future for heavy vehicles using roads in the United Kingdom indicating suggested weight and size. [36738]

Mr. Norris: The present general weight limit in the UK for the largest lorries is 38 tonnes, with 44 tonnes allowed for certain vehicles used for combined road/rail transport. We will be reviewing the effectiveness of the latter at the end of the year. From 1 January 1999, the UK will have to accept the European Union weight limit of 40 tonnes for international traffic.

European Union Transport Ministers recently agreed, subject to approval by the European Parliament, to amend the directive on vehicle weights and dimensions so that national rules on dimensions of goods vehicles will be harmonised. This will result in an increase in (i) the maximum length of drawbar-trailer combinations from 18.35 m to 18.75 m and (ii) the maximum width of non-insulated vehicles to 2.55 m.

In the case of buses, there is no harmonisation of dimensions for vehicles used on national journeys. The maximum length of non-articulated buses remains at 12 with 18 m for articulated vehicles. Some member states allow longer non-articulated buses and we will keep our national dimensions under review.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what restrictions apply to 44 tonne vehicles using the roads in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: Vehicles operating between 38 tonnes and 44 tonnes may do so only when taking a container or swap-body to or from a rail terminal on the road leg of a combined road/rail journey. These vehicles must have six axles and road-friendly suspensions, and must carry documentary evidence to show either that the loading unit had travelled by rail terminal or that it was destined to do so.

Bus Companies (Complaints)

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in how many cases the traffic commissioner has taken action since 1986 as a result of complaint against bus companies failing to fulfil their advertised timetables; which companies have been involved; in what areas of the country; and what level of fines has been charged. [36764]

Mr. Norris: Data are not available in the form requested.

Air Safety Regulatory Authority

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions are currently being held within the joint aviation authority about the establishment of a single regulatory authority for air safety across the joint aviation authority countries; what is the status of the draft convention adopted by the joint aviation authority board in March concerning a single regulatory authority; what form of consultation will take place on any moves to establish a new body to regulate aviation safety; what steps he will take to ensure accountability and enforcement with steps he will take to ensure accountability and enforcement within any new structure; and if he will make a statement. [36892]

Mr. Norris: No discussions are being held with the joint aviation authorities about the establishment of a single regulatory authority. We are considering a draft convention which would enable national aviation authorities of JAA member states to act through the JAA as a *de facto* single aviation authority, but expressly does not establish such an authority on a *de jure* basis. The Civil Aviation Authority would remain the aviation safety

regulator in the UK. The JAA is, and will continue to be, accountable through the JAA board, on which the UK is represented.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36824]

Mr. Watts: Members of the public have the same rights to make complaints to the relevant ombudsman about alleged maladministration in relation to a project funded through the private finance initiative as they would if the project had been publicly financed.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public interest immunity certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36687]

Sir George Young: I am unable to provide details for 1987–89. Central records were not kept and information before 1989 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Since that date, the position is as follows. As is already a matter of public record, in 1990 the then Secretary of Sate signed four certificates in connection with the fatal accident inquiry into the Lockerbie disaster but, in the event, none was produced at the inquiry. It is also a matter of public record that in 1992, the then Secretary of State signed two certificates relating to the Lockerbie disaster concerning the taking of evidence for proceedings in the United States. In the event, the taking of that evidence did not proceed and the certificates were not produced in that regard.

Driving Tests

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent assessment he has made of the risks to the health and safety of driving test examiners while undertaking driving tests. [37115]

Mr. Norris: An assessment of the risks to health and safety of driving test examiners while undertaking driving tests was prepared in early 1994 and circulated to all driving examiners on 17 May 1995. This assessment is introduced to all new driving examiners at a very early stage in their training and is included in a Driving Standards Agency health and safety manual held at every DSA location.

An assessment of risks resulted in the issue of a DSA policy for assaults to all DSA staff on 10 February 1995. This is introduced to trainees as above, and is held in DSA health and safety manuals.

An assessment of the risks to motorcycle driving examiners resulting from the wearing of radio equipment has recently been completed.

Railway Safety Centre, Derby

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his proposed sale of the railway safety centre of the British Railways Board at Derby, who will determine the minimum price at which it will be sold; on what criteria such a decision will be reached; and on what basis a privatised unit will charge when asked for information, advice, or services, *(a)* urgently and *(b)* otherwise, by those responsible for (i) operations, (ii) other parts of the national railtrack, train services and stations and (iii) other activity relevant to the safety of staff or public. [37356]

Mr. Watts: BR is selling quality and safety services by means of competitive tender and in pursuance of the Secretary of State's objectives set out in section 113 of the Railways Act 1993. Charging arrangements after sale completion will, as now, be a commercial matter for the business and its customers.

Atlantic Conveyor (Hull Cracks)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list each occasion that his Department's surveyors have visited the former Cunard Line vessel Atlantic Conveyor to investigate the appearance of cracks in her hull; what course of action was ordered to be taken; and what was recorded as being the cause of such cracks; [36670]

(2) if he will list each occasion that a Lloyd's surveyor has visited the former Cunard Line vessel Atlantic Conveyor to investigate the appearance of cracks in her hull and to oversee or examine any repairs. [36668]

(3) on how many occasions the former Cunard Line vessel Atlantic Conveyor has had to have cracks in her hull welded. [36669]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your three Questions about ATLANTIC CONVEYOR.

During the period in which ATLANTIC CONVEYOR was registered in the United Kingdom, surveyors from Lloyd's Register made 42 visits, beginning in 1985, in connection with the investigation of cracks in the hull structure. The cracks were repaired immediately either by welding or part renewal of the structure, or conditions of class were imposed on the vessel until permanent repairs could be effected within a defined period. The survey of the hull structure is a matter in which classification societies may act under delegated powers and surveyors from the Department of Transport have not visited ATLANTIC CONVEYOR to investigate the appearance of cracks.

It is not unusual for some vessels to suffer fracturing of this nature from time to time, particularly if they are exposed to heavy weather, as this vessel has been in North Atlantic trade. Provided that proper maintenance and repairs are carried out by the owners, and repairs to the ship are surveyed by the classification society in accordance with classification procedures, the safety of the vessel is not compromised. At the time of ATLANTIC CONVEYOR's transfer to the Bahamian flag in July 1995, there are no extant conditions of class relating to cracks and I understand there are none at present.

Newbury Bypass

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost to public funds of the construction of the A34 Newbury bypass. [36674]

Mr. Watts: This is a operational matter for the Highways Agency.

I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 16 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the cost of constructing the A34 Newbury Bypass.

The current estimate for the cost of the works and the land is £70 million.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the public consultation he has undertaken in respect of the Newbury bypass. [36676]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 16 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Road, Mr. John Watts has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the public consultation undertaken in respect of the Newbury Bypass.

The public were consulted about route options in 1982; as well as the public we also sought the views of statutory bodies and other interested parties. Exhibitions were held at the same time.

Following consideration of the comments received at Public Consultation, the preferred route for the bypass was announced in June 1984.

In 1988, following the publication of draft Orders, a Public Inquiry was held by an independent Inspector to enable objections to the published line to be fully aired.

In 1990, the Inspector's Report was published along with the decision letter. This followed detailed consideration not only of the report, but of representations received following the public Inquiry and revised National Road Traffic Forecasts. The decision letter also announced modifications to some of the draft Orders, which required further consultation with people likely to be affected by the proposed changes.

Road Building (Recycled Material)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to encourage the use of recycled materials in road building. [37044]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter for Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Spellar, dated 16 October 1995:

The Minister of Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning action being taken to encourage use of recycled materials in road building.

Wherever practical, the Highways Agency seeks to provide the opportunity in trunk road contracts for including recycled materials. There is already considerable scope for recycling and extension of this is being investigated as part of the Agency's research programme. A recent change has increased the permitted proportion of many reclaimed bituminous materials from 10 to 30 per cent. In June, the Agency published new advice on the conservation and use of reclaimed materials in road construction and maintenance which highlights the scope for reuse and recycling and is aimed at encouraging a greater awareness of the opportunities available.

Roadworks Planning

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy in respect of road surface renewal or repair contracts if highway authorities are empowered to include in such contracts provision in respect of minimum potential vehicle flow at given periods in the day and week. [37384]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Nigel Spearing, dated 16 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what is the policy in respect of road surface renewal or repair contracts if highway authorities are empowered to include in such contracts provision in respect of minimum potential vehicle flow at given periods in the day and week.

Roadworks planning is a matter for the highway authority. On local roads this will be the local authority, but on trunk roads including motorways the Highways Agency manages works in accordance with requirements set out in our Business Plan.

The aim is to minimise economic costs through careful planning and specification of lane availability needs.

Costs minimised through an economic evaluation of maintenance schemes, taking account of works cost and the increased costs to road users and others from the presence of the works. These increased costs are calculated by a computer program which takes into account the extra costs incurred due to delays, vehicle running costs, and accidents. The cost is different for each site and is dependent, amongst other things, on the type of road, traffic flows, percentage of heavy goods vehicles in the flow, the length of the works, and the number and configuration of lanes closed off.

In order to further reduce traffic disruption and delay at roadworks more schemes are being let using the Lane Rental form of contract. The contractor is given the incentive to expedite the works by earning a bonus for early completion, but incurring a charge for late completion.

Work is increasingly carried out at night, starting after the evening peak traffic flow has subsided, and finishing prior to the build-up the following morning. The closures take place when traffic volumes are low, and all lanes are available to traffic during the day.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consideration he has given to the electrification of the railway between Acton main line station and Acton Wells junction in order to give future direct access for fast electrified train services from Heathrow airport stations on the North London line, and the east and west coast main lines; [37264]

(2) what is the current estimated completion date for the re-electrification of the railway between Kew Bridge and Willesden Junction high level; and if he will now request Railtrack and the relevant railway operator companies to initiate, in part or in whole, a frequent electrified train service from North Woolwich to South London via Willesden and Clapham Junction; [37261]

(3) what consideration he has given to the electrification of the railway between South Acton at Kew Junctions and the Kew Bridge chord in order to give direct access from the south-western electrified networks to the North London line, the east and west coast main lines, and an alternative route for channel tunnel passenger stock to and from its North Pole depot and Waterloo International; [37263]

(4) what considerations he has given to electrification of railway between Action Wells Junction and Cricklewood in order to give direct access for electric trains from the Midland main line to electrified route to the Channel tunnel and the electrified lines of the former Southern Railways. [37262]

Mr. Watts: Work is currently under way on the North London line to prepare for the introduction of EPS/Eurostar services beyond London during 1996. This is being accomplished, in part, by the introduction of modern AC electrification between Acton Central and Camden Road which should be accomplished by spring 1996.

Significant investment is taking place on this route which will improve delivery of existing train services as well as allow international services to be established beyond London.

The changes will allow Railtrack and the train operating companies to explore other opportunities for the introduction of services to meet markets they may identify. It will be up to them to prepare investment and service changes as they see fit.

Trains (Carriage of Cycles)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate studies, as part of his policy to minimise the increase in the person miles travelled in motor cars, into the means whereby the effects of the disadvantageous actions taken by British Railways in respect of passenger-accompanied pedal cycles, taken subsequent to the announcement made by it and the Cyclist Touring Club be eliminated, or minimised. [37328]

Mr. Watts: No. The carriage of cycles on trains is an operational matter for train operators, balancing cyclists' needs with those of ordinary passengers.

The franchising director intends to include a requirement in each franchise agreement that franchise operators shall, so far as reasonably practicable and subject to the availability of appropriate space on their rolling stock, ensure that facilities are made available for bicycles on trains at a reasonable, if any, charge to passengers.

The Cyclists' Public Affairs Group, with the assistance of the Department has produced a guidance document for rail operators "Bikes and Trains—Opportunities for the new operators"—foreword by John Watts) explaining how they can make their services more attractive to cyclists. The document includes advice on the carriage of cycle on trains and the provision of cycle facilities at stations.

Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what criteria or job description he published with his advertisement for the new chair of the rail passengers advisory committee; and what consultation he had and what reports he had received relating to the work of the committee, and the position of its chairperson, from the Select Committee on Transport; [37404]

(2) how many applications, suggestions, or recommendation he received in respect of persons to be appointed chair of the rail passengers advisory committee; how many he shortlisted; and if he will make a statement concerning his method of filling this further vacancy. [37273]

Mr. Watts: Advertisements for the post of chairman of the Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee made clear to applicants the criteria needed for the post. An example of the advertisements has been placed in the House Library.

Advertisements for the post were published in March, eliciting 147 applications, and 17 candidates were shortlisted for initial interview. Further advertisements were placed in September to broaden the field of candidates. An additional 235 applications have been received and are under consideration.

The Select Committee on Transport has not reported on the work or chairmanship of the Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee.

Railtrack (Contracting Out)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirement is made on Railtrack to contract out its functions; what is the number of such arrangements extant and how many of these were made when its activities were the responsibility of the British Railways Board; and if he will list those functions newly contracted out since its creation which are related to operational safety. [37359]

Mr. Watts: Under the objectives set by the Government for the Railtrack board for 1995–96, the company is expected to procure services from the private sector where appropriate.

Full data on the number of functions contracted out and the number of these made when Railtrack's activities were the responsibility of the British Railways Board are not held centrally, but in 1994–95, Railtrack contracted out approximately £1.8 billion of work.

Almost all of Railtrack's functions, including those newly contracted out since Railtrack's creation, relate in some way to operational safety, and are subject to the rigorous safety regime which applies to all Railtrack's activities.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdort, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [37001]

Mr. Norris: The information requested is set out in the accompanying table. The value of each contract, and any additional work undertaken, has not been revealed on the grounds that this information is commercially confidential.

Year	*Contractor*	*Nature of Contract*
1990	Siemens	Maintenance of the Manchester Box
1991	Bis	Hardware and software support for Management Information System
1992	Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segati	Maintenance and support of file servers and networking system
	ICL	Enabling agreement for supply of network infrastructure products and services
	Siemens	Maintenance of NMCS North East region
	Siemens	Supply of national motorway communication system 2 equipment
	Siemens	Maintenance of NMCS Eastern and Greater London Region
1993	Digital Equipment	Installation and management of Computing facility
	EDS	The provision of on-site IT services/management (including supply, advice, support and development) to the Department and several of its Agencies
	Siemens	Maintenance of SPLC software
1994	Digital Equipment	Provision of a national street works register
	EDS	Development of new Information systems strategy
	Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segati	Technical support contract for new information systems strategy
	Logica	Supply and installation of NMCS central logging facility
	Sema Group	A study of new and combined technologies and optical technique in variable message signs
	Siemens	M25 trials of message sign subsystems
	Siemens	Software maintenance of message sign subsystems
	Siemens	Supply and installation of mimic driver system
	Siemens	Supply of NMCS2 Equipment (21 bit transponders, signal drivers, PSU's, site data entry terminals
	Siemens	Supply, installation and commissioning of motorway signals
	Siemens	Upgrade NMCS2 to semi-cobs status at Godstone and Manchester control offices
1995	Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segati	IT system strategy study
	Siemens	Installation commissioning of NMCS2 Outstation Equipment

West Coast Main Line (Modernisation)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding delays in modernisation of the west coast main line. [37114]

Mr. Watts: The modernisation is progressing well and the evaluation of tenders for developing the train control system will begin shortly with a contract to be let early next year. Work is also at an advanced stage on the strategy for the main implementation contract and this will be let in 1996.

Coastguard Staff and Operations

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the ratio of managers to regular staff at each coastguard station; [36694]

(2) if he will list the required number of staff in a coastguards operations room and the level of training required for the staff; [36698]

(3) how many coastguard stations including auxiliary and part-time stations closed in each of the last five years; [36672]

(4) if there is a limit on the amount of overtime a coastguard watch officer can undertake; [36696]

(5) how many MRII/SCS complexes are equipped with sleeping accommodation, restrooms and comprehensively equipped galleys; and what assessment he has made as to whether the equipment provided is enough to sustain a shift for a 24-hour period of duty; [36699]

(6) if he will list the average amount of overtime a coastguard watch officer did per week for each of the last five years. [36697]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. The chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Ms Joan Walley, dated 28 September 1995:

Thank you for your letter of 23 August requesting information on various aspects of Coastguard Operations.

1. The number of managers to regular watch keeping staff (Watch Officers and Senior Watch Officers) at each Coastguard Rescue Centre is as follows:

Rescue Centre	*Senior Watch Officers and Watch Officers*	*Regional or District Management Team*
Shetland	12	3
Pentland	12	3
Aberdeen	19	5
Forth	12	3
Tyne Tees	13	3
Humber	14	3
Yarmouth	15	5
Thames	13	3
Dover	25	5
Solent	18	3
Portland	14	3
Brixham	14	3
Falmouth	16	6
Swansea	18	5
Milford Haven	13	3
Holyhead	12	3
Liverpool	14	3
Clyde	14	5
Oban	12	3
Stornoway	12	3
Belfast	13	3

District and Regional Management Teams (DMT/RMT) comprising Station Officers, District Controllers, Regional and Deputy Regional Controllers as well as Coastguard Officers (Senior Watch Officers and Watch Officers) are all "regular staff"; i.e., uniformed, professional Coastguards. DMT and RMT members have an active Operations Room role in major emergencies and at any time if required.

The above figures do not include the 92 regular Sector Officers, nor the Auxiliary Coastguards who keep watch in rescue centres.

2. The required number of staff in operations rooms are as follows:

	Senior Watch Officer	*Watch Officers*
In each MRCC except Dover	1	3
In each MRSC	1	2
Dover	[1]1+1	3

[1] At MRCC Dover, each watch is headed by a Station Officer, in addition to the Senior Watch Officer.

All New Entrant Coastguards undertake an initial training lasting approximately one year. After a short familiarisation period (usually six to eight weeks) at their parent station, they undertake six weeks intensive training at the Training Centre. They then return to their parent station for about nine months, during which time, under the guidance of the District Management Team, they work through a taskbook compiled by the Training Centre. They return to the Training Centre for a two week revision and examination period at the end of the year. Subject to successful completion of the taskbook, the exams, an interview board and management reports, they are appointed Coastguard Watch Officers.

About two years later they could be ready to take Senior Watch Officer and Sector Officer Qualifying Courses. Passing the examinations on these courses, together with management reports indicating their fitness, qualifies them for selection to these posts.

Auxiliary Coastguard Operations Room Assistants receive 80 hours initial training locally culminating in examinations. They receive 20 hours refresher training per annum thereafter.

3. No rescue centres have closed in the last five years. The following sector bases and lookouts have closed in the last five years:

1991:	Three	(Seaton Sluice, Tyne Tees District) (Maryport and Aberdon lookouts)
1992:	Five	(Sizewell and Orford, Thames District) (Bass Point, Portland Bill and Whitehaven lookouts)
1993:	One	(Polrvan lookout)
1994:	Six	(Sea Palling, Yarmouth District) (Ives, Gwennap Head, Phyl, Cemaes and Aberdovey lookouts)
1995:	Three	(Prawle, Peveril Point, Fleetwood lookouts)

The above does not include the relocation of rescue centres or sector bases in new buildings or the amalgamation of sector bases (there have been two of these).

4. There is no specific limit on overtime other than that applied by the Regional and District Controllers to ensure that individual performance is not compromised.

5. There have been no occasions when a Coastguard station has been under the control of an unqualified Watch Officer. Staff are selected for the post of Senior Watch Officer (SWO) and allocated to rescue centres one per watch. In their absence they are either replaced by another SWO or a deputising Watch Officer. A deputising Watch Officer is a Watch Officer who is qualified by his or her initial establishment as Coastguard Officer having successfully completed the new entrants' process and who has been approved as deputy by the Regional Management. In order to be selected as SWO on a permanent basis Watch Officers are required to complete a SWO (Qualifier) course run by the Coastguard Training Centre. It is not a requirement that a deputy should have passed this course.

6. All rescue centres are equipped with rest rooms and comprehensively equipped kitchens. There is no requirement for officers to sustain a 24 hour shift or to need sleeping accommodation.

7. The table below shows the average amounts of overtime (in hours per week) for each Region in each of the last five years. The averages include all regular watchkeeping staff, ie Senior Watch Officers as well as Watch Officers.

	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*
North and East Scotland	5.4	5.3	5.5	4.2	6.8
Eastern	4.4	4.6	3.9	3.5	3.4
South Eastern	2.6	2.8	2.4	1.5	1.9
South Western	5.7	5.8	4.9	4.4	5.1
Western	4.5	4.6	4.0	3.8	3.9
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	8.7	7.4	6.7	3.8	3.6

8. The basic watch level at a rescue centre is the watch level required to meet the normal day-to-day operational commitments at that centre.

Road Projects, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those projects in the road programme in Greater London approved in principle, which add no route mileage to the road system but are designed principally to improve traffic flow or safety on existing routes indicating for each its cost, current state of planning and statutory processes, and likely commencement and completion dates; [37372]

(2) if he will list the constraints on increasing the traffic lanes on the Iron bridge spanning the River Lea at Canning Town from six lanes to eight; [37272]

(3) what is the current number of traffic lanes on trunk roads crossing the River Lea at or adjacent to Canning Town; what is their total maximum predicted traffic flow in each direction; what plans he has to increase the number of such lanes; and what is the increase in traffic flow estimated to result. [37271]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Nigel Spearing, dated 16 October 1995

I am writing in response to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Transport, in which you sought information about the A13 Ironbridge to Canning Town Improvement scheme and other schemes in Greater London.

I wrote to you on 17 October 1994, as did Mr. Norris on 3 March 1995, about the constraints on the use of the existing Iron Bridge. The overriding constraint is that the existing bridge is not wide enough to carry four lanes in each direction and there is no satisfactory way of modifying the structure to do so. There is nothing that I can usefully add.

I enclose at Appendix A a list of schemes which are in the trunk road programme for Greater London. It shows their cost (as quoted in last year's Review of Trunk Roads in England) and the last stage reached in their preparation. Further progress will depend on the satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures and the continuing availability of funds. All of the schemes are designed to improve existing routes rather than to extend the trunk road network.

There are currently three trunk road traffic lanes crossing the River Lea in each direction at or near Canning Town. Only two

lanes in each direction cater for through traffic: the others serve the slip roads to and from the Canning Town Roundabout. Maximum predicted traffic flows are governed by the capacity of adjacent junctions, link roads and traffic signal installations. The maximum predicted traffic flows quoted at the recent public inquiry for the existing trunk road were as follows:

Westbound: 2,200 vehicles per hour through traffic with an additional 1,000 vehicles joining from the slip road.

Eastbound: 4,400 vehicles per hour. (This figure includes about 900 vehicles which peel off at the slip road.)

The improvement scheme would provide three lanes in each direction for through traffic and two lanes in each direction for slip roads, but one of the latter would be a dedicated bus lane. There would also be a cycle lane on the slip roads.

At the inquiry, the maximum predicted flows of through traffic on the improved trunk road were quoted as follows:

Westbound: 4,800 vehicles per hour.

Eastbound: 4,800 vehicles per hour.

(There would be no junction constraints in the new configuration.)

In addition up to 700 vehicles per hour would use each of the slip roads, the peak being in the morning.

Appendix A

	Order of Total Scheme Cost £ million, excluding VAT
A40 Gypsy Corner Improvement (LB Hounslow); awaiting construction	32.4
A40 Western Circus Junction Improvement (LB Ealing): awaiting construction	38.2
A13 West of Heathway—Thames Avenue Improvement (LBS Barking and Dagenham); awaiting construction	86.9
A406/A1/A598 Regents Park Road Junction Improvement (LB Barnet): awaiting construction	57.3
A13 Movers Lane Junction Improvement (LBs Barking and Dagenham): draft Orders published. Public inquiry completed	36.8
A13/A117 Junction Improvement (LB Newham): draft Orders published. Public inquiry completed	26.3
A13/A112 Prince Regent Lane Junction Improvement (LB Newham): draft Orders published. Public inquiry completed	37.0

Appendix A

	Order of Total Scheme Cost £ million, excluding VAT
A406 Bounds Green—Green Lane Improvement (LB Enfield): draft Orders published, but to be revised and reissued	131.8
A406 Golders Green Road Junction Improvement (LB Barnet): Orders have been made and advance works have started	22.4
M4/A4 Link, Hounslow (LBs Hillingdon and Hounslow): at an early stage. Consultants yet to be appointed	24.0
A102 Blackwall Third Crossing (LBs Tower Hamlets and LB Greenwich): Public Consultation held—no firm conclusion. Further feasibility work to be done	137.4
A406 Popes Lane—Western Avenue Improvement (LB Ealing): Secretary of State's decision has been announced. Further work is required on smaller scale options	82.4
A406 East London River Crossing (LBs Greenwich and Newham): in the Longer Term programme i.e, currently in abeyance	n/a
A13 Ironbridge—Canning Town Improvement (LB Newham): draft Orders have been published. Public inquiry to be held	55.5
A205 Catford Town Centre Improvement (LB Lewisham): Side Roads Order confirmed. Compulsory Purchase Order yet to be confirmed	12.6
A4 Henlys/Waggoners Corner Improvement (LB Hounslow): Public Consultation held	9.9
A2 Kidbrooke Park Road Interchange Improvement (LB Greenwich): Public Consultation held	14.1
M4 J3-4B Widening (LBs Hillingdon and Hounslow): Public Consultation held	35.4
M25 Terminal 5 Spur (Heathrow), Surrey (LB Hillingdon): Public Consultation held	23.4
Primary Route Network Signing: pilot completed. Completion by 1998	12.5
Cable and Communications: in progress. Completion by 2000	13.8

The Highways Agency's Business Plan lists 47 Network Enhancement Projects in London, costing between £50,000 and £1 million each, at a total cost of £9.8 million, which are due to start in 1995–96. There is also an ongoing programme of smaller schemes in 1995–96 at a cost of £4.9 million.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what saving will result from reducing the period of absence during which housing benefit is payable from 52 weeks to 13 weeks; and how many claimants will be affected; [36744]

(2) how many housing benefit claimants in each of the last three years were convicted prisoners serving sentences of *(a)* less than 13 weeks, *(b)* between 13 and 52 weeks and *(c)* more than 52 weeks. [36746]

Mr. Roger Evans: We estimate that up to 10,000 claimants a year may be affected by reducing the period of temporary absence for which housing benefit is payable and that this will save up to £10 million. No information is collected on the number of convicted prisoners of housing benefit during the last three years.

Benefit Payment Card

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the powers under which he proposes to change the social security order payments book for plastic smart card; and if he will make a statement on the proposed timetable of the change. [37093]

Mr. Heald: Section 5(1)(i) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 provides that the Secretary of State may make regulations which

"provide for the . . . manner in which a benefit . . . is to be paid and for the information and evidence to be furnished in connection with the payment . . ."

Regulation 20A of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, inserted by Regulation 4 of SI 1994/3196 was made under the above power and provides, in effect, for benefit payments to be made on production of a card. We anticipate that the first benefit payment cards will be issued in 1996 with completion of the changeover in two to three years.

Attendance Allowance

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the number of claimants who have been refused attendance allowance; and to what extent the criteria to award attendance allowance takes account of people with restricted mobility being able to attend to their solid fuel heating systems. [37196]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: In 1994–95, the last full year for which figures are available, the Benefits Agency cleared 486,506 claims for attendance allowance, of which 146,924 were refused.

Entitlement to attendance allowance depends on the extent to which a severely disabled person needs attention in connection with their bodily functions and/or supervision to avoid substantial danger to themselves or others. The criteria do not relate specifically to a claimants' home heating arrangements.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM,*(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36958]

Mr. Burt: Details of the nature and value of contracts awarded to external suppliers following a competitive tender of work previously performed in-house by civil servants are in the table. No additional work has been awarded on these contracts to the companies in question. In-house teams who have retained work following a market test obtain a range of services through contracts with external suppliers. Information on those contracts is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Financial year	*Agency*	*Nature of work*	*Value of work (estimated)* £
January 1990 to March 1990	Contributions Agency	Night time security	1,349,000
April 1990 to March 1991	Benefits Agency	Security	725,000
	Contributions Agency	Day time security	1,031,000
	Information Technology Services Agency	Computer Operations Management	12,931,000
April 1991 to March 1992	Benefits Agency	Estates Management (London)	1,155,000
		Estates Management (London)	508,000
April 1992 to March 1993	Child Support Agency	Accommodation and Office Services	2,313,000
		Audit	309,000
		Training	547,000
April 1993 to March 1994	Information Technology Services Agency	Audit	1,264,000
	DSS Headquarters	Accommodation and Office Services	761,000
	Contributions Agency	Cleaning	771,000
	Benefits Agency	Travel Services	211,000
		Storage/Archives	516,000
		Accommodation and Office Services	884,000
		Training for various areas/offices:	540,000
			679,000
			646,000
			683,000
			637,000
			616,000

Financial year	Agency	Nature of work	Value of work (estimated) £
April 1994 to March 1995	Information Technology Services Agency	Security Guarding	436,000
	Benefits Agency	Area Computer Centre	6,297,000
		Publishing Services	4,466,000
		Accommodation and Office Services for various sites:	
		Building management and cleaning services	905,000
		Facilities management	3,952,000
		Typing and secretarial	945,000
		Facilities management	789,000
		Security services	192,000
		Office Support	1,402,000
		Facilities management	1,375,000
		Office Support	1,444,000
		Building and facilities management services	1,517,000
		Security, messengerial, stewards, reprographics and post opening	646,000
		Typing, secretarial, telephonists and building management	2,875,000
		Post opening, telephonists, typing, stationary and distribution	838,000
		Facilities management	4,251,000
		Postal, security and consumable services	2,265,000
		Building and facilities management	1,193,000
		Facilities management	5,547,000
		Building management services	1,010,000
		Facilities management	5,613,000
		Facilities management	5,275,000
		Typing, word processing, switchboard and reprographics	2,459,000
		Local accommodation facilities management	1,654,000
April 1995 to July 1995	Information Technology Services Agency	Computer operations management and distributed IT implementation and support services	231,400,000

Housing Benefit and Family Credit

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will bring forward proposals to take account of the value of capital assets by way of property other than the main residence, in applications for family credit. [37089]

(2) if he will introduce proposals to take account of the value of capital assets by way of property other than the main residence, in applications for housing benefit. [37092]

Mr. Roger Evans: In the income-related benefit schemes, taking capital assets, such as property other than the home, into account is the norm. With effect from 2 October 1995, regulations have been amended to restore the policy intention that, in general, tenanted properties should also be taken into account as a capital asset.

War Pensions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the latest annual expenditure of the treatment section of the War Pensions Agency; and what cash limits apply to this expenditure, [37088]

(2) how many war pensioners are currently receiving financial help from the Pensions Agency treatment section in respect of *(a)* travel costs for treatment and *(b)* private treatment not available on the NHS. [37084]

Mr. Heald: The information is not available in the format requested.

However, in the year ended 31 March 1995, 4,925 payments were made to meet the travel costs of war pensioners attending hospital for treatment for disablement in respect of which war pension is payable. In the same year 8,389 payments were made for treatment not available under the national health service—including remedial treatment, dental treatment, chiropody and other private treatment such as osteopathy and physiotherapy.

Total expenditure in the year ended 31 March 1995 was £8,337,770.

Housing Benefit Subsidy

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the payments of housing benefit subsidy by his Department to each London borough and metropolitan district in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will list those financial penalties imposed as a result of non-compliance with regulations. [37111]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the tables.

London Authorities

Authority	Subsidy paid for non-HRA rent rebate expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy paid for rent allowance expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy penalties incurred 1993–94 £
Barking	0	6,355,827	0
Barnet	2,320,996	31,407,483	0
Bexley	315,858	14,211,026	0
Brent	2,170,702	66,579,836	0
Bromley	853,129	37,150,509	0
Camden	2,334,989	50,110,032	0
City of London	34,652	512,846	0
Croydon	944,009	36,764,101	0
Ealing	1,451,433	46,387,342	0
Enfield	1,879,740	22,110,066	0
Greenwich	2,195,119	19,370,751	0
Hackney	12,127,983	49,971,026	0
Hammersmith	2,271,817	34,374,285	0
Haringey	1,757,001	69,423,145	0
Harrow	407,633	18,049,007	0
Havering	0	9,124,385	0
Hillingdon	1,171,542	15,247,872	0
Hounslow	1,603,733	22,687,110	0
Islington	1,155,175	30,038,272	0
Kensington and Chelsea	1,323,709	43,448,050	0
Kingston upon Thames	2,643,633	8,413,307	0
Lambeth	2,482,802	53,201,704	0
Lewisham	446,516	33,636,229	0
Merton	72,112	17,178,195	0
Newham	6,039,682	56,981,242	0
Redbridge	84,763	28,287,889	0
Richmond upon Thames	1,267,410	12,478,354	0
Southwark	1,469,200	31,511,360	0
Sutton	265,735	11,149,812	0
Tower Hamlets	4,866,915	17,890,177	0
Waltham Forest	1,053,839	29,348,006	0
Wandsworth	2,355,688	45,354,684	0
Westminster	1,251,400	74,463,340	0

Metropolitan authorities

Authority	Subsidy paid for non-HRA rent rebate expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy paid for rent allowance expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy penalties incurred 1993–94 £
Barnsley	320,405	7,238,878	0
Birmingham	0	75,161,007	808,405
Bolton	300,876	12,027,988	0
Bradford	280,087	32,830,162	0
Bury	1,284,583	7,338,627	0
Calderdale	656,648	8,465,058	0
Coventry	766,696	21,825,790	0
Doncaster	27,288	10,203,816	0
Dudley	89,094	7,157,873	0
Gateshead	27,757	10,643,184	0
Kirklees	1,538,545	15,083,052	0
Knowsley	26,305	7,245,949	0
Leeds	274,447	43,366,356	0
Liverpool	657,053	57,289,298	0
Manchester	3,127,525	72,273,662	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	356,293	22,576,129	0

Metropolitan authorities

Authority	Subsidy paid for non-HRA rent rebate expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy paid for rent allowance expenditure 1993–94 £	Subsidy penalties incurred 1993–94 £
North Tyneside	121,067	10,420,023	0
Oldham	539,851	11,008,362	0
Rochdale	859,235	10,924,769	0
Rotherham	57,795	7,716,837	0
Salford	1,911,307	15,882,162	0
Sandwell	17,515	10,281,120	0
Sefton	319,051	18,869,832	0
Sheffield	805,338	23,815,044	0
Solihull	42,283	4,475,569	0
South Tyneside	530,190	8,391,289	0
St. Helens	107,903	7,072,757	0
Stockport	145,624	12,986,302	0
Sunderland	402,524	14,660,492	0
Tameside	1,053,548	9,958,030	0
Trafford	175,092	11,162,270	0
Wakefield	289,146	8,714,297	0
Walsall	94,590	7,790,772	0
Wigan	1,502,261	7,854,034	0
Wirral	96,094	23,564,463	0
Wolverhampton	64,045	11,094,765	0

Water Charges

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the designated amount for water charges included in the calculation of income support levels. [37480]

Mr. Roger Evans: Income support does not designate separate amounts for particular items in the household budget.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many outsourcing contracts were granted by her Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)*BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [37002]

Mr. Robin Squire: Departmental records show that no outsourcing contracts have been awarded to any of the companies listed.

Quality Assurance Document

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment by what date responses are required to the paper entitled "Quality Assurance Regime for Institutions"; and if she will place copies of the responses in the Library.

Mr. Robin Squire: Responses to the quality assurance consultation document are to be sent to the Department by 13 October 1995. There are no plans to place any of these responses in the Library.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) if she will list for each grant-maintained school the number of pupils permanently excluded during each year since the school became grant-maintained; [36645]

(2) if she will list for each grant-maintained school the number of pupils excluded during each year since the school became grant-maintained. [36167]

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available centrally.

Education and Training Report

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the OECD survey of education and training in the United Kingdom; and if she will provide a refutation of its claim that departure from principles extant in public education since 1870 until 1992 are inappropriate. [37381]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State issued the Department's comments on the OECD report in a Departmental press notice on 27 July 1995—Ref: 167/95. My right hon. Friend has no plans to comment further on the report.

Teacher Training

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the proportion of school leavers from *(a)* the independent sector and *(b)* the maintained sector entering degree or teacher training courses in higher education institutions at the latest date for which figures are available. [37478]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available centrally.

Unemployment

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if he will give a breakdown in percentage terms of the numbers of unemployed people for each quarter since 1990 to the present who have been unemployed for *(a)* up to and including six months, *(b)* six months up to and including a year, *(c)* from between a year up to and including two years and *(d)* over two years who have (i) academic qualifications, (ii) vocational qualifications and (iii) no qualifications. [32367]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I have been asked to reply.

This information is available from the "Labour Force Survey" for Great Britain, annually until 1991 and quarterly from spring 1992 onwards, and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Earnings

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what the average weekly earnings are of *(a)* full-time female workers, *(b)* part-time female workers, *(c)* all female workers and *(d)* all male workers. [31998]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is given in the following table:

Employees on all rates whose earnings were not affected by absence: April 1994

	£ Week	£ Hour
Part-time females	98.0	5.06
Full-time females	259.2	6.83
All females	197.7	6.43
All males	343.9	8.46

Note:
The weekly earnings of all female employees relative to all male employees is distorted by a greater proportion of female part-time workers.

Mr. Ian McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employees in each G7 country are earning at or below the equivalent of £2.50 per hour. [23313]

Mrs. Knight: I have been asked to reply.

Information on proportions of employees earning less than £2.50 in each G7 country is not available.

Second Jobs

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of people with a second job. [32818]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is published in table 2 of the "Labour Force Survey" quarterly bulletin, No. 12, June 1995. A copy of the publication is available in the Library.

WALES

Farm Data

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of farms of the size *(a)* 1–25 hectares, *(b)* 26–50 hectares, *(c)* 51–75 hectares, *(d)* 76–100 hectares, *(e)* 101–150 hectares, *(f)* 151–200 hectares and *(g)* 201 or more hectares for (i) the last available year and (ii) 1985. [36432]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the following table:

Farm sizes in Wales

Holding size	*1985*	*1994*
0.1 to less than 1.0 hectares	238	342
1.0 to less than 26.0 hectares	13,395	14,145
26.0 to less than 51.0 hectares	6,958	6,216
51.0 to less than 76.0 hectares	3,784	3,574

Farm sizes in Wales

Holding size	*1985*	*1994*
76.0 to less than 101.0 hectares	2,033	2,037
101.0 to less than 151.0 hectares	1,821	1,924
151.0 to less than 201.0 hectares	679	749
201.0 hectares and over	900	923
All main holdings	29,808	29,910

Note:
These figures exclude minor holdings.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36954]

Mr. Hague: My Department has granted no outsourcing contracts to any of the listed companies since 1990. Information on all agencies could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ely Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he received the full resettlement plan for Ely hospital residents; and when he expects to make his decision on the plan. [37201]

Mr. Hague: I have yet to receive a full resettlement plan for Ely hospital residents.

In-patient Activity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report,* column *514,* if he will make a statement on the comparative benefits of the use of finished consultant episodes relative to deaths and discharges as the basis for remuneration of hospitals by *(a)* general practitioner fund holders and *(b)* health authorities, for in-patient activity. [37385]

Mr. Hague: As a basis for purchasing treatment and care from hospitals, whether by GP fundholders or health authorities, both measures have strengths and weaknesses.

Finished consultant episodes have the advantage over deaths and discharges of allowing the cost of treatment to be associated with the consultant responsible for providing it. The major drawback of finished consultant episodes is that definitions can vary both within and between hospitals, making comparisons difficult whether in terms of activity or cost. By contrast, the definition of an entire episode of treatment or care is more straightforward in the case of deaths and discharges.

Public Appointments

Mr. Touhig: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales have been approached in the last two years with regard to service on quangos; how they were selected; how many indicated they were members of *(a)* the Labour party and *(b)* the Conservative party; and how many (i) Labour party members and (ii) Conservative party members who expressed a willingness to serve were subsequently appointed. [37211]

Mr. Hague: I and my predecessor have made 597 appointments to non-departmental public bodies since 1 September 1993. Details of all appointments by Welsh Office Ministers are held in the Library of the House and updated quarterly. Appointments are made on merit. Candidates are drawn largely from the Welsh Office register of candidates. In addition to self-nominations, names of people willing to serve on a public body are regularly canvassed through advertisements in Welsh newspapers and by letters to professional, public sector and community organisations. I welcome candidates from all sources. Candidates are not currently required to declare any political affiliation: information is not therefore available in the form requested.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what proposals he has to reinstate levels of Government grant in aid to the Welsh Development Agency to remove conditionality on receipts from the European regional development fund for 1996–97. [37203]

Mr. Hague: None. As I confirmed to Commissioner Wulf-Mathies on 4 October, European funding is not a factor in determining the level of grant in aid to the WDA.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the European Union Commissioner responsible for the European regional development fund; concerning the suspension of ERDF funds to the Welsh Development Agency; and when he expects to reach agreement on the balance between ERDF grant and United Kingdom Government grant-in-aid to the Welsh Development Agency. [37207]

Mr. Hague: I met Commissioner Wulf-Mathies on 4 October. I confirmed that European funding was not a factor in determining the level of the Welsh Development Agency's grant in aid. We agreed that officials should consider ways of improving the transparency of these arrangements. I also volunteered to provide an account of my Department's general procedures for the management and monitoring of European programmes. We agreed to complete this work within two weeks to enable early clearance of outstanding applications.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to compensate the Welsh Development Agency for loss of receipts from the European regional development fund, following a suspension of ERDF payments to the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement. [37202]

Mr. Hague: None. I expect early agreement with the European Commission to allow clearance of outstanding applications.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what subsidies were paid out for environmentally sensitive areas in Wales for *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94.

(c) 1994–95, *(d)* 1995–96; and how many individuals were recipients of these payments in these years. [37127]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The amount of subsidies paid out for environmentally sensitive areas in Wales was:

1992–93: £1,503,000

1993–94: £1,542,000

1994–95: £1,536,000

Provision for 1995–96 is £6,971,000 as shown in the 1995–96 Main Supply Estimates, Class XV, Vote 1 (CM 271-XV).

Information on the number of recipients receiving payments by financial year is not held.

The number of live management agreements at the end of each financial year was:

31 March 1993: 857

31 March 1994: 794

31 March 1995: 883

The number of current management agreements as at 31 August 1995 was 1,111.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what area, in hectares and percentage terms, of environmentally sensitive areas in Wales is made up of productive, or potentially productive, agricultural land. [37126]

Mr. Jones: The following is the information:

	Hectares productive land	*Percentage of total area*
Cambrian Mountains	118,780	77.3
Lleyn Peninsula	41,304	90.9
Radnor	91,769	91.6
Ynys Mon	66,063	92.5
Preseli	113,878	94.2
Clwydian Range	25,725	92.3
	457,519	88.1

The figures quoted exclude urban areas, mineral workings, open water and rivers, unvegetated land and coniferous forests which are within the respective environmentally sensitive areas.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest out-turn estimate for expenditure on regional selective assistance in Wales for the year 1994–95. [37200]

Mr. Hague: £56.95 million.

Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the most recent allocation of grant in aid to the Cardiff Bay development corporation to cover the administrative running costs of the Cardiff Bay Opera House trust; if he will specify how it relates to previous estimates of the trust's running costs for 1995–96 and previous allocations of grant in aid; and if he will make a statement. [37494]

Mr. Hague: There is no grant-in-aid allocation given to the Cardiff Bay development corporation specifically to cover the administrative running costs of the Cardiff Bay Opera House trust. The question of specific payments to the trust is an operational matter for the corporation and I have therefore asked the chief executive to give those details.

18th Birthday Greeting Letters

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales;

(1) how many responses have been received to 18th birthday greeting letters sent out by Welsh Office Ministers in their ministerial capacity; [37466]

(2) what has been the cost to public funds of the practice of Welsh Office Ministers sending 18th birthday greetings in their ministerial capacity to members of the public in each of the last three years and in the current year to date; [37468]

(3) when the policy of Welsh Office Ministers sending 18th birthday greetings to 18-year-olds outside their own constituencies and in their ministerial capacities was initiated; [37467]

(4) how many letters of birthday greetings to young people reaching the age of 18 have been sent out by himself and his Ministers in 1994 and 1995 in their Welsh ministerial capacity. [37469]

Mr. Hague: There have been no such communications issued from my Department and hence no costs to public funds.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his department. [36780]

Mr. Hague: Members of the public have the same rights to make complaints to the ombudsman concerning a project funded through the private finance initiative in my Department as they would have had if the project had been publicly funded.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications are awaiting departmental approval in principle under the private finance initiative in *(a)* the health sector, *(b)* transport sector and *(c)* other sectors; if he will list each one and its estimated capital value; if he will give his current estimate of the number likely to be approved for actual commencement in this financial year; and if he will make a statement. [37493]

Mr. Hague: The Welsh Office examines all of its capital expenditure programmes to identify projects that

might be taken forward under the initiative. Some projects, such as an energy management scheme at Llandough hospital and a combined heat and power scheme at Withybush hospital, are already in place. Twenty-five projects, with a combined capital value of about £750 million are being examined at the moment with a view to taking them forward under the initiative. There projects in health, transport, Welsh Office administration and other sectors. I hope to make announcements on some of these in the next few months.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Central Science Laboratory

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list by grade the current establishment at his Ministry's site at Sand Hutton, north Yorkshire; what is the current funding; what percentage of the funding is for salaries; and what were the equivalent figures 12 months ago; [32996]

(2) if he will list the types of work currently being carried out at his Ministry's site at Sand Hutton, north Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement. [32997]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have asked the chief executive of the Central Science Laboratory to reply direct.

Letter from P. I. Stanley to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 16 October 1995:

THE STAFFING, FUNDING AND WORK OF THE CENTRAL SCIENCE LABORATORY, SAND HUTTON, N. YORKSHIRE

You asked two questions about the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) laboratory at Sand Hutton and it may be helpful if I first of all explain the present situation. [32996 & 32997]

The Central Science Laboratory (CSL) was first launched as an executive agency of MAFF in April 1992 and was re-launched as an enlarged agency two years later following its merger with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Food Science Laboratories.

CSL provides a wide range of scientific services to its major customer, MAFF including policy advice, technical support and training, underpinned by research and development (R&D) in the areas of plant health, the authenticity, safety and nutritional value of the food supply; pesticide safety: veterinary residues; the control of pests and diseases of growing and stored foodstuffs; wildlife management and the impact of food production on the environment and the consumer. In addition CSL offers R&D and advice to other Government Departments and public and private sector organisations on a commercial basis.

CSL is currently located at five major sites in Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Norfolk and Grampian and at several smaller sites throughout the Country. It is planned to relocate the major part of the Agency in summer 1996 to Sand Hutton, N Yorkshire, where a new purpose-built laboratory is at present under construction. The types of work carried out at existing CSL sites and described above will also be carried out at the new site. Precise information about grades and salaries at Sand Hutton are not yet available but I expect that in total about 450 staff will be employed at the new laboratory.

CSL income in the 1994/95 financial year was £26.267K and staff costs amounted to £14.414K (55%). In the previous financial year respective figures were £16.908K and £9.427K (56%). The increase in income and costs in 1994/95 was the direct result of the enlargement of the Agency following its merger with the MAFF Food Science Laboratories at Norwich and Aberdeen. CSL's published Annual Reports and Accounts give full details and copies should be available in the House Library.

Consultants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many contracts and for what total sum were let out by his Department and agencies for which it is responsible to *(a)* Coopers and Lybrand and its subsidiaries, *(b)* Peat Marwick and its subsidiaries, *(c)* Ernst and Young and its subsidiaries, *(d)* Arthur Andersen and its subsidiaries, *(e)* Price Waterhouse and its subsidiaries, *(f)* Grant Thornton and its subsidiaries, *(g)* Stoy Hayward and its subsidiaries, *(h)* Robson Rhodes and its subsidiaries, and *(i)* Pannell Kerr Forster and its subsidiaries, for privatisation, market testing, management advice, accounting, audit, consultancy and other services in 1993–94 and 1994–95. [33921]

Mr. Boswell: Centralised records are not kept of individual contracts between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and consultants. It is not, therefore, possible to provide the information requested in the required form. However, the total amounts paid to the consultants named in the question in the relevant years were as follows:

Year	*Consultant*	*Spend*
1993–94	Cooper and Lybrand	175,000
	Peat Marwick	372,718
	Ernst and Young	212,258
	Arthur Andersen	nil
	Price Waterhouse	190,531
	Grant Thornton	nil
	Stoy Hayward	22,326
	Robson Rhodes	nil
	Pannell Kerr Forster	nil
1994–95	Cooper and Lybrand	5,571
	Peat Marwick	319,357
	Ernst and Young	123,140
	Arthur Andersen	nil
	Price Waterhouse	72,507
	Grant Thornton	nil
	Stoy Hayward	16,450
	Robson Rhodes	nil
	Pannell Kerr Forster	nil

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitor those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring. [34708]

Mr. Boswell: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the UK economy. The Government continue to help smaller companies by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislative and administrative and taxation burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate.

The competitiveness White Paper, published in May 1995, outlines a programme of measures to assist the growth and competitiveness of the small firms sector.

Public Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in respect of documents on listeria in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [34406]

Mrs. Browning: So far as I am aware, only one public interest immunity certificate in respect of documents on listeria has been signed by any agriculture Minister.

The one certificate signed, in December 1993, followed the issue of a writ against the Ministry. As the law then stood, the Minister was under a duty to draw to the attention of the court any documents which, because of their nature, would normally be withheld from disclosure in the public interest. It was then for the court to decide whether, on the facts of the particular case, the overall public interest would best be served by disclosure of the documents.

The High Court recognised that the Minister had followed correct procedures. It also decided that disclosure would be appropriate in this case, and all documents have been made available to the plaintiff in this case.

It was not until July 1994 that the House of Lords—in the case of "Wiley"—ruled that Ministers can make voluntary disclosure of such documents where they are satisfied that this is in the public interest. Where the issues involved are difficult, and Ministers decide that they cannot judge where the balance lies, the certificate is made and it remains the function of the courts to decide whether the grater public interest favours disclosure.

Potato Prices

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the reasons for recent fluctuations in potato prices. [34994]

Mr. Boswell: Supplies, and thus the prices, of all vegetables including potatoes are very much affected by weather conditions. A cold wet spring in 1994, then summer drought followed by a wet harvest resulted in a reduced potato crop throughout Europe. The quality of potatoes also suffered. These factors led to a substantial increase in the price of potatoes of an acceptable quality to consumers.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost to United Kingdom public funds of administration of the CAP; and if he will make a statement. [35131]

Mr. Baldry: Information on the cost of administration of the CAP within the UK is contained in the departmental reports of the Ministry and Intervention Board, Cm 2803, and those of the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office, copies of which are available in the House. An overall position for the Ministry and the Intervention Board can be obtained from annexes 1 and 5 of the report.

In addition, the report details the expenditure, including administration costs, for the 80 programmes which describe the Ministry's activities. Twenty-two of these programmes are directly related to the operation of agricultural schemes, including agri-environment schemes, formulated under the CAP.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of the cost to the average United Kingdom household of the common agricultural policy. [37117]

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 9 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *328*.

Surplus Food Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many applications have been received under the EC surplus food scheme in each of the last five years by region; how many were *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected by the Intervention Board; and if he will make a statement; [34733]

(2) how many applications have been received by his Ministry under the European Community surplus food scheme; what was the number, by category for each of the last five years; how many applications for each category were turned down; and if he will make a statement. [34734]

Mr. Baldry: The number of applications received by the Intervention Board, acting on behalf of the four agricultural Departments which are responsible for the designation process, in each of the last three financial years, is as follows:

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
England	1,050	816	899
Northern Ireland	86	66	50
Scotland	272	235	168
Wales	95	78	86

The number of organisations designated by the Agriculture Departments was as follows:

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
England	948	713	669
Northern Ireland	82	62	36
Scotland	256	213	151
Wales	81	64	80

The number of unsuccessful applications was as follows:

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
England	102	103	230
Northern Ireland	4	4	14
Scotland	16	22	17
Wales	14	14	6

These figures include applications received after the closing date or withdrawn, and those rejected because the

applicant did not fulfil the conditions of the scheme or planned to operate in an area covered by a more suitable organisation.

A list of organisations designated in England in 1994, by region, has been placed in the Library.

Information on applications prior to 1992–93 and further breakdown by geographical regions or type of organisation could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

National Botanic Gardens

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for establishing national botanic gardens in each of the four home countries; and if he will make a statement. [34888]

Mr. Boswell: We have no plans to establish new botanic gardens anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Countryside Access Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the countryside access scheme costs will be incurred in Wales in 1995–96; and if he will make a statement. [34986]

Mr. Boswell: Approximately 3 per cent. of the total payments to farmers for the countryside access scheme—which operates in England and Wales only—will be incurred in Wales in 1995–96.

Postgraduate Studentship Awards

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the postgraduate studentships supplied by his Department were granted to people studying at Welsh institutions in 1994–95; and if he will make a statement. [34890]

Mr. Boswell: Four studentship awards were allocated to Welsh institutions in 1994–95.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many officials of his Department have in the past been seconded to work with DGIII; what part such secondees played in drafting the European Commission discussion document on nutritional supplements produced in December 1991; if they have now *(a)* returned to placement with his Department, *(b)* remain with DGIII or *(c)* obtained employment with pharmaceutical companies; and if he will make a statement. [35097]

Mr. Boswell *[pursuant to his reply, 18 July 1995, c. 1058]:* I can now inform the hon. Member that the member of staff who returned to the Department in 1992 resigned from the Department in 1994 to take up a post in a pharmaceutical company. I understand that this company is not involved in producing dietary supplements.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures his Department has taken to encourage the promotion of women into senior positions within his Department and its executive agencies. [35628]

Mr. Boswell: The Ministry, including its executive agencies, has in place a comprehensive programme aimed at improving the recruitment, retention and development of women staff particularly in the middle and senior management grades and in those specialist scientific, professional and technical areas where the proportion of women is relatively low.

Priorities under this programme include the provision of assistance with child care and the encouragement of the wider use of alternative working patterns. The Ministry also runs a career break scheme which provides for periods of unpaid leave of up to five years to enable staff to cope with domestic responsibilities such as caring for children or elderly relatives.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list *(a)* the number of (i) male and (ii) female employees, *(b)* the number of officials employed at each of the principal grades and the numbers and percentages of women employed at these grades and *(c)* the number of staff employed at administrative grades and the number and percentage of these staff that are women, in his Department and for each of its executive agencies for each year since 1985. [35690]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* The information requested for permanent non-industrial staff in my Department including executive agencies on 1 April 1995 is as follows:

(a) Total male staff 6,028; Total female staff 4,651

(b) Grade	*Total officials*	*Women employed*	*Percentage women*
1	1	0	0
2	6	1	17
3	23	1	4
4	14	1	8
5	104	9	9
6	160	18	11
7	934	173	19
SEO	681	131	19
HEO	2,147	601	28
EO	2,410	904	38
(c)			
AO	2,407	1,566	65
AA	1,792	1,246	70

The information is provisional. It is not separately available for executive agencies. Casual and seasonal staff are excluded. For earlier years, the information is not available in the form requested but details by grade and gender for the Department as a whole, including executive agencies, can be found in civil service statistics for each year from 1985 to 1994—copies available in the Library. Details for 1995 will be published later this year.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female and (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees. [35469]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* The numbers of permanent non-industrial staff on 1 April 1995 in my Department were as follows:

Grade	Total men	Full-time men	Part-time men	Total women	Full-time women	Part-time women
G1	1	1	0	0	0	0
G2	5	5	0	1	1	0
G3	22	22	0	1	1	0
G4	13	13	0	1	1	0
G5	95	95	0	9	9	0
G6	142	139	3	18	15	3
G7	761	757	4	173	151	22
SEO	550	546	4	131	112	19
HEO	1,546	1,537	9	601	514	87
EO	1,506	1,490	16	904	819	85
AO	841	830	11	1,566	1,357	209
AA	546	524	22	1,246	929	317
Total	6,028	5,959	69	4,651	3,909	742

Notes:
1. Executive agencies are included, for which figures are not kept separately.
2. Casual and seasonal staff are not included.
3. Information is provisional.

Poisons Unit

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1037–38*, which herbal products or remedies have been placed under surveillance by the poisons unit at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital Trust, in the project funded by his Department. [36322]

Mrs. Browning: No specific products or remedies are under surveillance. The purpose of the project is to investigate any reported cases of suspected adverse effects from exposure to traditional remedies and food supplements.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the number of United Kingdom fishing vessels that has been decommissioned in each of the last three years; and what has been the cost of this exercise. [36114]

Mr. Baldry: There was no UK decommissioning scheme in 1992–93. Some 135 vessels were decommissioned under the 1993–94 scheme at a cost of £7.8 million, and 162 were decommissioned under the 1994–95 scheme at a cost of £8.8 million.

Crop Planting

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will announce the acreages to be planted in respect of cereals, rape or other specified crops; and if he will give urgent consideration to the time scale for planting rape. [36246]

Mr. Baldry: Plantings of oilseed rape may take place in the autumn or spring. Exact timing will depend on individual circumstances but plantings of winter rape are expected to begin in August.

Claims for 1995 are currently being verified and input into the computer system. It is not possible to determine provisional figures earlier than mid-September when details are notified to the European Commission and published.

Set-aside (Appeals System)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a system of appeals for farmers aggrieved by decisions made within his Department with particular reference to cases where there may be disagreement about what is or not good agricultural practice in regard to set-aside decisions. [36236]

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the possible need for a more formal system for hearing appeals against the loss of CAP support scheme entitlement arising from alleged breaches of scheme conditions; he is always prepared to ask his officials to look again at the cases where farmers are genuinely aggrieved at decisions taken by his Department.

Food Advisory Committee

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish those non-personal interests of the Food Advisory Committee listed in the committee's register of members' interests. [36428]

Mrs. Browning: Details of the non-personal interests of members of the Food Advisory Committee are contained in the Committee's annual report, which is published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Copies of the report have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the policy of his Ministry regarding an increase in consumer representation on the Codex Committee. [36427]

Mrs. Browning: Only member nations and associate members of the Food and Agriculture Organisation and/or the World Health Organisation may nominate delegates to the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Some intergovernmental and international non-governmental organisations are invited to attend as observers. We have always indicated to UK interests, both industry and consumers, that, if they wished to nominate individuals to attend meetings, we would be happy to include them in UK delegations. Consumers International—formerly the

International Organisation of Consumer Unions—has observer status at Codex meetings and does send representatives.

The UK Codex Consultative Committee which meets to discuss items on the agenda of Codex meetings, has in membership the National Consumer Council, the Consumers' Association, the Consumers in the European Community Group, the National Federation of Consumer Groups, the Food and Drink Federation, the British Retail Consortium and the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards, which represents a cross section of interests in the matters under discussion. A number of other organisations have expressed interest in membership. It is, however, difficult to adjust the membership without upsetting the balance of interests or making the committees too large to operate satisfactorily. I thus have no plans for change; particular interests are co-opted to particular meetings as the need arises.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36838]

Mr. Boswell: At present there are no services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in the Department. However, the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, who has jurisdiction in these matters, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, will be maintained for services or projects funded through the private finance initiative.

Medicines Licensing

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the cases where information has been withheld by his Department under section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968. [36756]

Mrs. Browning: Section 118 protects information furnished for the purposes of the Medicines Act, and thus may affect all activities concerning medicines licensing. I am committed to making as much information available as possible within this constraint, but examples of information which would be withheld would include details of manufacturing processes or the addresses of sites at which companies are trialing products under development.

Insecticides

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the national, European Economic Community or international agreement that imposes conditions concerning use of insecticides, or other potentially harmful substances, in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables imported into the United Kingdom for human consumption. [37265]

Mrs. Browning: All imported fruit and vegetables must meet the general provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990 and other specific legislation concerning the use of insecticides and other substances. This includes:

The Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Crops, Food and Feeding Stuffs) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/1985), as amended, which set maximum residue levels for pesticides which may be used on certain commodities, including some fruit and vegetables;

The Antioxidants in Food Regulations 1978 (SI 1978/105), as amended, which set maximum residue levels for certain substances which may be used on apples and pears;

The Preservatives in Food Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/533), as amended, which set maximum residue levels for certain substances which may be used on citrus fruit and bananas;

Directive 86/2783, which controls the use of sludge for agricultural purposes implemented in the UK by the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/1263), as amended.

In addition, the use of products on home produced fruit and vegetables is controlled by the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors underlie the non-publication of payments of public money to companies in the farming industry for not growing crops. [37119]

Mr. Boswell: Under the set-aside schemes to which the hon. Gentleman refers, we have given an undertaking to claimants that all information regarding their claim is held in confidence. Therefore, no information is published which would enable individual claimants to be identified.

Overproduction

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the tonnage and value of fruit and vegetables destroyed due to overproduction in the United Kingdom and each EU member state in the latest year for which figures are available. [37118]

Mr. Baldry: Information on the tonnages and value of produce destroyed in each member state for which EU compensation was paid in 1992–93, the last year for which figures are available is as follows:

Table 1: Tonnage of destroyed produce for which EU withdrawal compensation was paid (t)

	Belgium	*Denmark*	*Germany*	*Greece*	*Spain*	*France*	*Ireland*	*Italy*	*Luxembourg*	*Holland*	*Portugal*	*UK*
Apples	6.832	0	54	141.251	136.627	657.371	139	0	0	0	8.906	20.019
Pears	430	0	77	1.234	19.594	32.361	0	0	0	0	1.572	17
Cauliflowers	1.872	0	1.783	202	2.143	104.203	138	930	0	0	241	16.598
Tomatoes	5.853	0	208	3.169	49	22.975	118	0	0	0	0	3
Apricots	0	0	0	5.393	492	13.605	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nectarines	0	0	0	114.587	3.895	46.368	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peaches	0	0	0	597.684	38.241	82.373	0	0	0	0	1.947	0
Lemons	0	0	0	1.610	79.163	116	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aubergines[1]	0	0	0	0	0	148	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grapes	0	0	0	0	90	3.116	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1: Tonnage of destroyed produce for which EU withdrawal compensation was paid (t)

	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Holland	Portugal	UK
Satsumas	0	0	0	0	3,587	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mandarins	0	0	0	2,493	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clementines	0	0	0	966	15,502	8,867	0	18,531	0	0	0	0
Oranges	0	0	0	215,679	200,097	622	0	87,862	0	0	318	0

[1] Refers to total volume of aubergines for which EU withdrawals compensation was paid. Information on proportion of withdrawn aubergines destroyed is not available.

Source:

European Commission.

Table 2: Cost to FEOGA budget of EU withdrawal compensation for the tonnages shown in Table 1 (ecu)

	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France	Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Holland	Portugal	UK
Apples	790,411	0	8,072	20,235,503	16,655,255	75,974,481	16,775	0	0	0	837,479	929,248
Pears	42,417	0	8,392	134,624	1,939,255	3,205,452	0	0	0	0	133,807	713
Cauliflowers	177,864	0	176,736	85,308	221,774	11,596,014	14,517	177,929	0	0	26,663	844,150
Tomatoes	433,871	0	34,963	250,971	2,931	1,682,891	8,230	0	0	0	0	210
Apricots	0	0	0	1,128,643	78,436	2,660,195	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nectarines	0	0	0	25,478,004	804,266	9,402,688	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peaches	0	0	0	107,336,391	4,297,182	14,997,163	0	0	0	0	340,201	0
Lemons	0	0	0	230,468	10,704,524	16,421	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aubergines[1]	0	0	0	0	0	8,195	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grapes	0	0	0	0	9,999	349,697	0	0	0	0	0	0
Satsumas	0	0	0	0	221,170	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mandarins	0	0	0	445,170	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clementines	0	0	0	118,480	1,705,287	966,909	0	2,053,059	0	0	0	0
Oranges	0	0	0	35,576,560	25,818,502	76,934	0	10,795,070	0	0	37,876	0

[1] Refers to total volume of aubergines for which EU withdrawal compensation was paid. Information on proportion of withdrawn aubergines destroyed is not available.

Source:

European Commission.

Environmentally Sensitive Farming

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken towards encouraging farming methods which support conservation measures and promote habitats for breeding birds. [35147]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 18 July 1995]:* We are expanding the range of schemes to encourage environmentally sensitive farming and plan to spend over £100 million on such schemes in the UK in 1996–97. The environmentally sensitive areas, countryside stewardship, habitat and moorland schemes in particular will benefit a wide range of habitats and species, including birds.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves from herds known to have had BSE have been exported over the last five years; and to which countries they have been exported. [34863]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* The information requested is not available. In any case, it is not an EC requirement that calves exported from the UK have to originate from herds in which no case of BSE has been diagnosed.

Mr. Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what proportion of calves exported from the United Kingdom are checked by his Department's vets at the time they are given an export certificate to ensure they are not from herds with a history of either BSE or EBL. [34865]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* It is not an EC requirement that calves exported from the UK have to originate from herds in which no case of BSE has been diagnosed. However, before signing an export health certificate for any consignment the certifying local veterinary inspector must obtain documentary evidence from owners/exporters/auctioneers and MAFF that none of the calves is the progeny of a BSE-infected dam or originates from a herd in which EBL has occurred within a specified time.

Mr. Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves from herds known to have had EBL have been exported over the last five years; and to which countries they have been exported. [34867]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* We are aware from audit procedures that one animal exported to Belgium in 1994 originated from a herd in which EBL had occurred during the previous three years. Under EC rules, the animal will have been slaughtered by six months of age.

Mr. Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what safeguards he has put in place to ensure that animals exported from the United Kingdom with further fattening certificates are not immediately slaughtered on arrival at destination. [35479]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* EC animal health and welfare rules do not preclude the slaughter of animals exported for further fattening and accompanied by further fattening health certification. It is the responsibility of the veterinary authorities of the importing country to ensure that appropriate controls are imposed once exported animals arrive at their place of destination.

Mr. Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animals were exported from the United Kingdom in 1994 and 1995 to date with a further fattening export certificate; and how many animals

during the same period were exported with a for slaughter certificate. [35478]

Mrs. Browing *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* Information in respect of exports to other member states is as follows:

	1994	*[1]1995*
Cattle for further fattening	301,009	104,400
Cattle for slaughter	1,623	760
Sheep for further fattening	1,038,572	202,327
Sheep for slaughter	79,901	4,126
Pigs for further fattening	10,718	358
Pigs for slaughter	9,471	296
Goats for further fattening	0	0
Goats for slaughter	2	0

[1] To end of May.

Note:

These figures are collated from the ANIMO system and show the number of animals certified for export from the United Kingdom to other member states. The figures remain provisional and subject to change.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by county the number of landowners receiving payments under the arable area payments scheme of *(a)* less than £25,000, *(b)* between £25,000 and £50,000, *(c)* between £50,000 and £1 million and *(d)* above £1 million, for the latest year for which figures are available. [35364]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* It is not possible from information held to differentiate between landowners and tenants receiving payments under the arable area payments scheme and such information could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Sickness Absence

Mr. Ian McCartney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, how many days were lost in sickness in the last 12 months by employees in his Department.*(a)* in total and *(b)* as a proportion of the number of days worked; and what was the cost of this absence. [34585]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 14 July 1995]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, selected aggregated data are provided by the Civil Service Occupational Health and Safety Agency on an annual basis. Provisional data for the 1994 calendar year show that in the core-Department—including the Pesticides Safety Directorate and Veterinary Medicines Directorate Agencies—59,572 working days, 3.28 per cent. of the total, were lost through sickness. The OHSA is not able to provide the cost of such absences except at disproportionate cost.

Responsibility for such matters within ADAS, Central Science Laboratory, Central Veterinary Laboratory and Meat Hygiene Service Agencies has been delegated to the agency chief executives and—with the exception of the Meat Hygiene Service Agency, which was formed only on 1 April 1995—I have asked them to reply to the hon. Member direct.

Letter from Phillip Needham to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 16 October 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to your Parliamentary Question number 1679 in which you sought details of how many days were lost in sickness in the last twelve months by employees in his Department (a) in total and (b) as a proportion of the number of days worked; and what was the cost of this absence. (34585)

ADAS was formed as an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office in April 1992.

During the period 1/7/94 to 30/6/95 the total sick leave taken by all ADAS staff (permanent, casuals etc.) was 11,012 days. This equates to 1.9% of the number of days worked. We are not able to put an exact value on the cost of these absences, but estimate that it was approximately £650,000 (based on average salary costs).

You may wish to note that these figures have not been adjusted for weekends and bank holidays where sick leave extended beyond the normal working week.

Letter from P. I. Stanley to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 16 October 1995:

NUMBER OF DAYS LOST IN SICKNESS AND THE RELATED COST

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question about the number of days lost in sickness in the last twelve months and the cost of this absence, as this is a matter within my operational responsibility. (34585)

The most recent data I am able to provide relates to the 1994 calendar year. The figures are provisional and have been adjusted to take account of weekends and Bank Holidays. The number of days lost in sickness by Central Science Laboratory employees was 4077. As a proportion of the number of days worked this amounts to 2.48%.

I am unable to tell you the cost of this absence as a grade/salary breakdown is not readily available and such information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Letter from T. W. A. Little to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 16 October 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about sickness absence during the last twelve months at CVL. (34585)

For the calendar year 1994, 6,546 days were lost through sickness. This represented 4.34% of the days worked. I am afraid I am unable to provide you with the cost of absence since the records do not readily show this information. It could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The figures are still provisional for 1994 and are adjusted by bank holidays and weekends. The source was the Occupational Health Safety Agency sickness/absence database.

HEALTH

Osteoporosis

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines he has issued in respect of preventive and treatment strategies for patients in high-risk groups of osteoporosis; [36332]

(2) what action has been taken to consider the role of diet in the prevention of osteoporosis; and if he will make a statement. [36333]

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of professional bodies to develop clinical guidelines where a need has been identified. Discussions have begun between the Department and the relevant medical royal colleges with a view to their developing clinical guidelines for

osteoporosis. In addition, a new expert advisory group has been set up and will be considering the dietary aspects of osteoporosis prevention. Details of the group will be announced shortly.

Prescriptions

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to remove the statutory requirement for a prescription charge to be paid for each drug contained in hormone replacement therapy preparations. [36334]

Mr. Malone: None. Where two, or more, prescribed drugs are dispensed, a prescription charge is payable for each one even though, for patient convenience or through manufacturers' packaging arrangements, they may be supplied together in a single combination pack or duo pack.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will conduct a review of the principal factors underlying the non-redemption rate of prescriptions issued by general practitioners; and if he will make a statement; [37047]

(2) if he will undertake a comprehensive review of the prescription system; and if he will include in such a review the option of altering pharmacists' regulations to allow individual pharmacists to offer patients the option of paying the cost price where this is less than the standard per item prescription charge. [37049]

Mr. Malone: Extensive charge exemption and remission arrangements, among the most generous in Europe, ensure that only those able to afford the national health service prescription charge are asked to pay. The scheme was last reviewed in 1993 as part of the fundamental review of health expenditure. There are no current plans for a further review, either of the scheme itself or of the reasons why patients may choose not to present prescriptions for dispensing.

Where a medicine is available only on prescription, doctors may already issue private prescriptions free of charge to NHS patients, although they are not obliged to do so. Pharmacists then set and charge patients a price for the medicine and a private dispensing fee.

Temazepam

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action his Department is taking to reduce the illegal use of Temazepam; [36624]

(2) what representations he has received concerning the illegal use of Temazepam. [36625]

Mr. Bowis: On 10 May, *Official Report*, columns 747–59, my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council announced a range of measures to help combat its misuse. This included a public consultation exercise on a proposal to ban national health service prescribing of the soft gelatin gel filled capsule formulation of the drug under schedule 10 to the NHS (General Medical Service) Regulations 1992. The Department of Health received 168 responses to the consultation exercise and these are being carefully considered. An announcement will be made shortly.

On 12 September my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department also announced that the drug was to be moved from schedule 4 to schedule 3 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985, which would make unlawful possession an offence, require pharmacies to store the drug more securely, and impose import and export licensing controls. Manufacturers and wholesalers will also be required to store the drug securely.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has that the administrative costs of GP fundholding are less than budget savings. [36634]

Mr. Malone: Information about fundholder savings and management allowances expenditure is shown in the table, which does not include start-up costs.

	Total fundholders budgets	*General Practitioner Fundholding (retained) Savings*		*Management allowances*	
	£ million	*£ million*	*As a percentage of budgets set*	*£ million*	*As a percentage of budgets set*
1991–92	400	14.5	3.7	10	2.5
1992–93	800	28.3	3.5	19	2.4
1993–94	1,800	64.2	3.5	38	2.1

Final figures for 1994–1995 are not yet available.

Mr. Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evaluation his Department has made of general practitioner multi-funds as purchasers of secondary health care services; [36614]

(2) what is the number of general practitioner multi-funds in the NHS by regional and nationally. [36613]

Mr. Malone: Information about multi-funds is not collected centrally. Multi-funds are administrative arrangements whereby one or more fundholders work together to share administration or purchasing expertise which can provide improved services for patients. How general practitioners choose to manage their fund, whether singly or in groups, is a matter for individual fundholders.

Market Testing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which sites within the NHS have been subject to market testing; and which services on those sites have been market tested. [36642]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department or the NHS executive has issued to health authorities or trusts about the market testing of physiotherapy services. [36646]

Mr. Sackville: None that is specific to physiotherapy.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of NHS contracts by district and region placed with independent sector providers for *(a)* catering *(b)* cleaning and *(c)* other ancillary services for (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95. [36795]

Mr. Sackville: From information recorded on the national health service executive market testing database, the aggregate value of contracts awarded by NHS trusts to another contractor, including other NHS trusts, for the baseline year 1992–93 is shown in the table by region for each service grouping requested. For later years the records are incomplete. Information is not maintained by district.

Contract value £000

Region	*Catering*	*Domestic services*	*Other hotel ancillary services*
Anglia/Oxford	1,199.10	8,563.82	17,793.14
North West (including Mersey)	4,462.85	18,013.65	35,460.27
Northern and Yorkshire	13,363.11	16,159.02	65,212.49
North Thames	3,159.30	31,181.71	50,592.81
South Thames	3,587.23	18,087.73	36,782.08
South and West	1,407.20	9,469.60	29,948.07
Trent	1,483.34	4,023.60	9,469.44
West Midlands	4,632.55	5,417.98	23,329.61
Total	32,294.68	110.917.11	209,587.91

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of NHS clinical contracts by district and region placed with independent sector providers for *(a)* radiology, *(b)* pathology, *(c)* imaging and *(d)* other clinical services for (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95. [36794]

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the information recorded on the national health service executive's market testing database, and covers market testing of the specified services by NHS trusts, where the contract was awarded to a non-NHS contractor. The analysis is by region, but not by district, for 1992–93. Information for 1993–94 and 1994–95 is still incomplete.

Figures in £000

Region	*Radiology*	*Pathology*	*Imaging*	*Other clinical services*
Anglia and Oxford	Nil	Nil	Nil	52.6
North Thames	Nil	224	98	280
North West	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Northern and Yorkshire	Nil	Nil	Nil	305
South Thames	Nil	Nil	Nil	277
South and West	Nil	Nil	Nil	893.5
Trent	Nil	Nil	182	Nil
West Midlands	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,181.6

Sheep Dipping

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the health risk associated with long-term exposure to chemicals used for dipping sheep. [36612]

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health's staff continually assess evidence relating to the health risks associated with long term exposure to chemicals used for dipping sheep. In particular officials provided expert input into the two meetings held by the Veterinary Products Committee in 1992 and 1993 to discuss the future licensing of organophosphorus sheep dips. The Department continues to provide expert input to the medical and scientific panel which the VPC set up to investigate the long-term health effects of exposure to these products. The panel has yet to report its final conclusions.

Cancer

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list by region the proportion of NHS cancer patients receiving modern anti-emetics, HT3 antagonists, while on chemotherapy; [36628]

(2) what is the proportion of NHS cancer patients receiving modern anti-emetics, HT3 antagonists, whilst on chemotherapy in *(a)* England and *(b)* other OECD nations. [36627]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to implement in full the recommendations of the Calman report on the commissioning of cancer services in the NHS. [36626]

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted the report's recommendations and welcomed the aim of delivering a uniformly high level of cancer care based on a network of expertise covering primary as well as secondary care. We support the development of designated specialist cancer units and centres and look to the national health service to make systematic progress in implementing this strategy.

Mr. Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many new patients are seen per year by NHS oncologists; and what are the comparable figures in other OECD states; [36635]

(2) if he will publish figures, by region and nationally, for the proportion of NHS cancer patients referred to a cancer specialist. [36637]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36369]

Mr. Sackville: The Department, with the exception of the Medicines Control Agency, has adopted a single motor mileage rate of 30p per mile for all motor cars and 15p per mile for all motor cycles. The Medicines Control Agency rates are as follows:

	Engine cc:		
	Up to 1500 cc	*1501–2000 cc*	*Over 2000 cc*
Up to 5000 miles	35.7p	42p	46p
Over 5000 miles	23p	27p	35p

The Agency pays 23p per mile when a car is used in preference to public transport.

Consultant Oncologists

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to meet the recommendation of the Royal College of Radiologists that there be a minimum of 470 NHS consultant oncologists by 2000; and what progress is being made towards this target. [36638]

Mr. Malone: The Government seek to ensure an adequate supply of appropriately trained doctors in each specialty, including both medical and clinical oncology. This involves planning the number of doctors in higher specialist training on a specialty basis and including all relevant parties in the process. However, employment of consultants is a matter for local employing bodies, who make medical staffing decisions in the light of competing priorities and the health care needs of the local population.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him today for the number of consultant oncologists up to and including September 1994.

Mr. Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish figures for the number of *(a)* consultant medical oncologists, *(b)* consultant clinical oncologists and *(c)* palliative care specialists working in the NHS for each of the last five years for which figures are available. [36636]

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Hospital Medical Consultants at 30 September each year England—whole-time equivalents

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Palliative Medicine	12.1	13.4	14.1	19.5	22.1	31.8
Medical Oncology	24.7	23.7	30.7	32.7	41.5	61.5
Clinical Oncology	190.2	185.6	202.5	200.1	198.8	221.2

Mr. Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of consultant oncologists per head of population in *(a)* England and *(b)* other OECD countries. [36615]

Mr. Malone: There were 282.7 hospital medical and clinical consultant oncologists—whole-time equivalents—in England as at 30 September 1994, 0.6 per 100,000 population. Data on the number of oncologists per head of population in OECD countries are not available centrally.

Intensive Care Unit Beds

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to set up a central telephone and computer system to provide accurate information for clinicians on the availability of ICU beds across the country. [36622]

Mr. Sackville: This is one of the points being considered by a working group of experts looking into admission to intensive care.

Bloomsbury and Islington College of Nursing and Midwifery

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the numbers and grades of those who will be made redundant because of the closure of the Bloomsbury and Islington college of nursing and midwifery; [36632]

(2) what representations he has received concerning the proposed closure of the Bloomsbury and Islington college of nursing and midwifery; and if he will make a statement. [36633]

Mr. Sackville: The closure of the Bloomsbury and Islington college of nursing and midwifery is a matter for the North Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Staveley, chairman of the authority, for details.

Dental Services

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the recommendations of the committee convened to review the provision of NHS dental services and the date on which he expects to publish the recommendations. [36443]

Mr. Malone: The Government have not convened such a committee. We have, however, been working closely with the General Dental Services Committee on the detailed development of the reform proposals that I announced to the House on 5 April, *Official Report*, columns *1214-15*.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salaried dental practitioner posts have been *(a)* approved and *(b)* filled since 1 January 1994. [36809]

Mr. Malone: The number of salaried dentist posts approved from 7 January 1994 to 22 September 1995 is 36. Over the same period the net increase in the number of salaried dentists was 26.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many referrals were received by the community dental service in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1994–95 and *(c)* in respect of patients unable to obtain treatment within the general dental service. [36819]

Mr. Malone: Family health services authorities in England report that between 1 August 1994 and 22 September 1995 that they suggested to 1,399 patients that treatment might be available through the community dental service. Information is not available in this form before 1 August 1994.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to initiate pilot studies on purchaser-provider arrangements for the dentist service; and if he will make a statement. [36815]

Mr. Malone: The package of reforms I announced on 5 April reaffirmed the Government's aim to introduce a system of local contracts between health authorities and dental practices similar to that which operates elsewhere in the health service. Such a system will need careful piloting and evaluation before a decision is taken on nationwide introduction. To run pilot projects would require primary legislation. The Government will seek to introduce the necessary legislation when parliamentary time allows. Bids for pilot projects will then be invited.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time by region for orthodontic treatment at hospitals. [36813]

Mr. Malone: At 31 March 1995 there were 275 patients waiting for in-patient or day case orthodontic treatment. No patient had waited more than 15 months and information by region is shown in the table. Waiting times for patients being treated on an out-patient basis are not collected centrally.

Numbers of patients waiting for orthodontic in-patient or day case treatment, by region and monthly time band, at 31 March 1995

Region	*0–2*	*3–5*	*6–8*	*9–11*	*12–14*	*Total*
Northern and Yorkshire	23	16	1	0	0	40
Trent	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anglia and Oxford	29	37	23	33	22	144
North Thames	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Thames	15	5	0	0	0	20
South and West	31	19	1	0	0	51
West Midlands	7	8	0	0	0	15
North West	5	0	0	0	0	5
SHAs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	110	85	25	33	22	275

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of children by region waiting for orthodontic treatment on the NHS for each month since January 1994. [36811]

Mr. Malone: Children are not identified separately in information collected on numbers of patients waiting for in-patient or day case treatment.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to improve dental care for elderly people in residential and nursing homes; and if he will make a statement. [36821]

Mr. Bowis: Last April the Government announced a range of reforms of national health service dentistry, including its intention to strengthen the community dental service's role in ensuring continued access to NHS dental services for all who wish to use them. This development should benefit those patients in residential and nursing homes unable to use the mainstream general dental service.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices in the United Kingdom are accepting children for orthodontic treatment on only a private contract basis. [36810]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget for the community dental service in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1994–95 and *(c)* 1995–96; and what is the projected budget for (i) 1995–96 and (ii) 1996–97. [36820]

Mr. Malone: Expenditure on the community dental services in 1992–93 was £75,770,000. Figures are not available for later years. The level of future expenditure on the community dental service is a matter for health authorities, as the local purchasers of health care, to decide.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount allocated by his Department to dental schools for capital improvements in *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95 and *(c)* 1995–96; and what proportion of this amount in each year was passed on to dental schools by hospital trusts. [36816]

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not allocate capital funds direct to dental schools for capital improvements. Up to and including 1994–95 a central allocation for the re-equipment of dental hospitals was made to each regional health authority for the schools in its area. The total allocated was £4,608,000 in 1993–94 and £4,788,000 in 1994–95 which was split equally between the schools to produce £384,000 and £399,000 a year respectively. These amounts were allocated by the

RHAs to the appropriate health authorities and national health service trusts. Records are not kept centrally of any additional capital allocated to dental schools by the health authority or trust.

From 1995–96 there is no central allocation. Dental schools are required to put bids in for capital funds from the trust's capital programme. Records are not kept centrally of the capital allocated.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of trained orthodontists for each year since 1991; and what was the estimated requirement for orthodontists in each of those years. [36812]

Mr. Malone: Any dentist who has the necessary facilities, experience of expertise may provide orthodontic treatment.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount allocated by his Department for orthodontic training for each year since 1991; and what is the projected budget for orthodontic training for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97. [36818]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has carried out into the working of the capitation payment system to dentists for dental care of children; and what plans he has to change this system. [36814]

Mr. Malone: The Government have commissioned two research studies on the operation of the capitation system since it was introduced in 1990.

The reports are at different stages of readiness. That from the university of Birmingham is in its final form and I have today placed it in the House of Commons Library. The report from the university of Manchester will be available shortly. Both research teams have plans to disseminate their findings more widely.

The improvement of the capitation system was one of the package of proposals for the reform of NHS dentistry that I announced on 5 April. The Government intend to reform the capitation system by relating payments to dentists to disease levels in children. We are discussing the detailed development of this and the other elements of the package with the representatives of the dental profession.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, formerly health services authority if he will list by region and in total the number of people *(a)* deregistered from NHS dental treatment and *(b)* seeking help from their local FHSA to find a NHS dentist, since July 1992. [36994]

Mr. Malone: This information will be placed in the Library. At 31 July 1995, as at 1 July 1992, there were 27.3 million patients registered with national health service dentists in England.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his answer on 27 March, *Official Report*, column *412*, if he will publish a breakdown of the grades of staff made redundant and the cost of redundancy payments, made to each grade of staff, for each of the last 10 years. [36647]

Mr. Malone: Information on the cost of redundancy by grade is not collected centrally.

Nursing and Midwifery Education

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the real terms NHS expenditure on nursing and midwifery education, for each of the past 15 years nationally and by region. [36621]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many public interest immunity certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36689]

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 19 July, column *1286*.

Deaths

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many elderly, over 65 years of age, people died last year in their homes in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* each other county in England. [36453]

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Deaths at home for over 65s in 1994 for each country in England

	65 and over
Greater London	9,785
Greater Manchester	4,449
Merseyside	2,564
South Yorkshire	2,309
Tyne and Wear	2,270
West Midlands	4,705
West Yorkshire	3,343
Avon	1,786
Bedfordshire	674
Berkshire	971
Buckinghamshire	957
Cambridgeshire	1,282
Cheshire	1,587
Cleveland	1,082
Cornwall	1,186
Cumbria	1,108
Derbyshire	1,825
Devon	2,268
Dorset	1,531
Durham	1,273
East Sussex	1,703
Essex	2,988
Gloucestershire	1,125
Hampshire	2,720
Hereford and Worcester	1,407
Herefordshire	1,454
Humberside	1,562
Isle of Wight	329
Kent	2,816
Lancashire	2,715
Leicestershire	1,523
Lincolnshire	1,173
Norfolk	1,674
Northamptonshire	834
Northumberland	644

Deaths at home for over 65s in 1994 for each country in England

	65 and over
North Yorkshire	1,361
Nottinghamshire	1,472
Oxfordshire	948
Shropshire	805
Somerset	979
Staffordshire	1,919
Suffolk	1,375
Surrey	1,605
Warwickshire	932
West Sussex	1,315
Wiltshire	992
Total	85,325

Children Act 1989

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will remove public schools from the provisions of the Children Act 1989. [36556]

Mr. Bowis: The Children Act covers the welfare of children in England and Wales wherever they are. There are no plans to amend its provisions to exclude the welfare of children in independent boarding schools.

Chlamydia

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department has concerning the incidence of chlamydia; and what measures his Department is taking to combat the spread of infection among the population with particular reference to women. [36952]

Mr. Sackville: Information about chlamydia is published in the statistical bulletin entitled "Sexually Transmitted Diseases, England 1994", copies of which are available in the Library. The Health Education Authority and other organisations issue materials on sexually transmitted diseases, including chlamydia, to help people understand what bacterial and viral infections exist and how they should be treated. People who think they may have been at risk can make use of the network of open-access genito-urinary medicine clinics which offer confidential advice and treatment. In addition, the Department plans to set up, in parallel with on-going research, an expert group to consider the practical implications that might arise if any screening programme for chlamydia was to be introduced for different population groups and in different settings.

Mental Health Services

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the real increases and real reductions in spending on mental health services for *(a)* hospital, *(b)* community services and *(c)* health authorities, for each year since 1979, taking 1979 as the base line. [36898]

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table.

Expenditure on mental health services 1978–79 to 1992–93[1]

Year	Hospital expenditure £ million	Percentage change year on year	Community expenditure[2,3] £ million	Percentage change year on year[3]	Health authority expenditure £ million	Percentage change year on year
1978–79	489.8	—	20.7	—	489.8	—
1979–80	507.9	3.7	—	—	507.9	3.7
1980–81	560.9	10.4	—	—	560.9	10.4
1981–82	567.9	1.2	—	—	567.9	1.2
1982–83	564.6	–0.6	—	—	564.6	–0.6
1983–84	568.5	0.7	—	—	568.5	0.6
1984–85	577.0	1.5	—	—	577.0	1.5
1985–86	572.9	–0.7	—	—	572.9	–0.7
1986–87	593.2	3.5	28.6	—	593.2	3.5
1987–88	638.2	7.6	29.3	2.4	638.2	7.6
1988–89	659.8	3.4	87.3	—	715.1	[4]—
1989–90	647.5	–1.9	103.8	18.9	713.6	–0.2
1990–91	636.4	–1.7	113.9	9.7	709.6	–0.6
1991–92	739.9	[4]—	140.4	[4]—	817.7	[4]—
1992–93	754.0	1.9	165.9	18.2	845.0	3.3

[1] All figures are expressed at 1978–79 prices. The mental health expenditure is made up of the following:

(a) *Hospital*: in-patient and out-patient expenditure—the consultant specialities of mental health, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychotherapy and old age psychiatry; day patient expenditure—in the categories mental health (alcoholism, drug abuse, psychogeriatrics and general), child and adolescent psychiatry and forensic psychiatry.

(b) *Community*: community mental health nursing expenditure and local authority personal social services for people with mental health problems.

(c) *Health authority*: hospital expenditure and community mental health nursing expenditure.

[2] Local authority personal social services data are not available for the years 1979–80 to 1985–86.

[3] Figures for 1978–79, 1986–87 and 1987–88 are local authority personal social services expenditure only. The percentage change figure for 1987–88 on 1986–87 reflects this. Community mental health nursing expenditure was not collected separately in years before 1988–89. It was included with other community expenditure.

[4] Figures for 1991–92 cannot be compared with those for 1990–91 for the following reasons:

(a) The introduction of the NHS reforms in 1991–92 and changes to accountancy practices; and

(b) The revision of the local authority personal social services expenditure return meaning that information on client group spend was provided directly by local authorities rather than being apportioned by the Department of Health.

Note:

1. Increases in local authority personal social services expenditure data in 1992–93 are, in part, due to refinement of the basis for Department of Health apportionment.

NHS (Private Patients)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of the recent decision by BUPA to withdraw automatic cover for intensive care treatment for patients who undergo routine surgery. [36623]

Mr. Sackville: This will depend on factors which are not predictable, including future patients' individual circumstances and unexpected complications during treatment. People who have a right to national health service treatment retain their right whether or not they are receiving, or have received, private treatment.

Private Finance Initiative

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the projected capital spending within the NHS for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97; and how much of that total he estimates will be funded through the private finance initiative; [36787]

(2) what is the projected capital spending on family and community health services within the NHS for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97; and what proportion will be funded through the private finance initiative. [36789]

Mr. Sackville: Gross capital spending within the National Health Service for 1995–96 is estimated to be £2,028 million. The Government's spending plans for 1996–97 will be announced in the Budget.

Spending on family health services and on community health services is not separately identified.

These figures are additional to capital arising from the private finance initiative. At present, capital projects with a total value of approximately £1 billion are being tested for private finance.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36831]

Mr. Sackville: The rights of complaint of members of the public about NHS services are unaffected by the private finance initiative.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many capital expenditure bids have been exempted from normal private finance initiative rules. [36981]

Mr. Sackville: The potential for private finance is always thoroughly investigated before public funding is made available. This rule applies to all capital investment projects submitted for approval since the issue of the capital investment manual to the national health service in June 1994.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he proposes to offer to trusts negotiating contracts under the private finance initiative in relation to foreclosure in the event of default on obligations. [36796.]

Mr. Sackville: Guidance on the general principles to be applied in contracting with construction companies is set out in the National Health Service Estates publication "Contracts and Commissions for the NHS Estate", issued to all NHS trusts. Trusts, in consultation with the NHS executive headquarters, are responsible for ensuring that contracts with the private sector cover the eventuality of default by the private sector partner. Trusts are therefore urged to take legal advice at all stages of negotiating such contracts.

NHS Clinical Contracts

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of NHS clinical contracts placed with independent sector providers by district and region for *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1994–95; and what proportion this represented of the total NHS budget for each of those years. [36793]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Infant Formula Advertising

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ban the advertising of formula milk products in hospitals and clinics. [36805]

Mr. Sackville: The advertising and promotion of baby milks are restricted by the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations which came into force on 1 March 1995.

Private Companies (Advice)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the private companies that have advised his Department during the past five years. [36991]

Mr. Sackville: No central record is kept and this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Acute Beds

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department classifies as an acceptable level of occupancy for acute beds in respect of *(a)* the district general hospitals and *(b)* teaching hospitals. [36791]

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has not attempted to set-a definitive level for bed occupancy rates. Optimum levels are dependent on an examination of local factors and are not therefore suitable or capable of being the subject of central advice.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department's target remains to reduce the number of acute beds, by 40 per cent. by 2005 in England and Wales. [36790]

Mr. Sackville: There is no national target for reducing acute beds in England. The number of acute beds needed has to be decided at local level, based on contracted work loads and taking account of local circumstances, such the local rate for emergency admissions, the level of day case treatments and the availability of alternative services, such as hospital at home schemes.

Responsibility for hospital services in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Breastfeeding

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent by his Department on the promotion of breastfeeding for each year since 1991; and what is the projected budget for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97. [36801]

Mr. Sackville: The expenditure by the Department on publicity materials to promote breastfeeding is as follows:

Financial year	*£*
1991–92	Nil
1992–93	30,000
1993–94	28,000
1994–95	58,000
1995–96	51,000 (estimated)
1996–97	not yet determined

Total expenditure, through section 64 grant aid programme, to voluntary bodies concerned with the promotion and support of breastfeeding, is as follows:

1991–92: 66,000

1992–93: 58,000

1993–94: 70,000

1994–95: 55,500

1995–96: 57,000 (provisional)

1996–97: not yet determined

In addition, we have contributed £38,000—paid over the financial years 1994–95 and 1995–96—of the £50,600 funding from the United Kingdom Health Departments towards the costs of the "Invest in Breast" training programme introduced jointly by the Royal College of Midwives and the Health Visitors Association which was launched last May.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has undertaken into the potential savings to the NHS of encouraging more mothers to breastfeed their babies in the last five years. [36802]

Mr. Sackville: Publicly funded research studies have shown that there are substantial health benefits for babies who are breastfed rather than bottle fed.

The Department's "Breastfeeding: good practice guidance to the NHS" provides an estimate, based on the research findings on the benefits of breastfeeding and of the potential savings to the national health service that could be achieved from increased breastfeeding. The guidance was issued in May and copies are available in the Library.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make training on breastfeeding mandatory for general practitioners and other health service professionals. [36804]

Mr. Sackville: The body responsible for general practice vocational training—the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice—expects general practitioners to be skilled in recognising and making appropriate decisions about all health problems presented by their patients. The specific curricular arrangements to achieve these attributes are the responsibility of regional postgraduate organisations.

The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting is responsible for approving—to standards set by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting—institutions to provide courses for these three professions. Midwifery and health visiting courses include breastfeeding.

Hospital waiting Lists

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the waiting times for in-patient admission and day surgery by *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* nine months and *(d)* 12 months by region. [36798]

Mr. Malone: Information in the form requested is not available. The numbers of patients waiting, by regions, for in-patient and day case treatment as at 31 March 1995 are shown in the table.

Numbers of patients on waiting lists on 31 March 1995 who had been waiting for:

Region	*0–2 months*		*3–5 months*		*6–8 months*		*9–11 months*	
	In-patients	*Day cases*	*In-patients*	*Day cases*	*In-patients*	*Day cases*	*In-patients*	*Day cases*
Northern and Yorkshire	36,356	37,550	20,677	14,110	12,879	7,028	7,969	3,265
	(45.8%)	(60.3%)	(26.1%)	(22.7%)	(16.2%)	(11.3%)	(10.0%)	(5.2%)
Trent	26,908	23,728	14,086	8,192	8,538	3,737	4,614	1,674
	(48.5%)	(63.3%)	(25.4%)	(21.9%)	(15.4%)	(10.0%)	(8.3%)	(4.5%)
Anglia and Oxford	29,759	24,662	16,414	9,517	9,797	4,461	5,742	2,263
	(46.7%)	(59.2%)	(25.7%)	(22.8%)	(15.4%)	(10.7%)	(9.0%)	(5.4%)
North Thames	40,708	39,115	22,467	16,148	15,817	9,020	11,673	5,935
	(40.5%)	(51.8%)	(22.4%)	(21.4%)	(15.7%)	(11.9%)	(11.6%)	(7.9%)
South Thames	35,628	39,348	19,694	15,369	13,181	8,685	8,791	5,065
	(42.2%)	(54.4%)	(23.3%)	(21.2%)	(15.6%)	(12.0%)	(10.4%)	(7.0%)
South and West	37,479	34,739	19,207	12,057	8,362	4,489	2,105	1,043
	(55.8%)	(66.4%)	(28.6%)	(23.0%)	(12.4%)	(8.6%)	(3.1%)	(2.0%)
West Midlands	25,861	27,933	14,265	11,340	6,877	4,834	128	24
	(54.8%)	(63.3%)	(30.2%)	(25.7%)	(14.6%)	(11.0%)	(0.3%)	(0.1%)
North West	42,891	48,113	21,309	15,679	12,822	7,674	6,692	3,640
	(51.2%)	(64.1%)	(25.5%)	(20.9%)	(15.3%)	(10.2%)	(8.0%)	(4.8%)

Note:

Figures in brackets represent proportion of all in-patient or day case patients waiting on 31 March 1995 at each region.

Source:

Provider based Körner returns.

GP Surgeries

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many administrative and clerical staff have been employed in general practitioners' surgeries by region, including London, since 1990–91; [36989]

(2) what has been the total of practice managers located in general practitioners' surgeries employed by GP fundholders or non-fundholders by region, including London, since 1990–91. [36988]

Mr. Malone: Information on the type and number of general practitioner practice staff is contained in the publication "GMS Basic Statistics—England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library. The fundholding status of GPs is not separately identified.

Baby Friendly Initiative

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hospitals have been awarded UNICEF/WHO baby friendly awards; [36807]

(2) what support his Department intends to give to hospitals working towards baby friendly status; and if he will make baby friendly status a mandatory requirement for NHS trusts. [36803]

Mr. Sackville: Two hospitals in England have been awarded the WHO/UNICEF/UK baby friendly initiative status which indicates an international standard in the promotion of breastfeeding. Others are working towards this.

The Department's "Breastfeeding Good Practice Guidance to the NHS" was issued to the national health service, including trusts, in May this year. It was prepared in consultation with the national breastfeeding working group on which the UNICEF/UK baby friendly initiative were represented. The guidance gives some prominence to the baby friendly initiative "10 steps to successful breastfeeding" and asks purchasers to incorporate its principles within their purchasing plans. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Consultants

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* management, *(b)* medical and *(c)* other consultants employed by his Department during the past five years. [36993]

Mr. Sackville: No central record is kept and this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Medicines Act 1968

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the cases in which information has been withheld by his Department under section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968. [36757]

Mr. Sackville: Except where disclosure would be in performance of duties placed upon holders of information, including public safety, the Medicines Act 1968 protects information obtained, furnished or gathered as a requirement of the Act. This would include trade secrets and manufacturing processes.

Fluoridation

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to ensure that water companies comply with requests from local health authorities for water fluoridation other than when technical considerations prevent them from doing. [36817]

Mr. Malone: Fluoridation of water supplies is a matter for local decision. Local health authorities have no power to compel water suppliers to fluoridate.

NHS Pension Scheme

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if men and women in the NHS pension scheme have contributed the same percentage contributions since 1972; [36800]

(2) what representations he has received regarding discrimination against women doctors in the NHS pension scheme in the last year; and if he will make a statement. [36799]

Mr. Malone: The contribution level of both men and women in the national health service pension scheme has been at 5 per cent. of pensionable earnings for manual workers, 6 per cent. of pensionable earnings for other staff, since 1972. Widower benefits were introduced into the scheme at no extra cost in April 1988. A voluntary purchase scheme was available until June 1989 to enable those members who wished to have additional widowers benefits cover to buy past service, costs being shared by NHS employers.

On 6 April the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), met representatives of the British Medical Association seeking retrospective improvements of widowers benefits. Since 1 July 1994, 29 right hon. and hon. Members have written on the same subject.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre Files, *(i)* Centre Files, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36955]

Mr. Sackville: No central record is kept and this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

GP Premises

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the projected capital spending by region on GP premises for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97. [36788]

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 25 January, column 259.

Formula Milk

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to limit the use of formula milk products by the NHS. [36806]

Mr. Sackville: While recognising and promoting breast feeding as the best start to life for infants the Government recognise some women will choose not to, or will not be able to, breastfeed. The use of formula milk products will reflect the choice mothers make about how to feed their babies.

Wellhouse Trust

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the Wellhouse Trust will be exempted from the private finance initiative rules in raising funds for the new Barnet hospital project; [36980]

(2) what factors underlay his decision regarding capital expenditure by the Wellhouse Trust; and if he will make a statement. [36982]

Mr. Sackville: No. The trust is pursuing private finance initiative procedures for phase 1b of the redevelopment of Barnet general hospital. Phase 1a is under construction at a cost of £29 million. The new hospital will help to ensure local people have access to comprehensive and high quality acute services.

Private Contracts

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the private companies that have been awarded contracts by his Department during the past five years. [36992]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Senior Registrars and Registrars

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received relating to his proposal to remove the contract of small registrars and small senior registrars from the regional health authority to national health service trusts. [36742]

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received letters from representatives of senior and junior doctors about our plans for junior doctors' contracts. He met with them on 13 July and emphasised Ministers' commitment to ensuring that the high standards of medical education and training are maintained. A package of safeguards has been developed that will protect the continuity and high quality of training programmes. Guidance to the service is now being worked up in conjunction with the medical profession.

GP Paperwork

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of time GPs devote to paperwork on average, by fundholder and non-fundholder, *(a)* now and *(b)* for whichever dates information is conveniently available in each of the last five years. [36990]

Mr. Malone: The information is not available.

Personal Social Services Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the social services standard spending assessment in each English and Welsh county for the current financial year. [36714]

Mr. Bowis: Personal social services standard spending assessments for 1995–96 for English county councils are set out in the standard spending assessment handbook 1995–96, copies of which are available in the Library.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Variations in Health

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the sub-group of the chief medical officer's health of the nation working group, variations in health is due to report; and when the report will be published. [36792]

Mr. Sackville: The variations sub-group of the chief medical officer's health of the nation working group has now reported. Its report will be published shortly.

Health Advisory Council

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the reinstatement of the Health Advisory Council; and if he will make a statement. [36808]

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of a body of that name.

Community Care

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of total national spending the Department of Social Security was spending in each English and Welsh county in the financial year prior to transfer of responsibility for care in the community to local authorities; and what proportion of funds allocated by his Department for care in the community are distributed in each English and Welsh county. [36713]

Mr. Bowis: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to community care and not the mental health care in the community. The Department of Social Security figures for 1992–93 relate to the amount paid in income support to residents of the independent sector residential homes. All other community care, residential, domiciliary and day services, were provided by social services departments. The information for England will be placed in the Library. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Population Statistics

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the population in each English and Welsh county is over pensionable age; and what is the English and Scottish average. [36715]

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Mid–1994 population estimates
Persons of pensionable age[1] as a percentage of all residents

	Percentage
Great Britain	18.3
England	18.3
Wales	19.9
Scotland	17.8
Counties:-	
Greater London	15.7
Greater Manchester	17.3
Merseyside	18.7
South Yorkshire	18.5
Tyne and Wear	18.9
West Midlands	17.8
West Yorkshire	17.4
Avon	18.7
Bedfordshire	14.8
Berkshire	14.5
Buckinghamshire	14.6
Cambridgeshire	16.4
Cheshire	17.6
Cleveland	16.8
Cornwall and Isle of Scilly	22.8
Cumbria	20.3
Derbyshire	18.7
Devon	22.8
Dorset	25.2
Durham	18.6
East Sussex	24.8
Essex	18.7
Gloucestershire	19.7
Hampshire	17.8
Hereford and Worcester	19.0
Hertfordshire	17.1
Humberside	18.7
Isle of Wight	26.4
Kent	19.0
Lancashire	19.2
Leicestershire	17.0
Lincolnshire	21.3
Norfolk	22.1
Northamptonshire	16.6
Northumberland	19.6
North Yorkshire	20.4
Nottinghamshire	18.0
Oxfordshire	16.1
Shropshire	18.3
Somerset	21.9
Staffordshire	17.3
Suffolk	20.3
Surrey	18.6
Warwickshire	18.1
West Sussex	23.5
Wiltshire	17.7
Clwyd	20.5
Dyfed	22.0
Gwent	18.9
Gwynedd	22.8
Mid-Glamorgan	18.1
Powys	22.0
South Glamorgan	18.1
West Glamorgan	20.6

Source:
Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
[1] 65 and over for males; 60 and over for females.

Postgraduate Education (Registrars)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to ensure that high standards of postgraduate education and training for registrars are protected. [36743]

Mr. Malone: The medical Royal Colleges and their Faculties are responsible for the standards of training and education of registrars. Under the reforms of specialist medical education currently being implemented, the registrar and senior registrar grades will be abolished and replaced by the new specialist registrar grade. We are working with the royal colleges and postgraduate deans to ensure that training in the specialist registrar grade will be of the highest possible standard.

Booth Hall Children's Hospital

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the occupancy rate and number of patients seen in the last three years at Booth Hall hospital. [37355]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The right hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. T. F. Lavin, chairman of Manchester Children's Hospitals national health service trust, for details.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations he has received on the future of Booth Hall; from which organisations; and what has been his response; [37354]

(2) what replacement services are proposed in replacement of those provided currently by Booth Hall children's hospital. [37353]

Mr. Sackville: Ministers have replied to eight letters from hon. Members. Officials have replied to 37 letters from members of the public.

Under the health authorities' proposals, all services currently available at Booth Hall children's hospital would be re-provided elsewhere. It is envisaged that routine paediatric services for local children would be provided at North Manchester general hospital. The more specialist, regional services would move to the Royal Manchester children's hospital, Pendlebury.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the report on paediatric care in Greater Manchester and when he will make an announcement on the future of Booth Hall children's hospital. [37352]

Mr. Sackville: The North West regional health authority commissioned Sir David Hull, professor of child health at Nottingham university, to carry out an independent and thorough review of service and make recommendations for the future. On the basis of Professor Hull's recommendations, Manchester and Salford and Trafford health authorities drew up specific proposals for the development of high quality, city-wide services for children. The proposals are currently set aside pending the outcome of a possible judicial review.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instructions or advice his Department has issued to regional or district health services concerning criteria for contracts which they make with providers of accident and emergency services on a capitation or other basis and in relation to patterns of access to those services: and where such advice or information is published. [37330]

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are expected to enter into contracts with appropriate providers covering all accident and emergency attendances, regardless of the district of residence of the attenders.

This was explained in the document "Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles" published in September 1989, copies of which are available in the Library.

Fertility Treatment

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many district health authorities place restrictions, other than age-related ones, on the availability of fertility treatment; [37309]

(2) if he will list the district health authorities which have an age-related policy regarding the purchase of fertility treatment, together with details of the age at which each of these denies treatment, specifying what kind of fertility treatment is being limited. [37308]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to introducing guidelines to ensure consistency of provision of fertility treatment across district health authorities. [37310]

Mr. Sackville: Advice on the services available under the national health service for the treatment of infertility is contained in the effective health care bulletin on "The Management of Subfertility", August 1992, published for the NHS management executive by a consortium of Leeds and York Universities and the research unit of the Royal College of Physicians, copies of which are available in the Library.

Local health authorities are responsible for the provision of local health services, including the provision of infertility services. Decisions about the availability of these services must be left to individual health authorities as they are in the best position to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate his Department has of the number of complaints made about care in *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes during the last year; [37010]

(2) what estimate his Department has of the number of *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes that are holders of BS5750, and of investors in people awards; [37012]

(3) what estimate his Department has made of the number of care assistants in residential homes that have nursing qualifications. [37015]

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate his Department has of the number of registered residential homes and the number of registered nursing homes. [37013]

Mr. Bowis: As at 31 March 1994 in England, there were 17,600 residential care homes for adults registered with local authorities and 5,100 nursing homes registered with health authorities. A number of homes may be registered for both residential and nursing care under the terms of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate his Department has made of the average gross and net profits made by private residential and nursing homes. [37018]

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available centrally on which to base such an estimate.

Blood Stocks

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the development of a national computing system to control blood stocks. [37137]

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the National Blood Authority expects to go out to tender shortly for bids to supply a new computer system for the national blood service.

NHS Staff

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps health authorities are taking to safeguard health staff carrying out their duties. [37042]

Mr. Malone: Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, it is a requirement that employers and staff agree appropriate methods locally for ensuring the safety of their working environment.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has *(a)* to introduce safety guidelines to all health authorities aimed at minimising risks to staff and *(b)* to introduce a legal obligation on all health service bodies to ensure that such staff in the course of their duties are protected and in the event of sustaining injuries or contracting diseases have legal safeguards against employer negligence. [37043]

Mr. Malone: The national health service executive has issued guidance to NHS employers on health and safety at work issues, EL(93)66 and occupational health service matters HSG(94)51, which underline NHS employers' statutory duties to promote a safe working environment for staff, and on security "The NHS Security Manual", 1995. Copies of these documents are available in the Library. In the event of staff sustaining an injury or contracting a disease at work, they may be eligible for benefits under the NHS injury benefits scheme.

Complaints Procedures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for legislation to introduce new national health service complaints and disciplinary procedures for general practitioners; on what date would these procedures take effect; and if he will make a statement. [37046]

Mr. Malone: The Government intend to lay measures before Parliament to introduce new national health service complaints and disciplinary procedures for family health services practitioners from 1 April 1996.

Excess Winter Death Rates

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *763*, what methodology is used to calculate excess winter death rates; and if he will publish the figures for all deaths in the relevant periods in each year since 1989. [37311]

Mr. Sackville: Excess winter deaths are defined as the number of deaths in the four months from December to March less the average of the numbers in the preceding autumn—August to November—and the following summer—April to July.

The excess winter mortality index is the number of excess winter deaths expressed as a percentage of the average of the number of deaths in the autumn and winter periods.

The numbers of deaths in each winter period in England and Wales since 1989 are as follows:

1989–90: 225,790
1990–91: 214,259
1991–92: 209,509
1992–93: 198,092
1993–94: 208,425

Hospitals (Car Parking)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require all district health authorities, as a condition of any contract entered into with providers of hospital services, to refrain from making any charge for car parking for those visiting patients or receiving out-patient treatment at their establishments. [37371]

Mr. Sackville: No.

Islington Social Services

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authority social service departments have made inquiries of his Department in respect of the index he holds of ex-employees of Islington who were referred to in the White report. [37099]

Mr. Bowis: Three.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure local authority social service departments have access to the list he holds of names of former employees of Islington social services department named in the White report. [37098]

Mr. Bowis: The Department has undertaken to check against its consultancy service index any names submitted by a local authority of any employee of theirs in the child care field who is understood to be a former employee of Islington social services department.

Information Disclosure

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the matters which staff of his Department are precluded by employment conditions from discussing with their Member of Parliament. [37102]

Mr. Sackville: There is no list of matters which staff of the Department are precluded by their employment conditions from discussing with their Member of Parliament. They may not, however, without prior permission, disclose official information held by the Department or another Government Department unless it has already been made public, nor should they discuss matters in such a way as to bring into question their political impartiality.

Private Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for health how many extra contractual referrals were made by health authorities to private psychiatric hospitals containing source accommodation in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* the first six months of 1995; and how many were made in each case to hospitals run by Partnership in Care Ltd. [37025]

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Home Visits (Security)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from NHS trusts on arrangements in place to improve the security of midwives, district nurses and other carrying drugs to relieve pain to patients in the community. [37100]

Mr. Malone: No. There is a continuing responsibility on national health service trust management to ensure that staff in the community can practice in safety. The NHS executive provides guidance to local managers who must devise local solutions in their own particular circumstances. The NHS security manual includes a suggested "check list" to be used by staff involved in home visiting.

Hospitals, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of hospital provision in South Manchester; when he expects to make any further assessment; and if he will make a statement. [37168]

Mr. Sackville: In November 1994, the North West regional health authority considered a report by Professor Herbert Duthie into the future shape of health care in south Manchester. Following amendments to the original proposals and a further period of public consultation, Manchester health authority has now agreed plans to improve health services in south Manchester, including those based in hospitals. In doing so, the health authority has accepted a number of demands put forward by South Manchester community health council and is currently working with South Manchester university hospitals NHS trust and others on the detailed arrangements.

NHS Staff Retirement

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total of NHS staff *(a)* retiring on pension and *(b)* taking early retirements on pension for each of the last 10 years; and what was the annual cost of early retirements in each of the last 10 years. [22739]

Mr. Sackville: *[pursuant to his reply, 11 May, c. 569–70]:* I regret that the information provided in the previous reply was incorrect. I have asked the chief executive of the NHS Pensions Agency, Mr. A. F. Cowan, to send the hon. Member a revised answer.

Letter from A. F. Cowan to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 13 October 1995:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what is the total of NHS staff (a) retiring on pension and (b) taking early retirements on pension for each of the last 10 years; and what was the annual cost of early retirements in each of the last 10 years."

I regret that the information previously provided was incorrect.

Age retirements over the last 4 years

1991–92: 11,734

1992–93: 12,774

1993–94: 11,666

1994–95: 11,364

Ill-health retirements over the last 4 years

1991–92: 7,323

1992–93: 8,327

1993–94: 9,520

1994–95: 9,030

Early retirements over the last 4 years

1991–92: 2,818

1992–93: 3,313

1993–94: 5,837

1994–95: 5,732

Full cost of early retirements for the Scheme, excluding ill-health retirements in each of the following financial years is:

1992–93: £137.291m

1993–94: £158.827m

1994–95: £211.383m

ENVIRONMENT

Civil Servants (Allowances)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36367]

Sir Paul Beresford: The mileage allowances payable to civil servants using their own vehicles in my Department are:

Cars—Standard mileage rate

Engine capacity	*Up to 1500cc*	*1501–2000cc*	*Over 2000cc*
	Pence per mile		
Up to 4000 miles (pa)	34	43	47
Over 4000 miles (pa)	19	23	30

A special rate of 23.8p per mile is payable where staff choose to use their own car, even when public transport is available.

Motor Cycles and Motor Cycle Combinations

Engine capacity	*Up to 125cc*	*Over 125cc*
Up to 4000 miles (pa) (comprehensive insurance)	16.2	25.3
Up to 4000 miles (pa) (third party insurance)	14.5	22.8
Over 4000 miles	6.2	9.0
Pedal cycles	6.2p per mile	

Dr. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last five years if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36368]

Sir Paul Beresford: The total cost of travel expenses claimed by staff using their own vehicles for official business was some £450,000 in 1993–94 and £640,000 in 1994–1995. Records are no longer available for earlier years and records showing the actual rate claimed are not kept. It is not possible, therefore to estimate the saving if the lower rate had not been claimed in each case.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public interest immunity certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36692]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State for the Environment has not produced a public interest immunity certificate in legal proceedings in any year since 1986.

Homelessness

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are estimated to be homeless in each English county. [36730]

Mr. Clappison: Data on households which local authorities accept responsibility to secure accommodation for under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act are reported by local authorities districts on a quarterly basis. Total acceptances by the districts in each county for the quarter ending June 1995, the latest available are set out in the table.

	Number
Avon	580
Bedfordshire	187
Berkshire	345
Buckinghamshire	279
Cambridgeshire	243
Cheshire	'—
Cleveland	481
Cornwall	210
Cumbria	111
Derbyshire	656
Devon	'—
Dorset	345
Durham	162
East Sussex	587
Essex	631
Gloucestershire	216
Greater Manchester	2,469
Hampshire	848
Hereford and Worcester	435
Hertfordshire	'—
Humberside	268
Isle of Wight	58
Kent	'—
Lancashire	'—
Leicestershire	'—
Lincolnshire	217
London	6,320
Merseyside	744
Norfolk	'—
North Yorkshire	'—
Northamptonshire	219
Northumberland	130

	Number
Nottinghamshire	[1]—
Oxfordshire	[1]—
Shopshire	231
Somerset	292
South Yorkshire	591
Staffordshire	[1]—
Suffolk	290
Surrey	394
Tyne and Wear	855
Warwickshire	131
West Midlands	[1]—
West Sussex	346
West Yorkshire	1,568
Wiltshire	373

[1] Not available—returns have not been received from all authorities in the county. Details of acceptances in individual authorities are available in a supplementary table which is released alongside the quarterly information bulletin on homelessness statistics.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much each English county has received via district councils under the housing investment programme. [36731]

Mr. Clappison: English counties do not receive any resources via district councils under the housing investment programme.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much each local authority received per head through central Government grants in 1994–95. [36732]

Sir Paul Beresford: I have placed the information in the Library of the House.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total standard spending assessment funding allocated to each English and Welsh county for this financial year. [36768]

Sir Paul Beresford: The requested information for English counties is available in the Library. The standard spending assessments for authorities in Wales are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with Staffordshire fire service the effects of the revised standard spending assessment calculation on fire service operations; and if he will make a statement. [37037]

Sir Paul Beresford: Shortly after the Budget, we will consult on our proposals for the local government finance Settlement for 1996–97. We are willing to discuss our proposals with any authority at that stage, so far as time permits.

Birds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to stop the decline in population of *(a)* song thrushes, *(b)* bullfinches, *(c)* lapwings, *(d)* reed buntings, *(e)* grey partridges, *(f)* tree sparrows and *(g)* turtle doves; and if he will make a statement. [36904]

Mr. Clappison: A number of steps are being taken by my Department, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to help in the recovery of these species. These include:

Habitats beneficial to these species are included in the sites of special scientific interest and special protection areas classified under the EC birds directive.

Agri-environment schemes developed under EC regulations, stewardship and woodland grant schemes encourage farming practices which help conserve habitat important to farmland birds;

Targets for the conservation of habitats to be developed under the UK biodiversity action plan;

Funding research and development projects on the effect of farming techniques on farmland bird populations;

Sponsorship of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds projects to provide practical information on farmland birds for farmers, their advisors and others.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he can take to increase the number of breeding pairs of *(a)* corncrake and *(b)* stone curlew on the British Isles. [36942]

Mr. Clappison: Since 1991, the Government have been involved in schemes in Scotland to provide financial incentives to landowners and farmers to introduce farming methods which are more conducive to breeding corncrakes. The Government are also working with landowners to protect nesting stone curlews on arable land in Wessex and East Anglia.

The biodiversity steering group is expected to advise the Government on action plans for the corncrake and stone curlew to improve their conservation status. The steering group will report later this year.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial support he will make available to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds towards its song thrush research project. [36941]

Mr. Clappison: Although we are not planning to give financial support to this project, my Department is currently negotiating with contractors on research to assess whether the use of herbicides and insecticides on agricultural land be contributing to the decline in the number of certain UK species, including song thrushes, and to provide information about the impact of pesticides on bird populations.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food also funds research related to farmland birds.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsman about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative through his Department. [36833]

Sir Paul Beresford: Members of the public have the same rights to make complaints of alleged maladministration to the relevant ombudsman concerning a Department of the Environment project which is privately financed as they would have had if the project had been publicly financed.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG, and *(q)* Logica. [36965]

Sir Paul Beresford: This information is not held centrally by my Department and to collect it would involve a disproportionate cost.

Water

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he gave and what *(a)* statutory and *(b)* other bodies he consulted concerning the impact on personal health and hygiene and public health, particularly on children, the elderly and the sick, of his policy to encourage the use of water meters for domestic premises; and if he will place the relevant documents in the Library. [37369]

Mr. Clappison: The Department of the Environment and the Office of Water Services commissioned a survey on "The Social Impact of Water Metering" the report of which was published in August 1992. A copy of the report is in the Library. The views of a wide range of organisations were sought in the Department's consultation paper "Using Water Wisely" published in July 1992. A copy of this document and a list of the organisations which responded to it are available in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the approximate revenue cost per given annual volume of water lost by leakage from *(a)* high and *(b)* low pressure water mains at which it becomes non-economic to eliminate such leakage, using average or median national costs for producing potable public supplies. [37337]

Mr. Clappison: The economic cost of leakage varies significantly, not only between companies but also within each company's operating area. An average national figure would not be meaningful.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to annex B, paragraph 8 of his document "Water Conservation; Government Action", what were the methodology and assumptions used; and what is the range of cost/value calculations he has used in determining his public targets for reduction by water companies in leakage for their mains distribution system. [37370]

Mr. Clappison: The Government does not at present propose to set mandatory leakage targets. The water companies themselves are in the best position to judge costs and benefits of leakage control. It will be for the Director General of Water Services to negotiate demanding voluntary leakage targets which take account of varying local circumstances.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what *(a)* advice has been issued and *(b)* regulations have been made by her Majesty's Government concerning the desirability of fitting of cisterns in domestic premises for the continued supply of water for hygiene and hot water systems during interruptions in mains supply. [37274]

Mr. Clappison: Section 66 of the Water Industry Act 1991 allows water undertakers to require certain properties to be provided with a cistern. In the case of a relevant house, the cistern should be capable of holding sufficient water to provide an adequate supply for a period of 24 hours.

Except in an emergency, a water undertaker may cut off a supply of water to any premises for the purposes of carrying out any necessary works only after having served reasonable notice on the consumer. If any supply of water to those premises for domestic purposes is interrupted for more than 24 hours for the purposes of carrying out those works then the water undertaker has a duty to the consumer to provide an emergency supply of water within a reasonable distance of the premises.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the mean daily evaporation rates from free water surfaces of reservoirs and rivers over a given period for known locations in England and Wales for an appropriate period of summer drought. [37368]

Mr. Clappison: Standard hydrological textbooks provide the equations, and the Meterological Office reports the data, from which estimates of free water evaporation can be made.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment following his conclusions in paragraph 29 of his White Paper, "Water Conservation, Government Action", that reduction in the need for additional capital investment in supply of water leads to consequential savings of cost for consumers, what are *(a)* nationally and *(b)* on a local basis the appropriate percentages of water charges that have been devoted to such investment (i) by undertakings which were previously regional water authorities and (ii) other water companies. [37382]

Mr. Clappison: Between 1989–90 and 1994–95 the water industry's investment on water resource development was about 5 per cent. of total investment on the water service during this period. Water company capital programmes may be funded by a combination of debt or equity finance and retained profits. Information on the percentage of water charges that has been devoted by the various water companies to this resource development is not held centrally.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names or descriptions of the relevant statutory or non-statutory bodies now fulfilling the duties, including reportage, of *(a)* the former National Water Council and *(b)* the former regional water authorities, as specified in sections 4 and 24 respectively of the Water Act 1973 before their replacement or repeal later. [37276]

Mr. Clappison: The Water Act 1983 provided for the dissolution of the National Water Council, which was primarily a consultative and advisory body on matters

relating to national water policy, and for its functions to cease by order of the Secretary of State. Subsequently, water authorities established their own non-statutory body, the Water Authorities Association—now the Water Services Association—to promote their interests nationally and to inform consumers about their activities.

Following the reorganisation of the water industry in England and Wales in 1989, the functions of the former water authorities are now largely undertaken by a combination of the National Rivers Authority, the drinking water inspectorate and the successor water and sewerage companies themselves.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support from public funds, by nature and amount, ceased to be available to the former regional water authorities in England and Wales in privatisation. [37270]

Mr. Clappison: Water companies ceased to have access to the national loans fund on privatisation. The amounts borrowed would have varied annually depending upon their capital requirements. They continue to be eligible to apply for Government grants and support from European funds for qualifying schemes.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will request the relevant bodies, agencies or organisations concerned with the conservation, purification and distribution of potable water supplies in England and Wales to prepare a report on national water resources, taking into account circumstances of the winter of 1976 and those of the summer of 1995; [37367]

(2) what is the general increase in demand for potable water supplies in periods of summer drought over average summer consumption *(a)* for each of the principal water regions and *(b)* nationally; and what assessment he has made of the purposes to which that extra demand is put. [37365]

Mr. Clappison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 1 September that the Department will be conducting a review of all aspects of legislation, planning, organisation and preparation for droughts. This will include consideration of changes in patterns of demand for water which have happened or which seem likely, and will involve all the interests concerned.

Sewers (Rodent Infestation)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory powers he exercises over suppliers of water disposal services in respect of levels of rodent infestation in sewers; where standards relating to such infestation are publicised; and what powers elected authorities or district health authorities possess to inspect and enforce levels of infestation. [37268]

Mr. Clappison: There is no specific duty on water and sewerage companies in relation to the control of rats in sewers. However, all sewerage undertakers have programmes to control and reduce the number of rats in their systems. Local authorities have a long-standing duty to keep themselves informed about the sufficiency of drainage systems in their area to ensure that they do not pose a threat to public health. Failure to control rat infestations on property could be enforceable by the local authority environmental health officer under part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, if it is judged to be a statutory nuisance.

Mobile Fresh Water Tanks

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory or other requirements have been made by Her Majesty's Government to require water companies to have available a given number of mobile fresh water tanks, wheeled or otherwise, related to the numbers of population served; and what national arrangement it has made for supplying of such equipment in emergencies. [37281]

Mr. Clappison: Water companies have a duty under the Security Measures (Water and Sewerage Undertakers) Direction 1989 to have plans in place to ensure the provision of essential water supplies at all times. The direction also requires that the water companies shall provide such facilities, including works, plant and equipment, as will secure the implementation of these plans, which should be mutually complimentary and co-ordinated between the companies.

Urban Renewal Grants

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the urban renewal grant repayment conditions in the case of a dwelling where the grant recipient dies within the statutory three years and the dwelling is then sold by a new owner. [37113]

Sir Paul Beresford: We propose to extend the house renovation grant repayment conditions to cover such cases at the next suitable legislative opportunity.

Fire Authorities (Coastline Factor)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has that fire authorities with a coastline incur extra costs from the coastline factor. [37036]

Sir Paul Beresford: The measure of coastline was introduced into the fire SSA formula in 1995–96 to reflect additional costs that authorities with coastline face compared with inland authorities. Authorities situated on the coast have less scope than inland authorities for drawing reinforcements from neighbouring brigades and therefore need greater self-sufficiency to provide the same standard of service as other local authorities.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from fire services adversely affected by the inclusion of the coastline indicator in the standard spending assessment calculation for fire services. [37035]

Sir Paul Beresford: During consultation on the 1995–96 local government finance settlement, the Secretary of State for the Environment received two representations from local authorities concerning the use of a coastline factor in the fire standard spending assessment. Other representations have been received subsequently.

Urban Development Areas

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer concerning

employment in urban development areas, *Official Report*, 18 July, column *1427-28*, how many of the 63,025 jobs quoted for the London docklands area existed in the same, or equivalent form outside that area prior to the re-location of the enterprises or services concerned.

Sir Paul Beresford: The London Docklands development corporation does not hold records which enable an analysis of gross jobs in the way requested.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been contributed *(a)* item by item *(b)* in toto by public funds to the infrastructure serving the complex of the Canary wharf project; and what is this figure as a proportion of the estimated current freehold value of the property, or the highest public offer extant, together with the purchase price of the site from the Port of London Authority and its selling price to the first Canary Wharf Company. [37332]

Sir Paul Beresford: Public spending on infrastructure serving the Canary wharf area totals £44.5 million and is broken down as follows:

	£ million
West Ferry Road Phase 1 Heron Quays Roundabout	5.3
Canary Wharf Eastern Access Road	22.3
West Ferry Road Electricity sub-station and National Grid Enhancement	16.9

Of course, all infrastructure expenditure by the London Docklands development corporation brings regeneration benefits to the economy and attractiveness of the docklands overall. Isolating separate areas of expenditure and attributing it to particular projects distorts its significance and broader benefits.

No valuation of the current freehold value of the Canary wharf complex is available.

The LDDC acquired land within the Canary wharf site from the Port of London Authority as part of a package deal—including water areas—and no separate breakdown of the land value is available. Of the 72 acre site purchased by Olympia and York, about 22 acres of land and 21 acres of water were in LDDC's ownership and these were sold for £8 million cash plus £12 million towards additional infrastructure.

Countryside Commission

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on advertising the post of chairman of the Countryside Commission; what was the cost of employing St. James Management Recruitment; what other costs were involved in making the appointment; and if Mr. Simmonds applied for the post. [37386]

Mr. Clappison: The total cost of employing St. James's Management Recruitment was some £31,000, of which some £8,000 represented advertising costs. The other costs involved in making the appointment relate to the time spent on the recruitment process by Ministers and officials in the Department, for which figures are not available. Mr. Simmonds did not apply but was approached by St. James's.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory, or other, consultations are being initiated by Her Majesty's Government with statutory and other bodies in fulfilment of obligations arising from *(a)* the biodiversity convention and *(b)* legislation of the European Community consequent on the biodiversity convention. [37275]

Mr. Clappison: The Government have consulted widely in the development of the UK biodiversity action plan which was produced in accordance with article 6 of the biodiversity convention. The publication of the plan in January 1994 followed a consultation involving some 300 organisations, including a two-day seminar in May 1993. In June 1995, a biodiversity steering group was established to advise Government on taking forward the plan. The group includes representatives from central and local government, the statutory conservation agencies, industry, the national collections and academia, landowners and land managers and the voluntary conservation bodies. It will publish a report in December and a Government response is planned early in the new year. Copies of both documents will be placed in the Library.

The UK delegation to the first meeting of the conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention held consultation meetings with interested parties both before and during the meeting in Nassau last year. This approach is being repeated in preparation for the second conference next month in Jakarta.

The Government issued a public consultation paper in October 1993 about the legal transposition of the EU habitats directive. The Conservation (Natural Habitats & C.) Regulations 1994, approved by Parliament in October 1994, were prepared in the light of the consultation. In March this year, the Government consulted interested parties on a list of possible special areas of conservation under the directive. Similar consultation takes place before the classification of special protection areas under the birds directive.

Basking Sharks

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to include basking sharks on the list of endangered species; and if he will make a statement. [37038]

Mr. Clappison: The basking shark has been considered for protection under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981 on two previous occasions but there was insufficient evidence to support protection.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Government's statutory conservation adviser, is currently considering which species should be recommended for protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act as part of the third quinquennial review. The case for the basking shark is being reviewed, but it is too early to say whether the evidence will result in the species being protected.

Water Companies (Share Value)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the *(a)* total and *(b)* percentage increase in the capital value of those publicly owned

assets, now privatised, on the basis of share capital at the time of issue and valuation on total share value at a given date during 1995. [37366]

Mr. Clappison: Information on the market capitalisation at floatation of the 10 water holding companies in England and Wales, is contained in the National Audit Office report "Department of the Environment: Sale of the Water Authorities in England and Wales", a copy of which is in the Library. Current share values vary daily according to fluctuations in the stock market and this information is not held by my Department.

Industrial Estates

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many industrial estates are owned by local authorities; and what is the total value of such estates. [37132]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Department's records show that between 260 and 290 local authorities have an interest in industrial estates and that the total value of these industrial estates is in the region of £750 million to £1,000 million.

City of London Common Council

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the abolition of the Alderman's veto and extension of the franchise in the City of London; and if he will make a statement. [37112]

Sir Paul Beresford: We have received one such representation. We have no plans to reform the arrangements for election to the common council.

Commercial Leases (Rent Reviews)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in the development and publication of a code of practice in relation to rent reviews in commercial leases. [37120]

Mr. Clappison: The commercial property industry and professional bodies are now completing their discussions on the code, and plan to publish it before the end of the year.

Rateable Values

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average change in rateable values between 1990 and 1995 for *(a)* commercial and *(b)* industrial properties for each region in England. [37136]

Sir Paul Beresford: The latest information I have is as follows:

Percentage

Region	*Shops*	*Offices*	*Warehouses*	*Factories*	*Other*
Northern	+28	+48	+41	+26	+18
Yorkshire and Humberside	+26	+55	+35	+24	+21
East Midlands	+24	+34	+21	+18	+20
East Anglia	+16	+14	+14	+4	+18
Inner London	−16	−58	−12	−10	−11
Outer London	+10	−4	+7	−2	+14
Rest of South East	+8	−12	+3	−3	+12
South West	+12	+13	+14	+6	+17
West Midlands	+32	+55	+49	+35	+28
North West	+35	+49	+44	+29	+22

Fair Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to introduce *(a)* amending legislation, *(b)* revised guidance to rent officers and rent assessment committees or *(c)* any other action to reverse the effect of the Court of Appeal judgment on the use of comparables in setting fair rents in the case of Spath Holme Ltd. v. Greater Manchester and Lancashire Rent Assessment Committee. [37488]

Mr. Clappison: The statutory basis on which fair rents are determined is set out in section 70 of the Rent Act 1977, which consolidated the Rent Act 1968. In essence, a fair rent is what a landlord could achieve in a market in which the supply of, and demand for, accommodation are in balance—that is, in the absence of scarcity. This has been the understanding since fair rents were introduced, and the judgment of the Court of Appeal does nothing to change that. We therefore do not propose to legislate to change the current statutory basis.

The Secretary of State does not issue guidance to rent officers and rent assessment committees to seek to influence them in the exercise of their independent statutory jurisdiction, and it would be wrong to do so.

Employment Trends (Effect on Mortgage)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate studies concerning the impact of the spread of employment by short-term contract instead of permanent contracts of employment, on the ability of persons and families to obtain mortgages for the purchase of homes. [37334]

Mr. Clappison: My Department has no current proposals for studies concerned specifically with the impact of labour market changes on the mortgage/housing market. However, employment trends figure prominently in many housing research areas and in our discussions with mortgage lenders.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Heritage Funds

2. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans she has to encourage the distribution of heritage funds to those areas which receive none at present. [35899]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I want to see the widest possible distribution of heritage funds, whether for grant in aid or the proceeds of the national lottery. Already the lottery has made possible a total of 1,405 grant awards the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, with a total value of over £543 million.

Sport in Schools

12. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what responses she has received about the Prime Minister's proposals for sport in schools. [35909]

Mr. Sproat: The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and I have received 23 letters from hon. Members and 252 from members of the public commenting on aspects of the policy statement "Sport: Raising the Game." Some 68,000 copies of the statement have now been distributed, many in direct response to requests from members of the public. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and we welcome any ideas that emanate as a result of publication of the statement.

Public Library Service

13. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations she has received on the public library service. [35910]

Mr. Sproat: We have received representations on both the Aslib report, which is a key element in the public library review, and the KPMG/Capital Planning Information report on the scope for contracting out in public libraries. My right hon. Friend plans to make a further statement to Parliament by the end of the year.

Television Coverage of Sport

14. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how she intends to ensure that the country's great sporting events are shown live on terrestial television. [35911]

Mr. Sproat: Sports rights holders should be free to dispose of their broadcasting rights in the way they choose. Rights owners should be allowed to judge the balance between the level of income from broadcasting rights, the size of the television audience, the amount and type of coverage and the impact on potential spectators and supporters.

Piers

15. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what priority is given by her Department to the maintenance and development of piers in seaside areas; and if she will make a statement. [35912]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Seaside resorts play a significant role in the tourism market—accounting for nearly 50 per cent. of domestic tourist spend on all holidays in this country—and piers are an important feature of the traditional seaside resort. My Department has listed some 29 piers in England, including Southend pier in my hon. Friend's constituency.

National Lottery

16. **Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will implement the recommendations of the Rowntree report on "The Impact of the National Lottery". [35913]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Rowntree report was one contribution to a lively debate. The Government are keeping all aspects of the national lottery under review.

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of sales of national lottery tickets is made in the north-west; and what percentage of the distributed proceeds to date has been made in the north-west. [35919]

Mrs. Bottomley: A report is placed in the Library of the House each month which includes a breakdown of awards made by region. Some 100 projects in the north-west region have so far been awarded almost £18 million. I shall ask the Director General of the National Lottery to write to you about the sale of national lottery tickets.

23. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals there are to change the competition arrangements and the good causes allocation of the national lottery. [35921]

Mrs. Bottomley: The lottery is making a tremendous contribution to the good causes agreed by Parliament. I have no plans to propose changes to these arrangements.

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will list all recipients of lottery funding over 50,000. [35923]

Mr. Sproat: A report on the distribution of national lottery proceeds is placed in the Library of the House each month which lists awards made. To date, 620 of 1,405 awards made have been for more than £50,000.

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when further details will be available regarding the financing of sport from national lottery funds. [35918]

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council will announce the next set of awards in the first week of November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will take steps to arrange that Camelot be required to give details of national lottery ticket sales at each outlet; and if she will make a statement. [36416]

Mr. Sproat: This is an operational matter for Camelot Group plc. I have therefore asked the Director General of the National Lottery, who is responsible for regulating the operation of the lottery, to write to my hon. Friend, placing copies of his response in the Library of the House.

17. **Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans she has to provide additional funding for public sports facilities. [35915]

Mr. Sproat: It is for local authorities and other suppliers of public sports facilities to determine their level of expenditure on sporting provision, in the light of their own priorities. The Department recognises the important role that both local authorities and the other suppliers of public sports facilities play in this area and the Sports Council will continue to work closely with them, as appropriate, in pursuing its objectives.

Royal Opera House

18. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about the future capital funding of the royal opera house. [35916]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The royal opera house is looking to a number of sources of funding for the new development project. These include major donations as well as the national lottery.

Film Industry

19. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures her Department is taking to attract film makers to make films in Britain. [35917]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My Department funds the British Film Commission, which actively markets to overseas producers, the United Kingdom's considerable wealth and diversity of locations, facilities and industry expertise.

28. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations she has received on the Government's review of the film industry. [35926]

Mrs. Bottomley: Since publication of the Government's policy paper on the British film industry in June, I have received seven representations from various members of the British film industry. On the whole these have given a very positive response to the paper, generally welcoming the various initiatives we announced.

Music Teaching

22. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations she has had from major orchestras concerning teaching of music to children [35920]

Mr. Sproat: I have had no such representations.

Media Ownership

26. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what she is doing to reduce the concentration of national media in the hands of a small number of owners. [35924]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's proposals for the future regulation of media ownership are set out in its policy document, Cm 2872, published in May 1995. These aim to preserve the diversity of the broadcast and press media, while introducing greater flexibility in ownership to reflect the needs and aspirations of the industry.

British Academy for Sports

27. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions she has held so far concerning the location of the new British Academy for Sports. [35925]

Mr. Sproat: None. The GB Sports Council is taking this initiative forward. The council is at present developing proposals for the possible structure and content of the British Academy of Sport and, following consultation this autumn, the sports councils across the UK will, by 31 March 1996, be open to consider bids to the national lottery to establish the academy.

Football Transfer Fees

29. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when she last met officials of the Football Association to discuss the issue of transfer fees. [35927]

Mr. Sproat: Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have regular meetings with all the football bodies to discuss various issues of significance to the sport.

Violence on Television

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps she is taking to curb violence on television. [35922]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Broadcasters in the UK are independent of Government but have clear responsibilities with regard to programme content. Both the BBC and ITC undertook to monitor violence on television as a result of meetings with my predecessor last year. I have now received the findings of the study, and I am pleased to note that the amount of television violence broadcast on the terrestrial channels in the UK is down. I will be meeting with the chairman of both the ITC and BBC to discuss how the findings of the study can be taken forward. However, it will remain the duty of the broadcasting regulatory bodies to continue to monitor the amount of violence broadcast on television.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsman about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in her Department. [36829]

Mr. Sproat: The parliamentary ombudsman has, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, jurisdiction to investigate complaints from members of the public about the way they have been treated by Government Departments, other public sector bodies engaged in the work of central Government, and those acting on their behalf. The ombudsman can investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by or on behalf of a Department or public body within his jurisdiction, that is those bodies which are listed in schedule 2 to the 1967 Act.

The Department itself has no capital projects so does not engage directly in the private finance initiative. However, its two agencies, the Royal Parks agency and the Historic Royal Palaces agency, have a substantial number of private finance initiative projects, for activities ranging form car park systems to restaurant refurbishment. Both agencies are under the jurisdiction of the parliamentary ombudsman and so members of the public are able to pursue complaints about the agencies'

services or projects funded by the private finance initiative through this avenue.

The Department is also contributing to the new Royal Armouries museum in Leeds, a private finance initiative scheme due to open in spring 1996. This is being financed in partnership with a private company, Royal Armouries (International) plc. The Royal Armouries does not come under the jurisdiction of the parliamentary ombudsman, so members of the public are unable to make complaints through this avenue. However, the Royal Armouries will have in place at the new museum a charter standard statement which will explain to members of the public how they can complain to the Master of the Armouries if they are dissatisfied with the museum related services they receive.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in her Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36361]

Mr. Sproat: Mileage allowance rates in the Department of National Heritage with effect from 1 October 1995 are as follows:

Car Standard Rate

	Up to 1500cc	*1501-2000cc*	*Over 2000cc*
Up to 4,000 miles	34p	43p	47p
Over 4,000 miles	19p	23p	31p
Public Transport Rate	23p	—	—
Passenger supplement	First passenger	2p per mile	—
	Others	1p per mile	—
	Equipment supplement	3p per mile	—

Motor Cycles

	Up to 125cc	*Over 125cc*
Up to 4,000 miles		
Third party insurance	14.6p	22.1p
Comprehensive insurance	16.2p	25.3p
Over 4,000 miles	6.1p	9.0p
Bicycles		
Mileage allowance	6p	—

Dr. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in her Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36362]

Mr. Sproat: My Department was created only in April 1992.

The available figures for standard rate motor mileage claims in my Department are as follows

1993–94: £82,273

1994–95: £75,210.28

For the period 13 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 the information is not available in the format requested.

The saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate—until 1 October 1995—of 35.7p per mile would be £1,985.36.

Eurotica Satellite Service

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will take steps to prescribe the TV Eurotica Satellite Service under the terms of section 177 of the Broadcasting Act 1990. [36444]

Mr. Sproat: I understand that my hon. Friend's question relates to TV Erotica. There is, however, a similarly named satellite service called Eurotica. The Independent Television Commission has not, under section 176 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, notified us that the satellite service Eurotica is unacceptable. The Secretary of State has however, been notified of the unacceptability of a similar service, TV Erotica, and the ITC has recently confirmed that that service has repeatedly been broadcasting unacceptable material. Discussions with the European Commission and Sweden, with the objective of reaching an amicable settlement, are in train, and we shall shortly be considering what further action to take.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many outsourcing contracts were granted by her Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting *(h)* Centre File, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Seimens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36960]

Mr. Sproat: My Department was established on 13 April 1992. IT service provision has been outsourced in line with the policy set out in the White Paper on "Competing for Quality". Sema Group won the contract through competitive tender. The value of the contract is of the order of £1 million per annum. Neither of my Department's two agencies has outsourced any contracts to the companies mentioned in the questioned.

Tourism

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department allocates for tourism promotion in each tourist board area. [36718]

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage sponsors the English tourist board which makes grants to the regional tourist boards in England for the operation of national programmes. The formula for funding RTBs is agreed between the ETB and the RTBs and is based on scale, need and performance. The regions can also apply for additional funding for specific projects from a tourism development fund.

In 1994–95 the total funding made available to the regional tourist boards, including their allocation from the TDF, was as follows:

	£
Cumbria	473,000
East Anglia	618,000
East Midlands	456,000
Heart of England	537,000
London	754,000
Northumbria	394,000
North West	558,000
South East England	522,000
Southern	1,106,000
West Country	615,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	490,000
Total	6,523,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Former Mental Hospital Patients

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the number of killings by discharged mental hospital patients with personality disorders; what assessment he has made of the scope of the current laws in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* Great Britain to prevent such killings; and what proposals he has for change. [36716]

Mr. Moss: I am aware of one such case in Northern Ireland, the circumstances of which are currently the subject of an independent review.

The operation of the powers of detention under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, and of the Mental Health Act 1983, is not significantly different in practice. Neither the Act nor the Order is intended to allow the detention in hospital of someone whose condition is not amenable to treatment. Under the Northern Ireland Order, personality disorder alone is not sufficient grounds for detention for treatment, but a person may be detained where he or she is also suffering from mental illness. In England and Wales, a patient with a psychopathic or personality disorder may only be detained under the 1983 Act where treatment is likely to alleviate or prevent a deterioration of his condition.

I have no proposals for change to the Northern Ireland mental health legislation, but the need for change is kept under regular review. In addition, the Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland has a statutory duty to monitor the operation of the order.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36828]

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland ombudsman has, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 and the Commissioner for Complaints Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, jurisdiction to investigate complaints from members of the public about the way they have been treated by Government Departments, other public sector bodies engaged in the work of central government, and those acting on their behalf. The ombudsman can investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by, or on behalf, of a Department or public body within his jurisdiction, that is those bodies which are listed in schedules 1 and 2 respectively, to the above Acts.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subsidies were paid out for environmentally sensitive areas in Northern Ireland in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94, *(c)* 1994–5 and *(d)* 1995–6; and how many individuals were recipients of these payments in these years. [37129]

Mr. Ancram: The expenditure on ESAs for the years 1992–93 to 1995–96 and the number of persons receiving payment is as follows:

Year	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*[1]
Expenditure (£'000s)	465	586	527	697
Claimants	1,062	1,059	1,050	526

[1] To 6 October 1995

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what area, in hectares and percentage terms, of environmentally sensitive areas in Northern Ireland is made up of productive, or potentially productive, agricultural land. [37128]

Mr. Ancram: The total land area of the five areas designated as environmentally sensitive areas in Northern Ireland is 247,000 hectares. Of this, 221,800 hectares—89 per cent.—is productive agricultural land.

Queen's University, Belfast

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the amount of financial support Her Majesty's Government distribute to Queen's university, Belfast and the amount of additional financial support Queen's university receives from the European Union. [37209]

Mr. Ancram: In the 1993–94 academic year, the latest year for which figures are available, the Queen's university of Belfast received financial support amounting to £55.8 million directly from central Government sources and additional support amounting to £6.4 million from the European Union.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy in respect of playing the national anthem at graduation ceremonies at Queen's university, Belfast. [37361]

Mr. Ancram: The Queen's university, as with all other universities in the United Kingdom, is an autonomous and independent body, and as such is responsible for its own internal affairs, practices and procedures. The playing of the national anthem at graduation ceremonies is not a matter of Government policy; it is entirely for the university authorities to determine.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many military service personnel have

received awards following injuries received in Northern Ireland from the Northern Ireland criminal injuries compensation scheme; how many cases have been reviewed after an award has been made; and how many awards were increased as a result of review. [37097]

Sir John Wheeler: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Denis Stanley. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. A. Stanley to Mr. Jeff Rooker, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply, on behalf of the Compensation Agency, to your recent Question regarding the number of military service personnel who have received compensation under the Northern Ireland criminal injury compensation scheme.

Compensation is paid under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which provides a right to compensation for injury or death caused by violent (including terrorist) offences in Northern Ireland. This scheme applies equally to civilians and members of the security forces.

The number of claims resulting in payment to military service personnel in each year since 1989–90 is set out in the table below. (Military service personnel has been taken to include members of the regular Army and both full-time and part-time members of the UDR/R Irish.)

Awards of Compensation to Military Service Personnel

Financial Year	*Number of awards*
1989–90	336
1990–91	375
1991–92	146
1992–93	382
1993–94	307
1994–95	295

Information about the number of awards prior to 1989–90 is not available.

It is not possible under the legislation to re-open cases or increase amounts once awards have formally been settled and the appeal period passed or where, in contested cases, awards are made by the Courts. Neither the Courts nor the Secretary of State can subsequently reinstate cases.

You may also wish to know that most applicants obtain the services of solicitors and will therefore have received legal advice before accepting offers of compensation in full and final settlement of their claims. Army Legal Services provide military personnel with advice at no cost to the individual and, in cases where outside solicitors are engaged, the Agency pays the reasonable costs and expenses incurred in making out and verifying successful claims, which normally includes the costs of such solicitors.

I trust this explains the position fully.

Proposed Legislation (Consultation)

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which external bodies, bodies and individuals have been consulted to date in the drafting process of *(a)* the proposed Race Relations Order and *(b)* the proposed Contracting Out and Deregulation Order (Northern Ireland) 1995. [37390]

Mr. Ancram: We have not yet reached the drafting process stage in relation to the proposed Race Relations Order and accordingly no formal consultation has taken place.

In advance of publication of the proposals for a Deregulation and Contracting Out (Northern Ireland) Order, an extensive number of bodies and individuals was consulted. On publication of the proposals, a number of additional bodies are individuals received copies. A full list of consultees has been placed in the Library.

Bangor-Belfast Road

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans are under consideration for the Bangor to Belfast road in relation to noise abatement, traffic calming and safety; and what measures are *(a)* already decided or *(b)* in progress. [37165]

Mr. Moss: Although there are no plans under consideration for this route in relation to noise abatement, a number of traffic management and road safety measure are proposed. These measures include, in particular, the introduction of new technology which will enable traffic signals along the route to be controlled remotely so that signal settings can be optimised to cater for varying traffic flows, and the provision of right turning lanes at the busiest junctions along the route. It is planned to start work on most of the proposals in the next financial year, subject to the availability of the necessary finance.

Public Works Loan Board

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the transfer of responsibilities for local authority lending from his Department to the Public Works Loan Board would *(a)* result in savings to public funds and *(b)* provide a more effective service. [37197]

Sir John Wheeler: Loans to local authorities in Northern Ireland are made from the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund by the Department of Finance and Personnel on similar terms to those which are extended to local authorities in Great Britain through the Public Works Loans Board. The administrative charges to local authorities in Northern Ireland are in most cases the same as those levied in Great Britain. In a minority of cases the Northern Ireland charges are less.

It is appropriate that the scheme continues to be administered locally along with other transferred matters.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people gave their nationality as *(a)* British and *(b)* Irish on the electoral registration form in 1994–95; and what other significant numbers and nationalities were otherwise specified. [37213]

Mr. Ancram: Information about nationality included on the 1994–95 electoral registration forms in Northern Ireland was not recorded centrally as there is no legal requirement to record statistics on nationality.

Information is available, however, on the nationality of those EU nationals who registered separately to vote in the 1994 European election. The nationalities were as follows:

	Number
Belgium	1
Denmark	7
France	54
Germany	51
Greece	1
Italy	5
Netherlands	38
Portugal	4
Spain	8
Total	169

Abandoned Vehicles

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review Northern Ireland planning legislation to ensure that the powers available to him regarding the unauthorised dumping of wrecked or abandoned vehicles are *(a)* as strong as those in Great Britain and *(b)* sufficient to protect the environment properly. [37248]

Mr. Moss: District councils in Northern Ireland have the power to remove or dispose of abandoned vehicles and to initiate proceedings under the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. This legislation is broadly similar to that obtaining in Great Britain. Planning legislation would not be an appropriate code to deal with abandoned vehicles.

Nursery Education

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration was given to extending he under-fives initiative to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [37315]

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *519–20.*

Civil Service Transfers

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy by mutual agreement specifically to permit transfers of staff between the Northern Ireland civil service and the home civil service on marriage. [37392]

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland civil service and the home civil service are separate civil services and there are no formal rights of transfer between them. It is the policy of both services, however, to seek to facilitate inter-service transfers on compassionate grounds, whenever possible, and the criteria for compassionate transfers include those who need to move to be with their spouse.

Joyriding

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many people have been charged with offences relating to *(a)* joyriding and *(b)* other traffic offences since 1 September 1994; [37040]

(2) how many people have been charged with offences relating to *(a)* joyriding and *(b)* other traffic offences in the nine months before 1 September 1994. [37041]

Sir John Wheeler: Figures for the number of persons charged are not available. The number of persons proceeded against at magistrates courts was as follows:

	1 Dec 1993–31 August 1994	*1 Sept 1994–31 May 1995*
Number proceeded against for unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle[1]	420	408
Number proceeded against for other motoring offences[2]	16,815	17,375

Notes:
[1] "Joyriding" is taken to be the offence of 'unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle'.
[2] 'Other traffic offences' is taken to mean summary motoring offences and to exclude indictable offences such as "reckless driving causing death/grievous bodily injury".

Police Staff

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many people are employed in the Police Authority of Northern Ireland departments in respect of *(a)* information technology, *(b)* buildings and *(c)* transport; and what is the cost of running these departments annually; [37059]

(2) how many people are employed in the Royal Ulster Constabulary departments in respect of *(a)* information technology, *(b)* buildings and *(c)* transport; and what is the cost of running these departments annually. [37058]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Police authority	*Number of staff*	*Staff costs (estimate 1995–96)* £
Information Technology[1]	68	1,931,500
Buildings	28	650,850
Transport	197	3,620,650
RUC		
Information Technology[1]	68	1,931,500
Buildings	11	443,040
Transport	102	3,154,840

[1] Information as to annual running costs of these departments, other than staff pay and related costs, is not available. The information technology department operates on a joint basis.

Farming and Forestry (Accidents)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many recorded accidents in the farming and forestry industry have occurred in each of the last three years; and how many have been fatal. [37135]

Mr. Ancram: During the calender years 1992, 1993 and 1994 there were 64, 64 and 70 accidents respectively reported to Department of Agriculture's health and safety inspectorate.

There were six fatalities in 1992, 10 in 1993 and 14 in 1994.

Interest Rates

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure that interest rates for local authority lending are issued in advance. [37199]

Sir John wheeler: Interest Rates are fixed on a weekly basis by the Treasury and are promulgated by the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Public Works Loans Board at the same time. They take effect from their time of issue. It is not possible to give advance notice of interest rate changes since these are subject to market volatility.

Fair Employment

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in which perceived religious category the fair employment monitoring process of the Northern Ireland civil service places those applicants or employees who have attended integrated secondary schools. [37391]

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland civil service relies on the primary school attended for the longest period of time, "The First Schools Method", as its principal method of making a determination of the perceived religious category of an applicant or employee. Where use of the "Schools List" fails to produce a determination of Protestant or Roman Catholic the service then relies on information specified under the "Residuary Method" in the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 to make a determination, insofar as this is possible. Under the "Schools List" maintained by the Fair Employment Commission for the purposes of the regulations, integrated schools, whether primary or secondary, are among the schools which are unclassified for religious monitoring purposes.

Small Loans

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Department of Finance and Personnel expects to introduce a rule similar to the PWLB circular 105 allowing a refinancing of small loans. [37198]

Sir John Wheeler: The Department of Finance and Personnel, having consulted with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, the approving authority for loans to local government in Northern Ireland, intends to apply the terms of PWLB circular 105 as they relate to refinancing of small loans, from 1 November.

Prevention of Terrorism Legislation

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 have been invoked in Northern Ireland. [37214]

Sir John Wheeler: Statistics on the operation in Northern Ireland in 1995 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 are available in the Library, but I am sending the hon. Member the information he seeks.

House Building

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will assess the special circumstances pertaining in the current year that have affected the cost of house building and construction in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the measures he intends now to take to deal with the cost and budgetary consequences within this financial year. [37389]

Mr. Moss: Tender prices for public sector housing contracts have shown a sharp increase in the past year and the reasons for this are being examined. The budgetary consequences will be considered in the context of in year monitoring of the amount allocated to the Northern Ireland public expenditure block.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals applied to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary in its most recent round of recruitment; and of these how many were *(a)* women and *(b)* Catholics. [37060]

Sir John Wheeler: The most recent recruitment competition was advertised in March/April of this year.

The total number of applicants was 2,058 of whom 811, or 40 per cent. of applicants, were female and 467, or 23 per cent. of applicants, were perceived to be from the Roman Catholic community.

Race Relations Legislation

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations underlay the decision to bring race relations law into operation in Northern Ireland by means of an Order in Council; what consideration was given to amending the existing Great Britain legislation to include Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [37212]

Mr. Ancram: The consultative document published in December 1992 considered a number of ways in which race relations legislation could be enacted in Northern Ireland. Having considered the responses, it was decided that the commitment to the early introduction of race legislation would be best achieved by way of a separate race relations Order in Council.

The extension of the Race Relations Act 1976 was not included as an option for legislation on the grounds that it would not be appropriate in the context of the particular circumstances and scale of race relations issues in Northern Ireland.

Country Parks

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce an environmental sensitivity forum to advise on the future arrangements for, and operation of, Crawfordsburn and Redburn country parks. [37156]

Mr. Moss: The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside advises my Department on the

management of country parks. I am not clear as to what the hon. Member has in mind regarding an environmental sensitivity forum and perhaps he would write to me with further details.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the current life sentence prisoners who have served more than 14 years in prison, indicating whether they are loyalist or republican prisoners. [37208]

Sir John Wheeler: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Prisons Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alan Shannon. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. D. Shannon to Rev. Ian Paisley, dated 16 October 1995:

Sir John Wheeler has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question in which you have asked for a list of life sentence prisoners who have served more than 14½ years in prison, including whether they are loyalists or republican prisoners.

The paramilitary affiliation of prisoners is recorded for prison management purposes, not for classification. In addition, it is not the policy of the Prison Service to disclose particulars pertaining to individual prisoners.

There are currently 25 life sentence prisoners who have served more than 14½ years in custody. They are broken down by perceived affiliation as follows:

Loyalist: 15

Republican: 7

Others: 3

Of these 11 (7 loyalist and 4 republican) are already in possession of provisional release dates. They are currently involved at various stages of the Pre-release Scheme.

Boundary Commission Reports

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take in respect of the fourth periodical and second supplementary reports of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. [37475]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today laid before Parliament the fourth periodical and second supplementary reports of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland together with a draft Order in Council for giving effect, without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the reports.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 October 1995

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Sir Sydney Chapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the Government's intentions for HMSO and the other agencies for which he is responsible. [37635]

Mr. Freeman: I have appointed Coopers and Lybrand to consider urgently the options for the future of HMSO, with a view to privatisation provided that satisfactory arrangements can be made for the future provision of services to Parliament. The future of HMSO has been uncertain for too long and I am anxious to set in place quickly arrangements which will secure the long-term interests of the taxpayer as well as HMSO's staff and customers, among whom Parliament is particularly important. I believe that these interests are most likely to be secured by privatisation of all but a very small part of HMSO. Consultation is under way with the House authorities about the safeguards necessary to ensure the future provision of the services which Parliament receives from HMSO. I shall be making an oral statement to the House as soon as these consultations are sufficiently advanced and we have received advice from our financial advisers and decided on the way forward.

The Government intend to sell Chessington Computer Centre as a single viable business in a way which will ensure that it retains its reputation for the provision of high quality services to Government Departments and the wider public sector. Freedom from the constraints of operating within Government will make Chessington better able to serve existing customers and to attract new customers in wider markets. I believe that this is the best way to secure the long-term interests of the taxpayer as well as those of the staff and customers of the business. I have appointed KPMG Corporate Finance to assist with the sale of Chessington. Formal expressions of interest for the business will be sought early in the new year.

I have also appointed Coopers and Lybrand to advise urgently on ways of increasing private sector involvement in the Occupational Health and Safety Agency, Recruitment and Assessment Services, the Central Office of Information and the Civil Service College. My aim is not only to secure savings for the taxpayer, but also to maintain the best interests of the agencies' customers and staff.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36966]

Mr. John Horam: The nature of current outsourcing contracts let by my Department and agencies since 1990 with the firms listed is set out in the table. Individual contract values, representing the total anticipated cost of the contracts, have been aggregated to preserve commercial confidentiality. The estimated total value of the contracts is £5,239,149. Further information is available only at disproportionate cost.

	Outsourcing contracts
(a) Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti	Management of project risk. Software services.
(b) AT & T Istel	Software, connection and training and line rental. Viewdata information service.
(d) Sema	Maintenance and support for hardware.
(i) BIS	Training call-off contract.
(k) ICL	Support for corporate strategy. Software services. Hardware maintenance (2 contracts).
(l) Digital	System maintenance.
(n)/(o) Siemens/Nixdorf	Call-off contracts for Personal Computers.
(q) Logica	Technical support to review Government Data Network (GDN) security policy. Government Telecommunications Network (GTN) Managed Network Services Agreement. Open Systems Environment (OSE) advice and profiles (3 contracts). Strategic Consultancy services. Consultancy support for performance monitoring. Technical support to assist Telecommunications staff. Central Support Staff audit of GDN billing system. Review of GDN security policy. IT System supply and support contracts.

Civil Service Pension Scheme

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) what plans he has to market test the civil service pension scheme; and if he will make a statement; [37296]

(2) what provision has been made for in-house bids from civil servants to administer the civil service pension scheme; and if he will make a statement. [37295]

Mr. Horam: An order will be laid, under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, in the next parliamentary Session to enable Departments to market

test administration of the civil service pension scheme. I intend to make a further statement on the matter at that stage.

ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable Development

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the Government are responding to the House of Lords Select Committee report on sustainable development, published on 18 July. [37942]

Mr. Clappison: The Government published their response to the Lords Select Committee report on sustainable development on 12 October. We did so in order that the House should have ample opportunity to consider it before the report is debated on 26 October. Copies of the response have been formally laid before the House and placed in the House Library.

Farming and Forestry (Accidents)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of recorded accidents in the farming and forestry industry in each of the last three years; and how many have been fatal. [37134]

Sir Paul Beresford: The table shows the total number of fatal and other accidents in the agriculture and horticulture and forestry sectors reported to all enforcing authorities between 1991–92 and 1993–94.

Year (1 April to 31 March)	*Fatal injuries*		*Non-Fatal major industries (c)*		*Over three-day injuries (d)*		*Total*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
1991–92	46	7	495	39	1,308	213	1,849	259
1992–93	45	6	525	49	1,361	164	1,931	219
1993–94	37	4	593	53	1,246	142	1,876	199

(a) Agriculture and horticulture sector. (b) Forestry.
(c) As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations—RIDDOR—but chiefly amputations, serious fractures and other injuries causing hospitalisation.
(d) An injury causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days and reportable for employed and self-employed persons only.

Liquid Effluent Treatment Plants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his departmental ruling on the applicability of the waste management licensing regulations as applied to liquid effluent treatment plants. [36776]

Mr. Clappison: On 1 May 1994, the Government brought into force a new waste management licensing system under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. On 25 July 1995, I announced that we had decided to extend from 31 July 1995 to 31 March 1996 the transitional arrangements made for the introduction of certain requirements of the new system. The Waste Management Licensing (Amendment No.2) Regulations 1995 give effect to this decision.

Whether or not the operation of a liquid effluent treatment plant needs a licence must be determined on the facts of the case. The effect of the 1995 regulations is that, where a licence is necessary, operators of treatment plant will have until 31 March 1996 to apply for a licence.

In the meantime, we are considering whether a case may be made for the exemption of some treatment plant from licensing. In doing so, it is necessary to have regard to the terms of article 11 of the amended EC framework directive on waste and the need to ensure that waste is treated without causing environmental pollution or harm to human health.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the local authority associations about the area cost adjustment; and if he will make a statement. [37941]

Mr. Curry: I met leading members of the local authority associations on 16 October. The local authority representatives whom I met are considering my proposals for an independent review of the adjustment. The aim would be to establish a method of carrying out the adjustment which commanded the widest degree of acceptance among authorities in all parts of the country, had a sound conceptual basis and was practical to apply.

I proposed that the review should be steered by a leading academic. It should also have someone knowledgeable about local government finance, nominated by the local authority associations, and someone familiar with central Government processes, nominated by the Secretary of State. Research would be commissioned to assist the review in its work. We would seek a report from the review in June 1996.

Leisure Activities

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government's response to the Environment Select Committee's report on "The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities" will be published. [37943]

Mr. Clappison: Our response is being published today, as a supplementary memorandum, to the Committee's report on "The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities".

We welcome the Committee's report, and we are pleased to note the general thrust of the Committee's findings. We share its view that there is no evidence that tourism and leisure pose a serious, immediate or intrinsic threat to the environment. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the need for effective management to take account of potential impacts. These impacts are most likely to be felt and be best resolved at the local level, taking account both of the diversity of the countryside and the knowledge and experience of local communities.

We strongly agree with the Committee that the economic benefits which tourism and leisure can bring to rural areas should be more widely recognised. We also welcome the Committee's endorsement of the principles of "green tourism" and their contribution towards securing a sustainable tourism industry.

We have addressed many of these issues in the context of the rural White Paper, which acknowledges the distinctive nature of the countryside, its value to the nation, and the importance of vibrant local communities.

Ministerial Transport

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the security implications of using hire car companies to transport Government Ministers rather than directly employed drivers. [37149]

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* Ministers, in the main, are provided with cars and drivers through the Government car service. All GCS drivers are security cleared to an appropriate level.

During busy periods, the Government car service will sometimes use private companies under contract. In all cases, drivers have the necessary security clearances. Very occasionally, to meet unusual requirement, a private company may be employed which is used so infrequently that security clearances are not justified. In such cases, the involvement of a Minister is not advertised to the company in advance. No substantive security implication therefore arises.

Renewal Areas

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *471*, if he will make a progress statement on the research work being undertaken in renewal areas by Austin Mayhead and Co. Ltd. for his Department. [37477]

Mr. Clappison: The research has now been completed and a draft final report is due to be delivered to the Department by Austin Mayhead on 31 October.

Nuclear Waste Repository, Cumbria

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the provision of daily transcripts to be made available to *(a)* participants and *(b)* outside interested parties of the proceedings of the public inquiry into the application by UK Nirex to construct a rock characteristics laboratory in connection with its nuclear waste repository development programme which began in September in Cumbria. [36753]

Mr. Clappison: The arrangements for the public inquiry into the appeal by UK Nirex Ltd. are matters for the Planning Inspectorate agency and Cumbria county council. I have asked the agency's chief executive to write separately to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Greenfield to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked the Inspectorate's Chief Executive to answer your question about arrangements for providing transcripts of the inquiry, currently being held, into the application by UK Nirex Ltd for a rock characterisation facility at Sellafield. I am replying in the absence of Mr Shepley.

There is no requirement in the Inquiry Procedure Rules for daily transcripts to be made available, either to participants or to interested parties. The only formal record of the proceedings is the Inspector's report to the Secretary of State which will be issued to the main parties with the decision letter.

However, I understand that one of the interested parties, the National Anti-Dump Network (NAND) is making daily transcripts. Cumbria County Council has agreed to produce photocopies of these and a limited number are periodically being made available at the inquiry venue. I should stress that this is a purely voluntary arrangement, and that the transcripts will not form part of the formal inquiry documentation to be included in the Inspector's report.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make an assessment of the operation of the system by which European regional development funds are filtered through to local authorities and other organisations; and what currently available tables he has for take-up of European development funds by the United Kingdom, in percentages, in relation to other member states. [37279]

Mr. Oppenheim: Grants are decided and offered by Government Departments after a procedure, agreed by a monitoring committee for the area concerned, which includes scoring applications against project selection criteria and consultation with members of the committee, for example in working groups.

The projects selection criteria have only recently been introduced. I will make an assessment in due course.

The European Commission's most recent annual report on the implementation of the reform of the structural funds includes tables for commitments and payments for the period 1989–1993. These show that the UK committed all allocations from the European regional development fund. Payments to the UK made by the end of 1993 were 86.8 per cent., 68.1 per cent. and 76.3 per cent. of these commitments for objectives 1, 2 and 5(b) respectively. Payments for the Community as a whole were 86.2 per cent., 71.3 per cent. and 77.0 per cent. Payments can continue until the end of 1995.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of total regional development grants in the last five years have been allocated to each English and Welsh county and to Scotland. [35725]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested, based on offers of regional selective assistance accepted between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1995, is as follows:

	Per cent.
England	
Cambridgeshire	0.10
Cheshire	1.09
Cleveland	2.16
Cornwall	1.50
Cumbria	0.86

	Per cent.
Derbyshire	0.09
Devon	1.05
Dorset	0.09
Durham	2.06
East Sussex	0.01
Essex	0.07
Gloucestershire	0.08
Greater London	0.14
Greater Manchester	3.50
Hereford and Worcester	0.45
Humberside	3.35
Isle of Wight	0.05
Kent	0.19
Lancashire	1.14
Leicestershire	0.06
Lincolnshire	0.12
Merseyside	4.04
Norfolk	0.04
North Yorkshire	0.01
Northamptonshire	0.25
Northumberland	1.25
Nottinghamshire	0.36
Shropshire	0.45
South Yorkshire	2.26
Staffordshire	0.19
Suffolk	0.01
Tyne and Wear	3.83
Warwickshire	0.54
West Midlands	4.68
West Yorkshire	0.73
Wales	
Clwyd	5.84
Dyfed	0.81
Gwent	5.81
Gwynedd	1.11
Mid Glamorgan	8.53
Powys	0.13
South Glamorgan	0.95
West Glamorgan	2.14
Scotland	37.90

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total regional development grant per head allocated to each English and Welsh county and Scotland in the last five years; and what was the English average. [36724]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested, based on offers of regional selective assistance accepted between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1995, is as follows:

	Grant per head £
England	
Cambridgeshire	2.11
Cheshire	16.04
Cleveland	55.05
Cornwall	45.05
Cumbria	24.91
Derbyshire	1.32
Devon	14.29
Dorset	1.94
Durham	48.36
East Sussex	0.28
Essex	0.60
Gloucestershire	2.21
Greater London	0.30
Greater Manchester	19.43
Hereford and Worcester	9.22
Humberside	54.19
Isle of Wight	5.22
Kent	1.78
Lancashire	11.48
Leicestershire	0.93
Lincolnshire	2.89
Merseyside	39.88
Norfolk	0.74
North Yorkshire	0.21
Northamptonshire	6.06
Northumberland	58.08
Nottinghamshire	4.96
Shropshire	15.39
South Yorkshire	24.67
Staffordshire	2.64
Suffolk	0.14
Tyne and Wear	48.12
Warwickshire	15.80
West Midlands	25.37
West Yorkshire	4.97
Average Grant Per Head[1]	10.85
Wales	
Clwyd	200.96
Dyfed	32.86
Gwent	184.45
Gwynedd	65.88
Mid Glamorgan	224.15
Powys	15.07
South Glamorgan	33.18
West Glamorgan	82.20
Scotland	105.78

[1]Based on total population for England.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the United Kingdom assisted area population resides in Devon and Cornwall. [36723]

Mr. Oppenheim: The percentage of the UK assisted area population resident in Devon and Cornwall is 5.03 per cent.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report of Lord Justice Scott on the inquiry into arms sales to Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [37110]

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* I understand from Sir Richard Scott that he has virtually finished the section of his report dealing with prosecutions arising from exports to Iraq in the period 1984 to 1990. He is currently completing the writing of his recommendations chapter.

I understand that the inquiry is engaged in seeking comments on criticisms of individuals made by Sir Richard Scott in the prosecutions section of the report. When Sir Richard has received those comments, he will consider them and, as appropriate, revise the report.

It is impossible to predict with certainty how soon the report will be completed. This depends on a number of factors, including the extent and promptness of the responses to the draft extracts which have been, and continue to be, sent to people.

Subject to that, I am informed that the inquiry's own present expectation is that the final text will be completed in early December. The report will then be printed and published as soon as practicable thereafter.

Newspaper Carriage Charges

Mr. Sykes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions are taking place between the Director General of Fair Trading, the newspaper wholesalers and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents in relation to newspaper carriage charges. [36953]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: There have been no such discussions involving the Office of Fair Trading since the Director General of Fair Trading announced his decision on 21 August not to refer the wholesale distribution of newspaper to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

PRIME MINISTER

Priorities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what are his priorities for the remaining period of his premiership. [36028]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the speech that I made on 13 October, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36996]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* For this purpose my office is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service on 16 October 1995.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *735*, if he will now make it his practice to release historic details of nuclear weapons numbers in the United Kingdom arsenal. [36840]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Information on the size of our nuclear forces since the 1970s was published in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995, Cm 2800, pages 38–39. We have no current plans to release further details of our nuclear weapons numbers.

Rosyth Naval Base

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the sale of Rosyth naval base; and if he will make a statement. [37738]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have now received the results of the recent tender exercise for the sale of the naval base. After careful analysis, and the submission of revised bids following further discussions with all the complaint bidders, the tender submitted by the Rosyth 2000 consortium was judged to be the best offer in terms of producing convincing business plans for the regeneration of the area and representing a fair return to the taxpayer for the sale of the base. The consortium has been selected as our preferred tenderer and our negotiations with the company will now continue to ensure a smooth transition of the naval base to civilian use by the end of March 1996. I am confident that Rosyth 2000 has the expertise and financial resources to sustain the regeneration of the area that we all wish to see.

Military Survey Defence Agency

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key performance targets have been set for the Military Survey defence agency for 1995–96. [37877]

Mr. Soames: The Military Survey defence agency key targets for 1995–96 are:

(1) To complete the endorsed in-year production programme, recognising that this may be impacted upon by unforeseeable, higher priority operational and emergency requirements.

(2) To implement by 31 March 1996 those three-year review study recommendations applicable to the agency, to include the development of customer agreement procedures.

(3) To implement by 31 March 1996 the military survey fundamental review redesign report, stage 1, part 2.

(4) To implement by 1 April 1998 a capability to support a specified geographic requirement package; initially to have costed the geographic implications for the Department by 31 March 1996.

(5) To improve the work unit cost of the production programme by 31 March 1996 by 3 per cent., in accruals terms, from an agreed 1 April 1995 baseline.

These key targets take forward much of the work of previous targets and prominence is given to the agency's core outputs. They also drive the management reforms possible because of agency status. More detail on these reforms, including those applicable to the agency and fundamental reviews, are contained in the agency's 1994 annual report, copies of which will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

SCOTLAND

Roads

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the proposed capital allocation for roads in the

Angus unitary authority for the years 1996–97, 1997–98 and 1998–99. [36456]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Capital allocations for roads and transport for the new unitary authorities in Scotland, including Angus, have still to be determined for these years.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the capital allocation for roads in Tayside region in each year since 1983, at 1994 prices. [36405]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The annual roads and transport capital allocations for Tayside regional council since 1982-83 at 1994 prices are set out in the table.

£ million

Year	*Allocation*	*1994–95 prices*
1982–83	6.50	11.68
1983–84	6.97	11.97
1984–85	8.20	13.41
1985–86	8.00	12.40
1986–87	8.25	12.42
1987–88	8.20	11.72
1988–89	7.50	10.04
1989–90	8.40	10.51
1990–91	8.50	9.85
1991–92	9.50	10.36
1992–93	9.10	9.54
1993–94	9.00	9.16
1994–95	8.85	8.85
1995–96	8.20	7.96

Some capital allocations prior to 1995–96 include in year supplementary allocations.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Transfer of Land Report

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he plans to implement recommendations in the Law Commission's report on Transfer of Land—Obsolete Restrictive Covenants, Law Com. No. 201. [37634]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Due to concerns about the potential costs to the public of using the scheme recommended by the Law Commission, and following careful consideration of representations from the public in this regard, it is not the Government's intention to implement the commission's recommendations. However, the matter will be kept under review following implementation of the commission's recommendations in Law Com. No. 127 for a scheme of land obligations.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Upper Waiting Hall (Exhibitions)

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the Henley management college to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 13 November to Friday 17 November 1995.

WALES

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs were created or safeguarded as a result of regional selective assistance granted to companies in Ynys Môn in each year since 1990. [36654]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Regional selective assistance offers accepted between 1 July 1990 and 30 September 1995 where some payments have been made are forecast to create or safeguard 521 jobs. To date, 343 jobs have been accounted for.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Detention Centres (Emotional Disturbances)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish his assessment of the significance of emotional disturbance among young people as a factor associated with inmates of detention centres, indicating his estimate of the proportion of the cost accounted for by such young people; and if he will make a statement. [36631]

Miss Widdecombe: Detention centres and youth custody centres were replaced by young offender institutions in 1988.

Two studies have been commissioned by the Home Office into the mental health of sentenced and unsentenced prisoners. Both include findings on young males in prison, although data on young females were not collated separately from data on adult females. The report of the first study was published in May 1991 under the title "Mentally Disordered Prisoners". The report of the second study, "Mental Disorder in Remand Prisoners" was received by the Home Office in late September 1995.

The 1990 study showed that 33 per cent. of sentenced young male offenders in the sample group were diagnosed as suffering from some form of psychiatric disorder, including harmful or dependant misuse of substances. The corresponding figure for unsentenced young male offenders in the 1995 study was 53 per cent. of the sample group.

No figures are available on the cost of maintaining inmates with emotional or mental health problems, as opposed to those without such problems.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the reduction in fire deaths attributable to the installation of smoke alarms. [37133]

Mr. Howard: None. However, United Kingdom fire statistics for 1993 reveal death rates for fires in dwellings which are discovered by smoke alarms are lower than those which are not discovered by smoke alarms; three deaths per 1,000 fires compared with nine deaths per 1,000 fires.

Prisons Ombudsman

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he authorised the office of the prisons ombudsman to refuse to investigate complaints which are received in a prisoner's own handwriting. [37195]

Miss Widdecombe: Complaints to the prisons ombudsman are never rejected because they are hand-written. The vast majority of complaints received by the prisons ombudsman are in the prisoner's own writing and are carefully considered to see whether they are eligible for investigation within the terms of the ombudsman's remit. It is, of course, helpful to the ombudsman's office if handwritten letters are legible. The ombudsman also accepts complaints from prisoners written in foreign languages. The detailed procedures are set out in the document, "The Prisons Ombudsman: A Note on Arrangements" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Operation Bumblebee

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the trends in domestic burglaries in London since the inception of Operation Bumblebee. [37170]

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that prior to the launch of Operation Bumblebee in June 1993, the number of domestic burglaries recorded for the financial year 1992–93 was 127,611. A total of 15,136—11.8 per cent.—of these offences were cleared up. By 31 March 1995 the number of recorded burglaries had fallen to 106,558, while the number of crimes cleared up had risen to 20,666—19.4 per cent.

Remand Custody

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 15 *(b)* 16 and *(c)* 17-year-old-boys were remanded into custody during (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992. [37186]

Miss Widdecombe: The available information on the number of 15 to 17-year-old boys received on remand into prison service establishments in England and Wales is given in the tables. The age split requested is not available for 1990–1991. This information is also published in successive volumes of "Prison statistics, England and Wales"—table 3.9 of the 1992 edition (Cm 2581) and table 2.6 for earlier years. Copies of these publications are available from the Library.

Table 1: Receptions of male remand prisoners, aged 14–20 into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales 1990–1992

Year	Age 14–16	17–20	Total aged under 21
1990[1]	1,240	18,517	19,575
1991[1]	1,164	19,077	20,241

[1] Only age split available.

Table 2

Year	Age 15	16	17	Total aged under 18
1992	377	720	3,755	4,852

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people aged *(a)* 12 to 14 and *(b)* 15 to 16 years were held in custody on remand in (i) local authority accommodation, (ii) prison services accommodation and (iii) any other venue in 1994 and in each of the previous five years. [36261]

Miss Widdecombe: The available information on the number of young persons remanded to local authority accommodation in England is published by the Department of Health in "Children accommodated in secure units"—reference A/F 94/21, table 10. This information is presented on a financial year basis with the last report covering the year ending 31 March 1994. The available information on the number of 14 to 16-years-olds received on remand into prison service establishments in England and Wales is given in the table. No age split is available for 1989–1991.

This information is published in "Prison statistics, England and Wales", table 3.9 of 1992 and 1993 editions, Cms 2581 and 2893, copies of which are available in the library. No information is available for young persons held in any other venue.

Receptions of 14, 15 and 16 year old remand prisoners into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales 1989–1994

Year	Age [3]14	15	16	Total
1989[1]	—	—	—	1,476
1990[1]	—	—	—	1,243
1991[1]	—	—	—	1,168
1992	4	377	721	1,102
1993	0	454	907	1,361
1994[2]	0	634	1,103	1,737

[1] No age split available.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Following implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 in October 1992, 14 year old boys may not be remanded to Prison Service establishments.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of farms of the size *(a)* 1 to 25 hectares, *(b)* 26 to 50 hectares, *(c)* 51 to 75 hectares, *(d)* 76 to 100 hectares, *(e)* 101 to 150 hectares, *(f)* 151 to 200 hectares and *(g)* 201 or more hectares for (i) the last available year and (ii) 1985. [36430]

Mr. Boswell: Statistics for England from the June agricultural census for the years 1985 and 1994 are shown in the table:

Holding size (hectares)	1985	1994
0.1 to 0.9	4,405	4,001
1.0 to 25.9	68,839	72,352
26.0 to 50.9	28,188	25,980
51.0 to 75.9	16,233	15,169

Holding size (hectares)	1985	1994
76.0 to 100.9	10,358	10,095
101.0 to 150.9	10,992	10,969
151.0 to 200.9	5,553	5,503
201 and over	9.198	9,357
Total holdings	153.766	153,426

1. The above figures exclude minor holdings.

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* ITN Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting, *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36959]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* Since 1990, no outsourcing contracts have been granted by the Department or its agencies to any of the companies listed. Consequently, there has been no additional work.

Fish (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the dangers to cod, haddock and plaice stocks in the North sea of the pollutions of hydrocarbons in drilling wastes discharging from rigs [37292]

Mr. Baldry There have been a number of recent studies which examined the levels of hydrocarbons and taint in fish. These show some evidence that oil residues are present but no evidence of taint. There are no dangers to cod, haddock or plaice stocks in the North sea arising from drilling wastes.

HEALTH

Cancer

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the mortality rates from *(a)* cervical, *(b)* breast, *(c)* lung and *(d)* bowel cancer in (i) England and (ii) other OECD countries. [36618]

Mr. Sackville: This information is shown in the table.

Provisional mortality rates for England 1993

Description	ICD9[1] code	Crude death rate (per 100,000)
Malignant neoplasm of the bowel	152,153,154	31.3
Malignant neoplasm of the lung	162	62.9
Malignant neoplasm of the female breast	174	49.3
Malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri	180	5.6

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

The latest available data for other Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development countries can be found in the "World Health Statistics Annual 1993", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the mortality rates from all cancers in *(a)* England and *(b)* other OECD countries. [36617]

Mr. Sackville: This information is shown in the table.

Provisional mortality rates for England 1993

Description	ICD9[1] code	Crude death rate (per 100,000)
Malignant neoplasms	140–208	270.7

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

The latest available data for other Organisations of Economic Co-operation and Development Countries can be found in the "World Health Statistics Annual 1993", copies of which are available in the Library.

Junior Doctors (Accommodation Changes)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department gives to trusts in relation to charging junior doctors for hospital accommodation when they are required by their contract to be resident on call. [37220]

Mr. Malone: The terms and conditions of service for hospital medical and dental staff (England and Wales) handbook includes the provisions for charges for residence for junior doctors whether they are compulsory resident practitioners or voluntary resident practitioners. From 1 April 1995 the ceiling on lodging charges for voluntary resident practitioners was removed. AL(MD)4/95, which announced this change, was issued on 12 June 1995 and contains guidance for employing bodies on the provision of accommodation for hospital medical and dental staff, including compulsorily resident practitioners.

Copies of both documents are available in the Library.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36370]

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's assessment of the potential value of a national awareness week focusing on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and similar conditions; and if he will make a statement. [36648]

Mr. Bowis: I am advised that it is unlikely that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder would benefit from presentation in this way.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each of the last three years *(a)* the total amount estimated to have been spent on mental health treatment and *(b)* the total amount estimated to have been spent in treating children diagnosed as suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, indicating in each case the percentage of each item as a proportion of the total health budget; and if he will make a statement. [36651]

Mr. Bowis: The available information on the amount spent on mental health treatment is shown in the table.

Information on the amount spent on treating children diagnosed as suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is not available centrally.

	Mental illness expenditure cash prices £ million	*Mental illness expenditure 1993–94 prices £ million*	*Mental illness as a proportion of total hospital and community health services expenditure Percentage*
1991–92	2,185.3	2,341.8	11.58
1992–93	2,350.3	2,422.2	11.56

1. Final figures for 1993–94 are not yet available.
2. The gross domestic product deflator was used to calculate the 1993–94 prices.
3. The mental illness expenditure is made up of the following:
   (a) in-patient and outpatient expenditure—the consultant specialities of mental illness, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, physiotherapy and old age psychiatry.
   (b) day patient expenditure—in the categories, mental illness (alcoholism, drug abuse, psychogeriatrics and general), child and adolescent psychiatry and forensic psychiatry.
4. Expenditure figures for 1991–92 onwards are not comparable with earlier years due to changes in national health service accountancy practices.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidelines to assist head teachers and social workers in providing for the medical problems of hyperactive children; and if he will make a statement. [36652]

Mr. Bowis: Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder who are regarded as having special educational needs should be assessed on an individual basis by a team of appropriately trained professionals, as provided for in the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs issued last year by the Department for Education and Employment and the Welsh Office.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his assessment of the linkage between long-term addictive tendencies and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and if he will make a statement. [36656]

Mr. Bowis: Some research suggests that children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder may have an increased risk of developing further problems later in childhood and in adolescence, including substance abuse. The nature of any such linkage is, however, not yet clear.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department provides for adoptive parents who discover that their adopted child is affected by attention deficit disorder or similar condition; and if he will make a statement. [36657]

Mr. Bowis: Advice for parents, whether adoptive or otherwise, is a matter for professional consideration in each individual case.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of conventional family therapy in the case of families in which one or more children are affected by attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. [36658]

Mr. Bowis: Family therapy may play a part in a comprehensive treatment programme which may also include medication and other interventions. With young children and in milder forms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, family therapy may be an appropriate and effective approach on its own—for example, if focused on enhancing parenting skills and helping the child learn strategies to improve concentration.

Breast Cancer (Radiotherapy Damage)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of women whose treatment by radiotherapy after breast cancer has led to major permanent injuries; what plans he has to pay compensation in these cases; and what compensation has been paid in each of the last five years. [37224]

Mr. Sackville: No estimate has been made but the Department of Health is working with Rage Breast, a patient support group representing women who have had radiotherapy for breast cancer which has led to major permanent injuries. There are no plans to pay compensation in these cases, nor has any compensation been paid in the last five years. We sympathise fully with those suffering as a result of any medical side effect; however, we consider that compensation by the national health service is appropriate only when there is evidence of medical negligence. The Government's position remains that the basis for seeking compensation should be by proof of negligence through the courts.

"Pocket Guide to the NHS in London"

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the "Pocket Guide to the NHS in London" cost to write, publish and distribute; how many copies have been produced; and to whom and to which organisations it has been distributed. [37424]

Mr. Sackville: A total of 15,000 copies of the "Pocket Guide to the NHS in London" have been produced at a total cost of £26,000. The guide has been distributed to a wide range of organisations and individuals in London including health authorities and trusts, hon. and right hon. Members, community health councils, general practices, local authorities and the media. The response to the guide has been overwhelmingly favourable with many requests for additional copies.

Health Care from Non-NHS Providers

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on purchasing care from non-NHS providers by fundholders, trusts, heath authorities and in total in each year since 1990. [37425]

Mr. Sackville: The table details expenditure on purchasing care for 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 for general practitioner fundholders, national health services trusts, health authorities and in total. Figures for 1990–91 are not available.

Purchase of health care from non-NHS providers (England) 1991–92 to 1993–94

£ thousands

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*19943–94*
GP fundholders	3,698	13,127	29,899
NHS trusts	12,204	45,436	50,386
Health authorities	194,471	210,558	277,716
Total	210,373	269,121	358,001

Source:
1. Annual accounts of family health services authorities; regional, districts and special health authorities for the London postgraduate hospitals, 1992–93 and 1993–94.
2. Annual financial returns of NHS trusts, regional, district and special health authorities for the London postgraduates hospitals 1991–92.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government intend to respond to the second report of the Health Select Committee on London's Ambulance Service, HC 20; and if he will make a statement. [37633]

Mr. Sackville: Copies of the Government's response to the Health Committee's report on London's Ambulance Service have been laid before the House today.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Agency Targets

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what targets she has set for the executive agencies in her Department. [37739]

Mr. Sproat: The following targets have been set for 1995–96:

For the Historic Royal Parks agency

Financial Targets:

Commercial Surplus—£7.4 million
Call on the taxpayer: £6.7 million

Visitor Satisfaction Measures[1]
Visitors' average ratings of:
Value for Money—0.7 to 1.0
Enjoyment—above 1.4
Helpful and friendly staff—above 1.4

Efficiency Target:

Savings on running costs—2 per cent.

Conservation Target:

To complete the fire prevention works planned for 1995–96 and the programme of works identified by the buildings condition surveys as needed in 1995–96. To undertake further detailed inspections of the specific areas identified by the surveys as possibly needing work in 1996–97.

[1]Visitor ratings are assessed from market research interviews with 900 visitors, undertaken by independent consultants each summer. 2.0 is extremely good; 1.5 is very good; 1.0 is quite good; 0 is OK; –1.0 is quite poor; –2.0 is very poor.

For the Royal Parks agency

Fabric:

(i) Examine the scope for private sector finance to fund the necessary works required to remove the three remaining buildings on the "at risk" register.

(ii) Carry out all the outstanding maintenance identified as necessary to meet health and safety obligations.

(iii) Redraft tender documents for three remaining grounds maintenance contracts which expire in March 1996, invite competitive tenders and award new contracts.

(iv) Achieve an average rating of at least 75 per cent. across all parks in response to the visitor survey question: "how do you rate the cleanliness of this park?"

(v) Redraft tender documents for the works management contract.

Financial:

(i) Increase income from £1.8 million in 1994–95 to £2.3 million from permits, licences, events, concessions and car parking.

(ii) Achieve 1.5 per cent. improvement in running costs efficiency.

(iii) Complete development of an agency pay and grading system in order that a new system can be introduced by 1 April 1996.

Visitor Survey:

Achieve an overall quality rating of 8 marks out of 10 in response to visitor survey question "Overall, how would you rate the quality of the park?"

Assessment of soft landscape quality:

Each park to achieve an overall score of 7 marks out of 10 for its soft landscape presentation.

National Lottery

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total income received to date *(a)* in tax revenue, *(b)* in money for distribution to good causes since the start of the national lottery and *(c)* in interest received on money prior to expenditure being incurred by the distribution boards. [37487]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* For the period 22 November 1994 to 30 September 1995, £410.7 million has been paid in duty levied on the national lottery. For the same period, £1,093 million has been paid to the national lottery distribution fund for distribution to good causes and £30.7 million of interest has accrued to the fund as a whole.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether the interest on the lottery income earmarked for distribution by the National Lottery Charities Board is being added, automatically and in full, to the money available for future distribution by that board; how the money is being held; and under what rules it is to be released to the board. [37484]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* Pending draw down by the distributing bodies, proceeds available from the national lottery are held in the national lottery distribution fund. Funds are invested and balances calculated for each distributing body. The NLDF investment account is revalued before each transaction, either receipt or draw down of funds—for payment of grants or expenses—and interest is apportioned in full to each body. Funds are normally drawn on a monthly basis, in accordance with procedures agreed between the Department of National Heritage, the National Debt Commissioners and the distributing bodies.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will show *(a)* the income earmarked for distribution by the National Lottery Charities Board from the income in each month since money started to flow from the national lottery, *(b)* the cumulative total held in respect of the NLCB at an appropriate point in each month, *(c)* how much of that total is held respectively (i) by the Treasury, (ii) by his Department or (iii) in any other fund and *(d)* the rate of interest and the total cash figure earned each month from the sums held. [37483]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The National Lottery Charities Board is allocated one fifth of the money generated by the national lottery for the national lottery distribution fund. Since 22 November 1994, £217.4 million has accrued to the charities board, which is an average of £20.7 million per month. All money paid into the fund, not immediately required for distribution, is paid over to the National Debt Commissioners and invested by them in accordance with Treasury directions. Interest is accrued on the fund as a whole and apportioned to each distributor. To date, £30.7 million of interest has accrued to the fund as a whole, of which £6.3 million is attributable to the charities board.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will show *(a)* the income received in taxation in respect of each month since such income started to flow from the national lottery, *(b)* the total income from distribution to good causes received in respect of each month since such income started to flow, *(c)* the proportion and sum earmarked for distribution by the National Lottery Charities Board from each month's income, *(d)* the sums actually disbursed by the Treasury each month, indicating the amounts within the total passed to the Home Office and direct to the National Lottery Charities Board, *(e)* the amount of interest earned each month on the sums held by the Treasury for future distribution by the National Lottery Charities Board and *(f)* the cumulative monthly total including interest held by the Treasury for each month since the income commenced. [37486]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The national lottery distribution fund is maintained under the control of the Secretary of State for National Heritage. All money paid into the fund not immediately required for distribution, is paid over to the National Debt Commissioners and invested by them in accordance with Treasury directions.

For the period 22 November 1994 to 30 September 1995, £410.7 million has been paid in duty levied on the national lottery, which is an average of £41 million per month.

For the same period, £1,093 million, has been paid to the national lottery distribution fund for distribution to good causes. This is an average of £104 million per month. One fifth of all money paid into the fund is allocated to the National Lottery Charities Board. To date, this equates to £217.4 million, which is accrued at an average of £20.7 million per month.

To date, £65.3 million has been paid to distributors, an average of £6.5 million per month. Of the total, £6.6 million has been paid to the National Lottery Charities Board.

Interest accrued on the charities board share of the national lottery distribution fund, since the start of the lottery, totals £6.3 million. This is an average of £0.6 million per month.

The total value of the fund to date stands at £1,052 million, which represents average monthly income of £100.2 million.

In-House Bids

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those parts of his Department or departmental agencies which were privatised without an in-house bid; if he will indicate the expertise which was absent in his Department or departmental agencies which prevented an in-house bid taking place; which future parts of his Department or departmental agencies he intends to privatise; and which of them do not have the necessary in-house expertise to mount an in-house bid. [29432]

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to the reply, 20 June 1995, c. 177–82]:* I regret that there was an omission from the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State. Following is the complete answer that should have been provided.

Since it was formed in April 1992, my Department and its agencies have contracted out the activities listed. As a newly formed Department, central services had been supplied by former parent Departments and thus there were no existing staff to mount an in-house bid. In order to concentrate on its core policy tasks it was decided to contract out these activities. Activities contracted out in the past and planned for the future, are as follows:

Let by	*Activity*	*Name of successful bid*	*Won by in-house bid*
1992–93			
DNH	Computer equipment and related services	SEMA Group Ltd.	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House Security	Royal British Legion Attendants Company	No in-house bid
1993–94			
DNH	Consultancy for advice on competitive tendering of works management functions	Watts and Partners	No in-house bid
DNH	Reprographics	Williams Lea FM	No in-house bid
DNH	Central typing and secretarial	Manpower plc	No in-house bid
DNH	Mailroom	Security Despatch Group	No in-house bid
DNH	Security	Royal British Legion Association	No in-house bid

Let by	Activity	Name of successful bid	Won by in-house bid
DNH	Minor maintenance	Richard Devine	No in-house bid
DNH	Cleaning	Ramoneur	No in-house bid
DNH	Reception	Manpower plc	No in-house bid
DNH	Payments and Accounts Services	Accounts Services Agency	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Property maintenance management	Tarmac Facilities Management	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kew Palace—Security Services	Royal British Legion	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Hampton Court Palace—Gardens Litter Clearance	SITA	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Hampton Court Palace	Initial Cleaning Services	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Catering	De blanks	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cleaning	Swanlux	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cash Collection	Armaguard/Security Express	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House—Cleaning Services	Sloane Cleaning	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House—Security	Royal British Legion	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House—Porterage	Universal	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House—Catering	10 companies used—selected by tender	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Banqueting House—Floristry	Nancy Ford	No in-house bid
1994–95			
DNH	Provision of works management services for certain properties in central London	E. C. Harris	No in-house bid
DNH	Provision of works management services for central ceremonial activities	Unicorn Consultancy Ltd.	No in-house bid
DNH	Provision of works services management at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich	Taylor Woodrow Facilities ManagementNo in-house bid	
DNH	Statue maintenance services	Stonewest Ltd.	No in-house bid
DNH	Services relating to Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree and New Year works	Building and Property Facilities Management Ltd.	No in-house bid
DNH	Record Storage, Retrieval and Review	Britannia Data Management	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Management of Car Parking Facilities	Apcoa Parking Ltd.	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Audit Services	Price Waterhouse	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Estate management duties	Daniel Smith	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	IT Consultants	Internet Solutions	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Ticketing/EPOS Systems	MHG Systems Select Ticketing	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Window Cleaning	Metropolitan	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Computer Maintenance	HMSO	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Commercial Guard Force	RBLA	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Signage—Moat Gardens	HB Sign Company	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Costumed Interpretation	Past Pleasures	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Garden Maintenance	Ground Control	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Hampton Court Palace—Catering	Town and County	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Hampton Court Palace—Costumed Interpretation	Past Pleasures	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Hampton Court Palace—Recorded Tour Service	Acoustiguide	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Catering	De blanks/Digby Trout	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cleaning	Securicor	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cash Collection	Armaguard/Security Express	No in-house bid
1995–96			
DNH	Consultancy for provision of professional support and advisory services relating to other Royal Estate Division works responsibilities	Tenders under consideration	No in-house bid
DNH	Services relating to Remembrance Day ceremony works	Tendering exercise planned for later in the year	No in-house bid
DNH	Stationery	No yet awarded	No in-house bid
DNH	Payments and Accounts Services	CSL Managed Services	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Car Park Security duties	Reliance Security	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Entertainment Organiser	Not yet awarded	—
The Royal Parks	Royal Parks Constabulary, recruit training	Tenders under consideration	No in-house bid
The Royal Parks	Additional Horse Grooming duties	Tendering exercise planned for later in the year	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Computer Maintenance	LCE Computer Systems	No in-house bid

Let by	Activity	Name of successful bid	Won by in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	HM Tower of London—Cash Collection/Counting	Security Express	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Catering	Securicor	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cleaning	Securicor	No in-house bid
Historic Royal Palaces	Kensington Palace—Cash Collection	Armaguard/Security Express	No in-house bid
1996–97			
Historic Royal Palaces	All Palaces Security Warding	Tenders to be invited September 1995, contract to start 1 April 1996	No in-house bid

Millennium Fund

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) how much money has been already promised from the millennium fund in each English and Welsh county; [36719]

(2) how many individual projects have applied for funding from the millennium fund in each English and Welsh county. [36720]

Mrs. Bottomley: This is a matter for the Millennium Commission. I shall reply to the hon. Member in my capacity as chairman of the Commission and place copies of my reply in the Libraries of the House.

TREASURY

Local Government Finance, Isle of Wight

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice he will be giving the Department of the Environment following the meeting and correspondence between the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight and Mr. Orchard of the Department of Employment about the data in the new earnings survey and the Isle of Wight and the area cost adjustment formulae. [35989]

Mrs. Knight: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him in my letter dated 28 July, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36823]

Mr. Jack: For Treasury and other Chancellor's Departments, members of the public have the same rights to make complaints of alleged maladministration to the relevant ombudsman concerning a project funded through the private finance initiative as they would have had if the project had been publicly financed.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he had made of the cost to the Exchequer of profit-related pay for each of the last three years; and what is the estimate for this financial year. [37161]

Mr. Jack: Estimates of the cost of income tax relief for profit-related pay schemes in 1994–95 and 1995–96 are published in table 1.6 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1995, a copy of which is in the Library. Estimates for other years can be found in earlier editions.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Outsourcing Contracts

Mr.McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many outsourcing contracts were granted by his Department or agencies in each year since 1990, indicating the nature and value of each contract; and if any additional work was added and of what value to *(a)* Hoskyns/Cap Gemini Segeti, *(b)* AT and T Istel, *(c)* EDS, *(d)* Sema Group, *(e)* Datasolve, *(f)* IT Net, *(g)* Andersen Consulting *(h)* Centre File, *(i)* BIS, *(j)* Telecom Capita, *(k)* ICL, *(l)* Digital Equipment, *(m)* CFM, *(n)* Siemens, *(o)* Nixdorf, *(p)* CMG and *(q)* Logica. [36956]

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The following outsourced contracts have been awarded:

(e) Datasolve—Since 1990 Datasolve has provided a hot-site contingency service for the Water Executive mainframe. As this is the only outsourced contract with this company its value cannot be disclosed for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

(f) IT Net—Two separate contracts for system software and support for the Department of Economic Development.

1994–95: £193,613 main contract

1995–96: £25,560 main contract

No additional work was added to the contracts.

(i) BIS—Two Separate contracts were awarded for consultancy support.

1993–94: £19,500 main contract

1994–95: £5,040 main contract

(k) ICL—a hardware support contract was awarded in respect of the Valuation and Lands Agency computer system, a financial computer system for the Water Executive, road maintenance and traffic accident systems for the Roads Service. As 1994–94 was the only year when more than one contract was in operation the cost of the contracts for other years cannot be disclosed for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

1994–95: £249,2178 main contract

No additional contract work was added to the contracts.

(l) Digital—An office automation system for the DOE NI. The cost cannot be disclosed because of commercial confidentiality.

(m) CFM—Contracts for the provision of a computer bureau and associated services for NICS Departments and the NIO, data capture for agricultural area aid applications, an accounting system for the Department of Agriculture NI, mainframe computer services for DHSS NI, file storage for the NI Child Support Agency, child benefit payments and giro reconciliation for the Social Security Agency contract programmers and a print and dispatch service for the Rate Collection Agency and a mainframe management contract for the Department of Economic Development.

	Main contract £	*Additional* £
1991–92	3,520,000	27,000
1992–93	6,128,000	364,000
1993–94	6,146,859	578,000
1994–95	5,706,109	322,125
1995–96	5,162,516	200,000

(q) Logica—A software support contract for the Valuation and Lands Agency and the provision and maintenance of a mainframe for the Department of Economic Development.

	Main contract £	*Additional* £
1991–92	162,008	137,801
1992–93	246,400	169,173
1993–94	279,300	3,412
1994–95	233,380	58,500
1995–96	229,548	—

Housing

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, following the 25 per cent. rise above estimates in tender costs for house building in Northern Ireland in the current year, what plans he has to provide emergency extra funding for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. [37388]

Mr. Moss: None. However, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive can, along with other important public expenditure programmes, bid for any resources which might become available in-year within the Northern Ireland block.

National Anthem

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the policy of the Northern Ireland Department of Education in respect of whether the national anthem is sectarian. [37362]

Mr. Ancram: The Government's policy remains that the national anthem should be played on ceremonial occasions. Its use on other occasions is a matter for the relevant authorities in each case.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what grounds the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland issued instructions that the national anthem should not be played when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited Northern Ireland to open the new Lagan bridge in Belfast. [37360]

Sir John Wheeler: No instructions were issued either by the Department of the Environment or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Statutory Rules, Regulations and Orders

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many statutory rules, regulations and orders have been made in total, and by each Northern Ireland Department, over the last five years. [37393]

Sir John Wheeler: The total number of statutory rules, regulations and orders made by my right hon. and learned Friend and Northern Ireland Departments over the last five years is as follows:

1990: 426
1991: 506
1992: 536
1993: 463
1994: 478
1995 to 11 October: 362

The breakdown by Department is as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995 to 11 October*
Department of Agriculture	45	65	52	63	62	56
Department of Economic Development	45	79	71	54	44	36
Department of Education	22	28	24	25	20	13
Department of Environment	183	224	244	210	208	166
Department of Finance and Personnel	2	9	10	6	6	4
Department of Health and Social Services	131	106	154	121	117	91
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	25	18	22	23	29	17
Medicines Act 1968, 1971 made jointly by Great Britain and Northern Ireland Departments	11	8	20	10	22	4

Because a number of statutory rules, regulations and orders are made by more than one Department the figures when broken down by Department are greater than the overall total.

Business Development Service

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the prior options study of the business development service has been completed; and what was the outcome of the study. [37873]

Sir John Wheeler: On 18 January 1994, I announced that the business development service of the Department of Finance and Personnel would be subject to a prior options study. That study is now complete and I have decided that the business development service of DFP

should become a next steps agency and that preparations for launch should proceed, with a view to agentisation by 1 April 1996.

Health and Social Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many administrators or managers with salaries there were in *(a)* the Department of Health and Social Services, *(b)* the management executive, *(c)* the four area boards and *(d)* the various trusts for the last available year. [37293]

Mr. Moss: The information is as follows:

DHSS	*Number with pay*	*Whole-time equivalent*
DHSS staff employed on health-related matters, excluding the Management Executive	158	153.04
Staff employed in the Management Executive	334	328.37
DHSS total	492	481.41

Trusts	*Number with pay*	*WTE*
Belfast City Hospital Trust	536	490.19
Green Park Trust	296	271.27
South and East Belfast Trust	530	443.37
UNDAH Trust	419	355.05
Royal Trust	828	757.31
Mater Trust	140	130.17
North and West Belfast Community Trust	442	387.74
Down and Lisburn Trust	494	440.02
North Down and Ards Trust	294	242.11
Causeway Trust	426	376.44
Craigavon Area Hospital Group Trust	255	233.14
Newry and Mourne Trust	287	250.97
Craigavon and Banbridge Community Trust	222	188.69
NI Ambulance Service Trust	39	37.91
Trust total	5,208	4,604.38

Boards	*Number with pay*	*WTE*
Eastern Health and Social Services Board		
EHSSB Headquarters	226	218.24
Regional Medical Physics Agency	9	7.43
Regional Supplies Service	158	153.08
Blood Transfusion Service	49	44.28
EHSSB Provider Support	33	33.00
EHSSB total	475	456.03
Northern Health and Social Services Board		
NHSSB Headquarters	169	159.70
Homefirst Community Unit	662	568.38
United Hospital Group	588	516.26
NHSSB total	1,419	1,244.34
Southern Health and Social Services Board		
SHSSB Headquarters	115	110.50
Armagh and Dungannon UOM	361	318.53
SHSSB total	476	429.03
Western Health and Social Services Board		
WHSSB Headquarters	330	323.09
Altnagelvin Group	199	173.54
Foyle Community	266	229.08
Omagh and Fermanagh Group	328	305.77
Western Board Commissioners	64	58.35
WHSSB total	1,187	1,089.83
Board grant total	3,557	3,219.23

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on self-promotion as distinct from services to patients and clients by *(a)* the Department of Health and Social Services, *(b)* the management executive, *(c)* the four area boards and *(d)* the various trusts for the last available year. [37294]

Mr. Moss: Neither the Department of Health and Social Services, which includes the management executive, nor any of its agent bodies in the health and personal social services incur expenditure on items which could be termed "self-promotion", as distinct from "public relations". Most HPSS bodies have a public relations function which is concerned with the communication to interested parties of information relating to services, service development, and health and personal social services issues generally.

Chief Constable's Certificates

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the Chief Constable's certificates issued between the commencement of the ceasefire and 30 September 1995 giving the date of the incident and the date of issue. [37225]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Since PIRA declared its ceasefire on 31 August 1994, a total of 951 certificates have been issued by the Chief Constable under the criminal damage and criminal injuries legislation, of which 122 relate to acts committed since that date. Of the 122, a total of 52 relate to acts committed since the loyalist terrorists declared their ceasefire on 14 October 1994, when the general ceasefire situation took effect. The attached table details the number of certificates issued between 1 September 1994 and end September 1995.

Chief Constable's Certificates issued September 1994 to 30 September 1995 (Includes claims pre- and post- ceasefire)

	Injury	*Damage*	*Total*
September 1994	5	160	165
October 1994	3	189	192
November 1994	7	96	103
December 1994	10	128	138

Chief Constable's Certificates issued September 1994 to 30 September 1995 (Includes claims pre- and post- ceasefire)

	Injury	*Damage*	*Total*
January 1995	0	80	80
February 1995	2	109	111
March 1995	2	35	37
April 1995	5	44	49
May 1995	8	16	24
June 1995	1	7	8
July 1995	2	17	19
August 1995	1	3	4
September 1995	1	20	21
Totals	47	904	951

Incidents from 1 September 1994 to 30 September 1995.
1 September 199 to 13 October 1994: 66 Damage, four Injury.
14 October 1994 to 30 September 1995: 51 Damage, one Injury.

Valuation and Lands Agency

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for the Valuation and Lands Agency in 1995–96. [37874]

Sir John Wheeler: For 1995–96 the following key performance targets have been set for the agency:

(1) To complete 39,000 rating cases, equivalent to 21,000 work units.

(2) To complete 23,700 client service cases, equivalent to 20,700 work units.

(3) To have met by 31 March 1996 all 1995–96 non-domestic revaluation project milestones as specified in the business plan.

(4) To produce an action plan to implement the recommendations of the efficiency scrutiny on Government-owned land and establish a central advisory unit within VLA.

(5) To achieve a productivity for case working valuers of 316 work units.

(6) To achieve at least a 2.5 per cent. efficiency saving on the 1994–95 allocation in real terms.

(7) To reduce the unit cost of casework by 3.5 per cent. in real terms.

(8) To issue 93 per cent. of certificates for rating cases subject to backdating within 12 months of the events giving rise to revisions of the valuation list.

(9) To achieve a standard in rating valuations such that 88 per cent. of those determined on appeal are within (plus) + or (minus)—10 per cent. of the initial assessment.

(10) To complete 84 per cent. of rating appeals within 6 months of receipt.

(11) To complete 93 per cent. of a representative sample of client services casework within agreed time limits.

Full details are sent out in the agency's corporate and business plans, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Health and Social Services Estates Agency

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in establishing the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Estates Agency. [37875]

Mr. Moss: I am pleased to announce that the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Estates Agency was established as an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Services on 2 October 1995, under simplified next steps procedures.

The agency is the principal source of expertise available to health and personal social services managers in all aspects of an estate which comprises some 427 sites covering approximately 1200 hectares throughout Northern Ireland. The agency has 127 staff, the majority of whom are within professional estates disciplines. The range of estate services which the agency will provide includes policy and strategic advice to the Department, as well as project sponsor support, planning, project management and design and consultancy services for health and personal social service bodies generally.

I have delegated full managerial authority for the agency's day-to-day operation to its chief executive. A ministerial advisory board will enable me to ensure public accountability for the performance of the agency. The policy and resources framework of the agency is set out in its framework document, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

In addition, I have set challenging targets for the agency in its first six months of operation. These are as follows:

Financial management

To manage the agency's resources so as to deliver the business plan within a total budget of £2.156 million;

To deliver efficiency savings of 4 per cent. and to develop a programme of efficiency reviews to ensure that the most efficient and effective use is made of the agency's resources.

To develop a programme for the development and implementation of resource accounting system by 31 March 1996;

To develop service level agreements with client bodies and broad assessments of the prices to be charged for each of these packages of services by 31 March 1996.

Efficiency of services

To continue the continuous market test of the design and consultancy function of the agency ensuring a 3 per cent. increase in achieved surplus of £368,000 over the previous market testing period.

Delivery of services

To have in place a service level agreement with the Health and Personal Social Services Management Executive for the provision of agreed services by 31 March 1996.

To complete by 31 March 1996 a comprehensive survey of client satisfaction with the type and quality of the agency's services. This survey will provide the baseline against which future client satisfaction levels will be measured.

To ensure that the following programme of work is completed:

Issue of 70 guidance papers on matters of general safety as well as specific guidance on fire safety in residential care premises.

Completion of the design and achievement of "practical completion" in respect of 25 schemes valued at £7.5 million.

Completion of business cases for schemes with a value of £48 million.

Completion of planning of two schemes with a value of £74 million.

Police Complaints System

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will carry out a review of the police complaints system; and if he will make a statement. [37876]

Sir John Wheeler: After consultation with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Police Authority and the Independent Commission for Police Complaints, the

Government have concluded that after seven years' operation of the current police complaints system, it is appropriate now to review it. This review constitutes another important part of the major process of review of the policing service in Northern Ireland, and will be co-ordinated with the wider reform of policing structures and with the fundamental review of policing needs which the Secretary of State announced in a speech at Queen's university on 25 August this year.

The Government will be appointing an independent reviewer shortly to take forward the review. Copies of the terms of reference have been placed in the Library.

The terms of reference make it clear that the Government want a fundamental and wide-ranging review which will include examination of the current system of investigating complaints into the behaviour of individual officers but will also consider how complaints against police policy and standards of service can be dealt with. The review will begin in November with a report being presented to me no later than May 1996. The results of the review, and the Government's proposals for taking them forward, will be made public.

I have no doubt that the reviewer will want to consult widely and I hope that, when comments are invited, all those with an interest will make their views known.

TRANSPORT

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what actions have been taken concerning departmental action on bomb warnings since the meeting on 14 June 1989 between assistant secretary C. T. Harris and Mr. and Mrs. Martin Cadman, Lockerbie relatives, and Mr. Derek Dempster, a member of the Air Transport Users Committee. [37451]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 6 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *55.*

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to improve the criterion for controlling the noise of aircraft landing and taking off at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports; [36705]

(2) if the existing policy of controlling noise of aircraft landing and taking off at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted remains in force. [36701]

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend's policy on noise abatement measures at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted has not changed.

A consultation paper proposing increased monitoring efficiency and reductions in the noise limits which apply to departing aircraft at these airports, was issued on 3 October. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The aircraft noise monitoring advisory committee, which reviewed the departure noise limits, will now study the feasibility of noise limits for landing aircraft at these airports.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36371]

Mr. Norris: The present rates of travel allowance that may be claimed by civil servants in the centre of the Department of Transport and in the Highways Agency, Transport Research Laboratory, Coastguard Agency, Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency, Marine Safety Agency and Vehicle Certification Agency are:

Car (standard rate) engine capacity	*Up to 4,000 miles*	*Over 4,000 miles*
Up to 1000cc	27p	15p
1001cc to 1500cc	35.7p	19p
1501cc to 2000cc	42p	23p
2001cc and above	46p	30p
Public transport rate	23.8p per mile	

Motor cycles	*Up to 125cc*	*Over 125cc*
Up to 4,000 miles		
with third party insurance	14.6p	22.1p
with comprehensive insurance	16.2p	25.3p
Over 4,000 miles	6.1p	9p
Pedal cycles	6.2p per mile	

The Driving Standards Agency figures are:

Per mile

Standard Rate	*Up to 1500cc*	*1501–2000cc*	*Over 2000cc*
Up to 5,000 miles	35.7p	42p	46p
Over 5,000 miles	18p	22p	30p
The public transport rate	23p per mile		

Motor Cycles	*Up to 125cc*	*Over 125cc*
Up to 4,000 miles third party insurance	14.6p	22.1p
Comprehensive insurance	16.2p	25.3p
Over 4,000 miles	6.1p	9p
The pedal cycle allowance	6p per mile	

The Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency figures are:

Engine size (cc)	*First 5,000 miles*	*Over 5,000 miles*
Class A Up to 1500	35.7p	18p
Class B 1500–2000	42p	22p
Class C Over 2000	46p	28p
Public Transport Rate Rail Classes	23p	

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total cost of travel expenses by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36372]

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport, including its agencies, holds no detailed record of this expenditure past the end of each financial year.

During 1994–95 the spend for the Department's Central Transport Group, together with the Highways Agency, Marine Safety Agency, Coastguard Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency, and Transport Research Laboratory was £1.418 million. If claims had been limited to the lowest level—that is, the public transport rate of 23.8p per mile—the spend would have been £944,000. Disaggregated figures for the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency, Driving Standards Agency and Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency are not available.

Traffic Measures, Newbury

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what detailed studies he undertook into traffic reductions in Newbury in order to alleviate the problems of congestion from local vehicles; [36678]

(2) what on-the-ground measures he has undertaken to assess the environmental impacts of the Newbury bypass during the review period; [36675]

(3) what account he has taken of the findings of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution 18th report, with particular reference to recommendations 59 and 96, and possibilities and options for traffic reductions in the review of the A34 Newbury bypass and the subsequent decision to proceed with the road; and if he will make a statement. [36677]

Mr. Watts: The inspector who held the public inquiry in 1988 agreed with the Department that the bypass would not solve all Newbury's traffic problems, but he did conclude that it would provide sufficient relief to enable local authorities to introduce effective measures to relieve the residual problems.

The recent study commissioned by my right hon. Friend for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) looked at traffic management—including the measures covered by RCEP recommendation 96—public transport and minimal improvements to the existing road as an alternative to the proposed bypass. The conclusion was that the benefit of such measures were constrained by the limited number of canal/river crossings and the congested junctions at either side. The bypass will allow the space for a new approach to transport and traffic in the town by removing the heavy through traffic.

The team which carried out the study based its work on existing environmental data collected for the public consultation and the two public inquiries, visiting the site to put this in context. In assessing the information thus collected, the team applied the current environmental assessment procedures set out in the Department of Transport's design manual for roads and bridges.

RCEP recommendation 59 was considered by the recent study, but the measures that this would involve would force more traffic on to local routes unsuited to heavy traffic, much of which would end up travelling longer distances. If the measures covered by RCEP recommendation 96 were implemented on their own, they could worsen the situation. By removing the through traffic, the bypass will allow the space for a new approach to transport and traffic in the town.

M25

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if it is possible to construct the additional lanes proposed for the M25 between junctions 14 and 15 without an expansion of the existing curtilage or boundaries of the M25 at this section; [36419]

(2) for what reasons the proposed widening of the M25 between junctions 13 and 15 announced by him on 3 April exceeds the capacity which the British Airports Authority has said would be sufficient to absorb additional traffic generated by the proposed additional terminal 5 at Heathrow;

(3) pursuant to his statement of 3 April, *Official Report*, columns 1391–93, to what extent his traffic forecast for the M25 in the area and approaches to Heathrow airport agrees with the findings of the reassessment following the publication of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report; [36407]

(4) how the traffic forecast on which he based his decision to plan the widening of the M25 to 10 and 12 lanes over most sections varied from the forecasts previously used in support of the M25 link road scheme, the abandonment of which he announced on 3 April; [36435]

(5) if he will publish the traffic forecast for the M25 that he used when determining his decision to widen the motorway to 10 and 12 lanes over most sections; [36436]

(6) to what extent plans for additional motorway lanes proposed between junctions 12 and 16 of the M25 will require a reduction in the widths of the existing lanes or hard shoulder; [36418]

(7) what remedies or other arrangements he proposes for those people whose properties were covered by the compulsory purchase orders in connection with the defunct scheme for M25 link roads; [36414]

(8) what were the findings of the reassessment of M25 traffic growth forecasts that stated he would publish after the receipt of the SACTRA report; [36434]

(9) what factors he intends to take into account when deciding whether to conduct a public inquiry into plans for the additional motorway lanes proposed between junctions 12 and 16 of the M25; [36420]

(10) what assessment he has made of the effect of a refusal to grant planning permission in respect of BAA's application for Heathrow terminal 5 on the need to widen the M25 between junctions 13 and 15; [36429]

(11) to what extent the proposal to widen a section of the M25 to 12 and 10 lanes take into account *(a)* the recommendations of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution and *(b)* the SACTRA report; [36437]

(12) which sections of the M25 he intends shall not be widened to a standard of eight lanes. [36413]

Mr. Watts *[holding answers 16 October 1995]:* Following the withdrawal of the link road proposals between junctions 12 and 16, the Highways Agency has been assessing the widening schemes to be taken forward in their place. The work undertaken so far indicates that the proposed widening between junctions 12 and 15 be accommodated within the existing highway boundary. Between junctions 15 and 16, the proposals to widen to dual five lanes may require small areas of land outside the highway boundary.

The proposals, which have yet to be published, are expected to maintain standard lane widths and hard shoulders for most of the distance between junctions 12 and 15. At bridges and over certain lengths where there are restrictions, reductions in lane widths and/or discontinuous hard shoulders are expected to be necessary. Some reduction in widths and loss of hard shoulders are likely to be necessary between junctions 15 and 16 but where existing underbridges are to be widened the opportunity will be taken to reinstate hard shoulders which had earlier been dispensed with.

Traffic forecasts used to assess the change from link roads to widening were based on the same model and growth factors as the forecasts published in May 1994 with the draft Highway Orders for the then proposed link roads. But the design year adopted for the widening is 15 years from now compared with 2015 for the link roads, for the reasons explained by the Secretary of State in his announcement on 3 April. The contribution of the control motorway pilot was taken into account in determining traffic that could be catered for on this section of the M25 in the period up to 2010. This regulates speeds and sets speed limits according to conditions on the motorway.

Traffic growth is being reassessed and this includes work to test the effect of the factors identified in the SACTRA report. The Highways Agency is also taking into account the appropriate balance between road building and environmental impact raised by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. The results will be made available when details of the schemes are published.

There are remedies proposed for those people whose properties were covered by the draft compulsory purchase orders for the link roads. The Highways Agency has offered to pay all reasonable costs incurred from the date of the first notice of the draft orders by the owners of these properties in preparing an objection to the draft orders.

When the proposals for both widening schemes are published, all the comments received will be considered by the Secretaries of State before a decision on the way forward is taken. They would consider the weight and nature of objections to any draft highway orders in determining the need for an inquiry. Where the widening does not involve draft orders, as is likely between junctions 12 and 15, there is no statutory requirement for a public enquiry.

The scope of the widening of the M25 between J13 and 15 is governed by the need to reduce congestion on the motorway and provide for the predicted traffic in the next 15 years, whether or not the fifth terminal at Heathrow airport proceeds. Refusal of planning permission would therefore not alter the proposals for the M25.

The only sections for which dual four lanes do not exit or for which there are no schemes in the roads programme to widen to dual four lanes are clockwise from junction 28 to junction 3.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for *(a)* the Shetland maritime rescue co-ordination centre, *(b)* the Aberdeen maritime rescue co-ordination centre, *(c)* the Great Yarmouth MRCC, *(d)* the Dover MRCC, and *(e)* the Falmouth MRCC and *(f)* the Humber MRCC the dates in 1995 when the centre was understaffed and an unqualified senior watch officer was on duty; [36671]

(2) if he will list for the Shetland MRCC from September 1994 to January 1995 inclusive, the dates when the centre was undermanned and when an unqualified senior watch officer was on duty. [35700]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguards Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as the questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

Questions 2504, 2498, 2492, 2491, 2471 and 2463/94/95 were answered in my reply of 28 september in response to your letter of 23 August, addressed directly to me (copy attached).

The following information replies to questions 2478 and 2486/94/95.

Coastguard instructions allow watches which are short by one Regular Watch Officer to be made up by using Auxiliary Coastguard Operations Room Assistants. The figures below show the dates when there was a shortfall on that provision. In many cases the shortfall was not for a full twelve hour watch.

MRCC ABERDEEN 1995:

1 Jan–1; 13 Jan–1; 16 Jan–1, 17 Jan–1; 24 Jan–1; 4 Feb–1; 6 Feb–1; 20 Feb–1; 2 Mar–1; 20 Mar–1; 26 Mar–1; 13 Apr–1; 14 Apr–1; 18 Apr–1; 19 Apr–1; 21 Apr–1; 22 Apr–1; 29 Apr–1; 1 May–1; 25 May–1; 29 May–1; 2 Jun–1; 1 Jun–1; 15 Jun–1; 16 Jun—1; 18 Jun–1; 22 Jun–1; 24 Jun–1; 2 Jul–2; 13 Jul–1; 22 Jul–1; 23 Jul–1; 26 Jul–1; 28 Jul—1; 1 Aug–Aug–1 4 Aug–1; 6 Aug–1.

MRCC Dover

1 Apr–1; 26 Jun–1; 3 Jul–1; 4 Jul–1; 14 Jul–1; 20 Jul–1; 27 Jul–1; 2 Aug–1.

During 1995—and for Shetland, from September 1994 to January 1995—there were no shortfalls in the numbers of watchkeepers at the following rescue centres; Shetland; Humber; Yarmouth; Falmouth.

There have been no occasions when a Coastguard station has been under control of an unqualified Watch Officer. Staff are selected for the post of Senior Watch Officer (SWO) and allocated to rescue centres one per watch. In their absence they are either replaced by another SWO or deputising Watch Officer. A deputising Watch Officer is a Watch Officer who is "qualified" by their initial establishment as Coastguard Officer, having successfuly completed the new entrants process and who has been approved as deputy by the Regional Management. Senior Watch Officer are required to complete a SWO (Qualifier) course run by the Coastguard Training Centre. Successful completion of this course is a perquisite to selection as SWO on a *permanent* basis. It is not a requirement that a deputy should have passed this course.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Ms Joan Walley, dated 28 September 1995:

Thank you for your letter of 23 August requesting information on various aspects of Coastguard Operations.

1. The number of managers to regular watch keeping staff (Watch Officers and Senior Watch Officers) at each Coastguard Rescue Centre is as follows:

Rescue Centre	*Senior watch officers and watch officers*	*Regional or district management team*
Shetland	12	3
Pentland	12	3
Aberdeen	19	5
Forth	12	3
Tyne Tees	13	3
Humber	14	3
Yarmouth	15	5
Thames	13	3
Dover	25	5
Solent	18	3
Portland	14	3
Brixham	14	3
Falmouth	16	6
Swansea	18	5
Milford Haven	13	3
Holyhead	12	3
Liverpool	14	3
Clyde	14	5
Oban	12	3
Stornoway	12	3
Belfast	13	3

District and Regional Management Teams (DMT/RMT) comprising Station Officers, District Controllers, Regional and Deputy Regional Controllers as well as Coastguard Officers (Senior Watch Officers and Watch Officers) are all "regular staff"; ie, uniformed, professional Coastguards. DMT and RMT members have an active Operations Room role in major emergencies and at any time if required.

The above figures do not include the 92 regular Sector Officers, nor the Auxiliary Coastguards who keep watch in rescue centres.

2. The required number of staff in operations rooms are as follows:

	Senior watch officer	*Watch officers*
In each MRCC except Dover	1	3
In each MRSC	1	2
Dover	[1] 1 + 1	3

[1] At MRCC Dover, each watch is headed by a Station Officer, in addition to the Senior Watch Officer.

All New Entrant Coastguards undertake an initial training lasting approximately one year. After a short familiarisation period (usually 6 to 8 weeks) at their parent station, they undertake 6 weeks intensive training at the Training Centre. They then return to their parent station for about nine months, during which time, under the guidance of the District Management Team, they work through a taskbook compiled by the Training Centre. They return to the Training Centre for a two week revision and examination period at the end of the year. Subject to successful completion of the taskbook, the exams, an interview board and management reports, they are appointed Coastguard Watch Officers.

About two years later they could be ready to take Senior Watch Officer and Sector Officer Qualifying Courses. Passing the examinations on these courses, together with management reports indicating their fitness, qualifies them for selection to these posts.

Auxiliary Coastguard Operations Room Assistants receive 80 hours initial training locally, culminating in examinations. They receive 20 hours refresher training per annum thereafter.

3. No rescue centres have close in the last five years. The following sector bases and lookouts have closed in the last five years:

1991: three (Seaton Sluice, Tyne Tees District) (Maryport and Aberdon lookouts)

1992: five (Sizewell and Orford, Thames District) (Bass Point, Portland Bill and Whitehaven lookouts)

1993: one (Polrvan lookout)

1994: six (Sea Palling, Yarmouth District) (Ives, Gwennap Head, Phyl, Cemaes and Aberdovey lookouts)

1995: three (Prawle, Peverll Point, Fleetwood lookouts)

The above does not include the relocation of rescue centres of sector bases in new buildings or the amalgamation or sector bases (there have been 2 of these).

4. There is no specific limit on overtime other than that applied by the Regional and District Controllers to ensure that individual performance is not compromised.

5. There have been no occasions when a Coastguard station has been under the control of an unqualified Watch Officer. Staff are selected for the post of Senior Watch Officer (SWO) and allocated to rescue centres one per watch. In their absence they are either replaced by another SWO or a deputising Watch Officer. A deputising Watch Officer is a Watch Officer who is qualified by his or her initial establishment as Coastguard Officer having successfully completed the new entrant's process and who has been approved as deputy by the Regional Management. In order to be selected as SWO on a permanent basis Watch Officers are required to complete a SWO (Qualifier) course run by the Coastguard Training Centre. It is not a requirement that a deputy should have passed this course.

6. All rescue centres are equipped with rest rooms and comprehensively equipped kitchens. There is not requirement for Officers to sustain a 24 hour shift or to need sleeping accommodation.

7. The table below shows the average amounts of overtime (in hours per week) for each Region in each of the last five years. The averages include all regular watchkeeping staff, i.e, Senior Watch Officers as well as Watch Officers.

	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*
North and East Scotland	5.4	5.3	5.5	4.2	6.8
Eastern	4.4	4.6	3.9	3.5	3.4
South Eastern	2.6	2.8	2.4	1.5	1.9
South Western	5.7	5.8	4.9	4.4	5.1
Western	4.5	4.6	4.0	3.8	3.9
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	8.7	7.4	6.7	3.8	3.6

8. The basic watch level at a rescue centre is the watch level required to meet the normal day-to-day operational commitments at that centre.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Costs

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the costs to a household of a child, aged *(a)* one, *(b)* eight and *(c)* 15. [36970]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: This information is not available. The cost of a child in any household will inevitably depend on a wide range of factors, including income.

Compensation Recovery

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will commission an independent review of the responses to the consultation exercise contained in the Government's reply, Cm 2997, to the Social Security Committee's fourth report of 1994–95, HC 196, on compensation recovery, in the same style as the analysis published on the Government measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people. [37470]

Mr. Roger Evans: The consultation exercise on compensation recovery is different in scale and range of groups affected to the exercise concerning measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people. I therefore have no plans to commission an independent review on this occasion.

Mr. Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library copies of all responses to his consultation exercise contained in the Government's reply, Cm 2997, to the Social Security Committee's fourth report of 1994–95, HC 196, on compensation recovery, which do not specifically request that they remain confidential. [37471]

Mr. Evans: A summary of the main responses to the consultation exercise will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a list of the individuals and organisations who have been sent copies of the Government's reply, Cm 2997, to the Social Security Committee's fourth report of 1994–95, HC 196 on compensation recovery. [37472]

Mr. Evans: I will do so shortly.

Mr. Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many weeks elapsed between the publication of the fourth report from the Social Security Committee of 1994–95, HC196, on compensation recovery, and the publication of the Government's reply, Cm 2997, to that report; how many weeks he has allowed for responses to the consultation exercise on the proposals in Cm 2997, and if he will extend the deadline for receipt of responses to his consultation exercise. [37473]

Mr. Evans: The periods are 12 and six weeks respectively. The issues on which the Government are seeking views are closely tied to the Select Committee's central recommendations. When the consultation exercise ends, it is likely that those commenting will have had a total of 18 weeks to form a view on the implications of those recommendations. However, we will consider any reasonable request for an extension to the deadline where the respondent contacts the Department by 13 November.

Mr. Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answers of 29 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *625*, and 27 June 1995, *Official Report*, column *587*, if he will set out the final outturn figures on the operation of the compensation recovery unit for the financial year 1994–95; and if he will give such comparable data as he has available for the current financial year. [37474]

Mr. Evans: This is a matter for Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Frank Field, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about information relating to the operation of the Compensation Recovery Unit during the 1994/95 financial year and the first half of the 1995/96 financial year.

The information is provided in the table below:

Period	*Number of cases*	*Total amount recovered £ million*	*Operating costs £ million*
1/4/94–31/3/95	39,915	[1]110.1	2.8
1/4/95–30/9/95	19,874	[1]61.8	1.5

[1] These figures includes monies recovered from both final and interim settlements.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Income Support, Derby

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the number of people on income support for the city of Derby and in each of its constituent wards; [37139]

(2) what is the number of people for whom direct payments are made in respect of *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity and *(c)* rent and council tax for the city of Derby and in each of its constituent wards. [37140]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the right hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mrs. Margaret Beckett, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about the number of people receiving Income Support and the numbers for whom direct payments, in respect of gas, electricity, rent and council tax is being made, in the city of Derby and in each of its constituent wards.

Statistics are maintained on the Income Support live load for each of the Benefit Agency's Districts. These are not co-terminus with the areas covered by Parliamentary Constituencies.

The Benefits Agency's Central Derbyshire District comprises of the Derby (Becket Street) and Ilkeston offices. The Benefit Agency's South Derbyshire District comprises of the Derby (London Road) and Burton-on-Trent offices.

At the end of August this year, the figure for the number of people receiving Income Support in the Central Derbyshire District was 33,996. In the South Derbyshire District the figure was 24,527.

Appendix A provides details of the numbers of people in the Central and South Derbyshire Districts who have their fuel, rent and council tax paid direct from their Income Support. Separate statistics are not kept for gas and electricity.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix A

Central Derbyshire DO	*August 1995*
District Payment (DP) Load—Fuel	1,059
DP Load—Rent arrears/amenity charges	401
DP Load—Council Tax	292
South Derbyshire DO	
DP Load—Fuel	1,203

Appendix A

Central Derbyshire DO	*August 1995*
DP Load—Rent arrears/amenity charges	384
DP Load—Council Tax	345

Note:
Customers may have more than one direct payment.
This data is provisional and is subject to amendment.

Benefits Agency Mail

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines govern arrangements agreed between the Benefits Agency and the Post Office for Post Office employees to open mail addressed to the Benefits Agency; how many such arrangements are in place; and what training is provided for Post Office employees covered by such arrangements. [37218]

Mr. Roger Evans: This is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the arrangements between the Benefits Agency (BA) and the Post Office to open mail addressed to the BA.

In taking forward the Governments Competing for Quality initiative, the BA market tested a range of accommodation and office services throughout the country. This included opening and sorting post addressed to BA offices.

Services were packaged geographically for market testing and, following competitive tender, some of the work was awarded to external suppliers and some retained in-house. Seven of the successful in-house teams have contracted out their post opening services to the Royal Mail.

The guidelines which govern the arrangements between the Royal Mail and the BA are laid down in the 'Benefits Agency Postal Security Framework'. This covers:

post receipt,

post opening,

post despatch,

mandatory checks, and

discretionary checks.

The guidelines apply to all staff opening BA post, whether this is the BA's own staff, Royal Mail employees or any other external contractor.

These arrangements are clearly set out for potential bidders in the Invitation to Tender document, and are contained within the contract document between the Royal Mail and the BA.

Royal Mail staff received a minimum of one weeks initial training from the BA. Additional training is given as and when required to meet the particular needs of individual offices.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date consent was first sought and given for the Benefits Agency to agree arrangements with the Royal Mail for Royal Mail employees to open letters addressed to the Benefits Agency, what specific conditions relating to confidentiality govern such arrangements; and if he will make a statement. [37219]

Mr. Evans: This is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 16 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the date consent was first sought and given for the Benefits Agency (BA) to agree arrangements with the Royal Mail for the opening of post addressed to the BA. You also asked what specific conditions relating to confidentiality governed the arrangements.

The arrangements for each contract awarded to Royal Mail were approved by the BA's Chief Executive and Department of Social Security Ministers. Approval for the first of these contracts was given on 22 March 1994.

Confidentiality of information is governed by legislation and the conditions of contract. Section 123 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 makes it a criminal offence to disclose personal information provided for Social Security purposes. All staff working for Royal Mail on BA business are required to sign a declaration acknowledging the provisions of Section 123. This is a condition of the contract (Condition 33) between the BA and the Royal Mail.

Contracts require that mail has to be opened under supervision in separate secure areas within the Royal Mail premises. The accommodation used for post opening is locked at all times and only staff directly involved in the contract are allowed access to the room. The contract further requires that post marked 'private', 'confidential' or 'personal' is to be passed to the BA unopened. Sorted mail is put into sealed bags and is delivered to the appropriate BA office for processing.

I enclose Appendix A which is a copy of Condition 33 of the contract and Appendix B which is a copy of the confidentiality agreement.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Appendix A

33 Confidentiality

33.1 The Contractor shall:

(a) treat as confidential all unpublished information which may be derived form or obtained in the course of or in connection with the Contract; and

(b) take all necessary precautions by contract or otherwise to ensure that all such information is treated as confidential and not disclosed by its employees, servants, agents or sub-contractors.

33.2 The Authority undertakes to treat as confidential all unpublished information supplied by the Contractor under or in connection with the Contract.

33.3 The provisions of this Condition shall not apply to any information appertaining to either party which is held in the public domain.

33.4 Section 123 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 shall apply to this Contract. It is an offence for any Person to disclose any information obtained while carrying out the Service, where that information relates to a particular person.

33.5 The Contractor shall introduce procedures which ensure that only Approved Persons are given any information relating to the Authority's business. These procedures shall be subject to Approval.

33.6 The Contractor undertakes to store all items, and any personal data or information acquired in connection with the Contract only at Premises specifically Approved in advance.

Appendix B

Confidentiality Agreement

Declaration—To be signed by all Staff prior to being given access to Government information.

My attention has been drawn to the provisions of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 Section 123. I am fully aware of the serious consequences which may follow any breach of this Act.

I am aware that it is a criminal offence to disclose personal information that has been provided for social security purposes.

I understand that I will not be free to communicate official information/knowledge acquired in the course of performing the Services, whether written or oral, to anyone who is not authorised to receive such information.

I realise that upon termination of my contract of employment, I will continue to be bound by the provisions of this Act.

I understand that this declaration does not extend to information which is in the public domain.

Signed:

Surname:

Forename(s):

Contractor's Name:

Date of Agreement:

Child Support Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision he has made to promote advice to employers via the Child Support Agency on the method of the payment of deductions from earnings orders, which will ensure that parents in care and their children receive the child maintenance due to them with minimum delay; and if he will make a statement. [37050]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 17 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the subject of Deduction from Earnings Orders (DEOs).

When a DEO is issued to an employer it clearly states the amount to be deducted and when this should be paid to the Child Support Agency; it also provides guidance on the methods of payment.

Additional guidance for employers on DEOs is contained in a Child Support Agency leaflet called "Advice for Employers". I have enclosed a copy of this for you. The Agency also has an enquiry line for employers should they require further information (local rate telephone number 0345 134134) and we hold meetings with employers' representatives and payroll providers.

We have not identified any general problems or concerns with this method of payment.

Habitual Residence Test

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been made homeless while awaiting the *(a)* judgment and *(b)* appeal of their habitual residence tests as a result of their inability to produce evidence of income while their cases were in progress.

Mr. Clappison: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available centrally.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Transfers between Schools

12. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement about the age of transfer between schools in Buckinghamshire. [36002]

Mr. Paice: It is for Buckinghamshire local education authority in respect of its schools and for the governing bodies of individual voluntary and grant-maintained schools to publish proposals if they wish to change their age range. My right hon. Friend will consider any such proposals on their merits. My officials stand ready to advise on the technical aspects.

Hours of Study Limit

13. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what has been the effect of limiting permitted hours of study by recipients of social security benefits on recruitment in the further education colleges. [36003]

Mr. Forth: There has been no change in the permitted number of hours of study by current recipients of benefit. The number of students entering further education courses continues to rise, increasing by 3 per cent. in 1994–95 over the previous year.

24. **Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what has been the effect on college recruitment of the changes to the 21-hour rule. [36014]

Mr. Forth: There is no intention that the introduction of job seeker's allowance in October 1996 will lead to any change in the permitted hours of study by recipients on benefits. The number of students entering further education courses continues to rise, increasing by 3 per cent. in 1994–95 over the previous year.

Jobseeker's Allowance

14. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the progress made in the implementation of the jobseeker's allowance. [36004]

Mr. Forth: Work is continuing on the preparations for introducing the jobseeker's allowance.

27. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what assessment she has made of the effect of the jobseeker's allowance on wage levels. [36017]

Mr. Forth: The jobseeker's allowance will help unemployed people to compete effectively for jobs and will therefore contribute to the general improvement in employment prospects that the country is experiencing.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what services will be provided by the Employment Service for those people who are ineligible for jobseeker's allowance and are seeking employment. [37031]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 17 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about what services will be provided by the Employment Service (ES) for those people who are ineligible for Job Seekers Allowances (JSA) and are seeking employment.

There are no plans to change the nature of the services currently available for people who are not claiming benefit.

The public access employment service including vacancy displays provided by the ES through its network of Jobcentres will continue to be available to people seeking work, irrespective of whether or not they qualify for JSA.

I hope this is helpful.

Assisted Places Scheme

15. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many pupils are currently being helped by the assisted places scheme. [36005]

Mrs. Gillan: In the school year 1994–95, 29,747 pupils held assisted places under the Department's scheme in England.

Local Employment and Training Projects

16. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proposals she has to encourage local employment and training projects similar to the Allerton outreach team in Bradford. [36006]

Mr. Paice: The single regeneration budget challenge fund now enables local people to define their needs and priorities. This year we are providing £125 million to support 200 new projects. Many of these include employment and training objectives.

Unemployment

17. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom. [36007]

Mr. Forth: In August, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment stood at 2,295,000—down by more than half a million since the labour market recovery began.

Special Needs

18. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is her policy towards the outcomes necessary for young people with special needs on training courses. [36008]

Mr. Paice: It is the Government's policy that all young people are given the opportunity to maximise their potential.

Grant-maintained Schools

19. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many pupils are currently being educated in grant-maintained schools. [36009]

28. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the number of pupils who attend grant-maintained schools in the United Kingdom. [36108]

Mrs. Gillan: We estimate that more than 660,000 pupils are currently being educated in grant-maintained schools in England. The figure for the United Kingdom as a whole is more than 670,000.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what advice is given to grant-maintained schools about the operation of schools' admission and exclusion procedures in relation to Sex Discrimination Acts and Race Relations legislation. [36643]

Mr. Robin Squire: Guidance is contained in circulars 6/93, "Admissions to Maintained Schools", and 10/94, "Exclusions from School". Copies of both circulars were sent to all maintained schools and have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what are the requirements on the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools in respect of the process of consultation about proposals to alter admission arrangements. [36641]

Mr. Squire: The Department's circular 6/93, "Admissions to Maintained Schools", a copy of which was placed in the Library, advises all admission authorities to take into account local views before changing their admission arrangements.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what capital funds have been provided to grant-maintained schools for emergencies outside the normal annual bidding round; to which schools; and for what purpose in each of the financial years 1990–91 to 1994–95. [35811]

Mr. Squire: These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the Funding Agency to write to the hon. Member with this information.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school governing bodies were under a duty to consider whether to conduct a parental ballot on grant-maintained status during the 1994–95 school year; how many ballots have been held in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools since 1 September; and, in each case, how many resulted in votes in favour of grant-maintained status and how many resulted in votes against. [35810]

Mr. Squire: We estimate that the governing bodies of about 18,200 primary schools and 3,000 secondary schools were under a duty to consider whether to conduct a parental ballot on grant-maintained status during the 1994–95 school year. The overwhelming majority determined that they would not conduct such a ballot. The number of ballots held and their outcome during the same period is as follows:

Type of school	*Number of ballots held*	*Number of ballots in favour*	*Number of ballots against*
Primary	59	37	22
Secondary	26	13	13

Ministerial Duties

20. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the most significant finding she has made since assuming the duties of the Department of Employment. [36010]

Mr. Forth: That the integration of policies for education and employment will increase Britain's competitiveness by raising education and skills levels,

advancing knowledge and promoting a flexible and efficient labour market—in particular, by providing a single focus on young people in the crucial years between 14 and 19.

Nursery Education Vouchers

21. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many local authorities have so far volunteered to take part in phase 1 of the nursery education voucher scheme. [36011]

Mr. Robin Squire: As I announced earlier, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth, and Westminster have confirmed their decision to take part in the first phase of the voucher scheme, beginning in April 1996.

I hope to add to this list in the near future.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517-19, in respect of the provision for providers to borrow capital for premises against the value of voucher income, who she envisages will underwrite such loans. [36152]

Mr. Squire: As the Secretary of State previously stated, we envisage that borrowing or similar arrangements will take place on the strength of the anticipated voucher income. Any additional underwriting of the loans will be a matter for negotiation in the normal commercial way.

Modern Apprenticeship Scheme

22. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement regarding the operation of the modern apprenticeship scheme. [36012]

Mr. Paice: Modern apprenticeships are now available in more than 50 sectors. Many employers are offering places nationwide and recruitment of young people for this year's intake is well under way.

School Transport (Finance)

23. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what plans he has to compel local authorities to finance the cost of transport of children to grammar schools. [36013]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the current statutory position whereby local education authorities have a duty to provide free transport to the nearest suitable school for pupils who live beyond the designated walking distances.

Higher and Further Education

25. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proportion of school leavers in England go on to higher and further education.

Mr. Forth: Almost 80 per cent. of 16-year-olds go on to further education. Approaching 30 per cent. of young people enter full-time higher education.

Internet

26. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will give details of her Department's initiatives to augment public access to Internet information and training. [36016]

Mr. Robin Squire: The UK Education Departments' super-highways initiative was launched earlier this year. As part of this, our consultation paper "Superhighways for Education" considered the use of network connections, including the Internet, in all sectors of education and sought views widely. We shall be announcing the outcome later this year, including plans to evaluate a series of projects piloting innovative communication technologies in education. Work is also in progress on the potential of super-highways to deliver training.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements and practice of statementing of children suffering from attention deficit disorder and similar conditions in schools; and if he will make a statement; [36655]

(2) if she will examine what measures could be put in place to equip schools to deal more effectively with children suffering from attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; [36649]

(3) what assessment she has made of the significance of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in explaining withdrawal of children from state education in favour of home tuition; and if she will make a statement. [36650]

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave him on 24 January 1995, *Official Report*, columns *166–67* and on 26 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *503–4*.

Pupil Medication

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what guidelines and controls exist regarding decisions by head teachers on the giving of medication in schools; and if she will make a statement. [36653]

Mr. Forth: Many schools and local education authorities already have policies on giving medication in schools. The Department is currently consulting on general guidance for LEAs, schools and teachers on managing children with a range of medical conditions, including administering medication. It is intended that this guidance will draw together much of the good practice already followed by some schools and LEAs.

Class Sizes

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what his her Department's latest estimate of the number of children in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in England and Wales that are being taught in classes of over 30 pupils. [35997]

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of pupils in England in single-teacher classes of 31 pupils over in January 1995 was just under 1.2 million in maintained primary schools and 201,000 in maintained secondary schools.

Information on class sizes in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage, and how many primary school pupils were in classes of more than 30 in January in each local education authority and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers compared with January 1994 in each local education authority and in total. [36759]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 31 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England: 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

	1994		1995 (provisional)		Change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
City	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Camden	542	6.1	605	6.7	63	11.6
Greenwich	2,301	13.3	2,555	14.5	254	11.0
Hackney	499	3.7	569	4.0	70	14.0
Hammersmith	795	11.1	1,294	16.6	499	62.8
Islington	892	6.9	1,055	8.1	163	18.3
Kensington and Chelsea	454	9.0	221	4.5	-233	-51.3
Lambeth	816	5.2	540	3.4	-276	-33.8
Lewisham	1,318	7.2	1,192	6.4	-126	-9.6
Southwark	2,331	12.3	2,483	12.7	152	6.5
Tower Hamlets	638	4.9	778	5.1	140	21.9
Wandsworth	1,666	11.8	1,459	10.3	-207	-12.4
Westminster	428	5.9	646	9.4	218	50.9
Barking	1,415	9.9	1,317	8.7	-98	-6.9
Barnet	2,434	11.6	2,291	10.9	-143	-5.9
Bexley	5,910	32.0	7,834	39.2	1,924	32.6
Brent	2,157	11.4	2,444	13.0	287	13.3
Bromley	10,385	47.5	11,596	51.8	1,211	11.7
Croydon	4,896	20.5	5,973	23.7	1,077	22.0
Ealing	4,146	20.3	4,137	19.2	-9	-0.2
Enfield	7,237	35.4	8,192	39.7	955	13.2
Haringey	732	4.3	1,045	6.0	313	42.8
Harrow	3,544	22.6	4,152	25.5	608	17.2
Havering	4,176	22.1	4,662	24.1	486	11.6
Hillingdon	4,896	27.5	4,833	26.4	-63	-1.3
Hounslow	5,319	33.5	5,691	34.1	372	7.0
Kingston upon Thames	5,484	57.9	6,216	64.0	732	13.3
Merton	3,114	25.3	3,299	26.2	185	5.9
Newham	1,317	6.0	2,680	11.3	1,363	103.5
Redbridge	8,456	52.8	8,337	51.5	-119	-1.4
Richmond upon Thames	1,134	11.4	2,040	20.4	906	79.9
Sutton	4,696	40.1	4,328	35.7	-368	-7.8
Waltham Forest	3,200	18.4	3,330	18.8	130	4.1
Birmingham	27,164	28.4	28,251	29.2	1,087	4.0
Coventry	5,541	21.9	7,875	29.4	2,334	42.1
Dudley	7,497	31.1	6,935	28.5	-562	-7.5
Sandwell	10,175	37.5	10,815	39.1	640	6.3
Solihull	6,711	36.9	7,506	40.3	795	11.8
Walsall	5,577	25.1	6,428	27.9	851	15.3
Wolverhampton	5,155	24.1	5,846	26.8	691	13.4
Knowsley	5,915	34.8	6,300	34.7	385	6.5
Liverpool	12,620	26.6	12,541	27.0	-79	-0.6
St. Helens	5,437	37.5	5,507	37.4	70	1.3
Sefton	8,258	33.7	8,793	35.1	535	6.5
Wirral	5,928	20.4	6,076	20.7	148	2.5
Bolton	9,046	41.0	10,366	45.9	1,320	14.6
Bury	6,239	40.0	6,434	41.1	195	3.1
Manchester	9,619	23.4	10,211	24.2	592	6.2
Oldham	8,617	41.1	8,823	41.0	206	2.4
Rochdale	8,020	43.8	8,102	41.8	82	1.0
Salford	6,817	30.6	6,975	30.8	158	2.3
Stockport	8,179	33.8	7,858	31.8	-321	-3.9
Tameside	12,079	56.4	11,291	51.8	-788	-6.5
Trafford	9,151	49.6	9,689	51.1	538	5.9
Wigan	9,997	38.2	11,375	42.7	1,378	13.8
Barnsley	5,656	28.3	6,201	30.9	545	9.6
Doncaster	7,548	28.4	8,338	31.7	790	10.5
Rotherham	2,569	11.5	3,269	14.4	700	27.2
Sheffield	8,281	21.9	11,119	28.3	2,838	34.3
Bradford	8,781	27.3	10,707	32.4	1,926	21.9
Calderdale	5,268	30.1	5,666	30.9	398	7.6
Kirklees	9,372	29.9	12,290	38.2	2,918	31.1

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 31 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England: 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

	1994		1995 (provisional)		Change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Leeds	19,405	32.7	21,245	35.1	1,840	9.5
Wakefield	9,996	37.0	10,544	37.8	548	5.5
Gateshead	1,862	11.2	2,237	13.2	375	20.1
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,843	28.5	6,744	33.1	901	15.4
North Tyneside	3,905	26.0	4,930	32.7	1,025	26.2
South Tyneside	3,456	23.9	3,616	24.7	160	4.6
Sunderland	4,244	16.2	3,601	13.5	-643	-15.2
Isles of Scilly	31	18.5	0	0.0	-31	-100.0
Avon	26,753	35.5	26,919	34.5	166	0.6
Bedfordshire	9,064	24.4	10,328	26.7	1,264	13.9
Berkshire	16,290	28.9	15,605	26.8	-685	-4.2
Buckingshamshire	19,072	33.3	21,205	35.6	2,133	11.2
Cambridgeshire	15,079	27.2	14,946	26.8	-133	-0.9
Cheshire	30,193	36.2	30,315	35.5	122	0.4
Cleveland	13,386	23.2	13,859	23.7	473	3.5
Cornwall	13,441	35.1	14,004	35.6	563	4.2
Cumbria	9,385	24.2	11,452	29.0	2,067	22.0
Derbyshire	29,982	39.9	32,959	42.7	2,977	9.9
Devon	21,175	27.3	23,659	29.8	2,484	11.7
Dorset	18,142	44.0	18,038	42.8	-104	-0.6
Durham	15,012	28.9	15,455	29.5	443	3.0
East Sussex	19,297	40.7	19,691	40.8	394	2.0
Essex	30,729	25.8	31,875	25.8	1,146	3.7
Gloucestershire	11,123	26.5	11,595	26.7	472	4.2
Hampshire	44,304	34.2	43,976	33.9	-328	-0.7
Hereford and Worcester	9,910	21.1	10,533	21.8	623	6.3
Hertfordshire	21,344	27.7	23,054	29.0	1,710	8.0
Humberside	25,914	33.4	26,896	33.8	982	3.8
Isle of Wight	1,862	26.6	1,860	26.4	-2	-0.1
Kent	41,570	33.6	44,208	34.4	2,638	6.3
Lancashire	45,112	38.5	48,832	40.4	3,720	8.2
Leicestershire	14,433	20.2	17,567	23.6	3,134	21.7
Lincolnshire	12,642	26.6	14,632	29.8	1,990	15.7
Norfolk	11,175	19.5	12,066	20.5	891	8.0
North Yorkshire	13,702	24.8	17,758	31.3	4,056	29.6
Northamptonshire	9,590	20.6	10,576	21.9	986	10.3
Northumberland	7,901	41.4	8,030	41.8	129	1.6
Nottinghamshire	19,947	24.2	23,142	27.8	3,195	16.0
Oxfordshire	5,850	15.3	6,422	16.4	572	9.8
Shropshire	9,085	27.2	9,972	29.0	887	9.8
Somerset	10,476	30.1	10,776	30.1	300	2.9
Staffordshire	30,738	35.3	31,147	35.3	409	1.3
Suffolk	5,608	13.8	6,396	15.1	788	14.1
Surrey	13,741	20.2	12,118	17.7	-1623	-11.8
Warwickshire	12,740	30.6	13,980	32.9	1,240	9.7
West Sussex	10,934	21.6	12,879	24.2	1,945	17.8
Wiltshire	12,185	26.5	14,703	31.0	2,518	20.7
England	1,076,173	28.2	1,155,726	29.6	79,553	7.4

[1] Pupils in single teacher classes of 31 and over expressed as a percentage of all pupils in single teacher classes.
[2] Change in the number of pupils in classes of 31 or more pupils taught by one teacher between 1994 and 1995 expressed as a percentage of pupils in classses of 31 or more pupils taught by one teacher in 1994.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many public interest immunity certificates her Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36691]

Mr. Forth: One certificate was issued in 1991 and one in 1992 in civil court cases to which the then Secretary of State for Education was a party.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in her Department when using their vehicles for official business. [36353]

Mr. Robin Squire: Two rates are payable depending on the circumstances of the journey involved. The public transport rate is 23p to 23.8p per mile. The standard mileage rate is 35.7p to 46p per mile up to the first 5,000 miles and 18p to 30p per mile thereafter, depending on engine size.

Dr. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in her Department; and what would have been the saving

in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36354]

Mr. Squire: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list the average expenditure per primary school and per secondary school pupil of *(a)* all London boroughs, *(b)* all metropolitan counties and *(c)* all other English and Welsh counties. [36773]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table sets out for each local education authority in England and Wales the net institutional expenditure per pupil in LEA-maintained pre-primary/primary and secondary schools for the latest year for which figures are available.

Cost per pupil in LEA-maintained schools

Net institutional expenditure per pupil	*1993–94* *Pre-primary/primary* £	*Secondary* £
London boroughs		
Corporation of London	3,587	0
Camden	2,047	2,716
Greenwich	2,009	2,583
Hackney	1,958	2,617
Hammersmith	2,534	3,329
Islington	2,719	3,005
Kensington and Chelsea	2,394	3,266
Lambeth	2,666	3,296
Lewisham	2,058	2,614
Southwark	1,806	2,421
Tower Hamlets	2,656	3,157
Wandsworth	2,139	2,795
Westminster	2,592	2,739
Barking	1,790	2,355
Barnet	2,006	2,952
Bexley	1,573	2,341
Brent	1,633	1,835
Bromley	1,525	2,280
Croydon	1,793	2,309
Ealing	1,915	2,575
Enfield	1,768	2,531
Haringey	2,236	3,041
Harrow	1,913	2,439
Havering	1,636	2,290
Hillingdon	1,804	2,670
Hounslow	1,935	2,405
Kingston upon Thames	1,728	2,284
Merton	1,853	2,463
Newham	1,708	2,563
Redbridge	1,640	2,526
Richmond upon Thames	1,794	2,280
Sutton	1,639	1,978
Waltham Forest	1,821	2,526
Metropolitan counties		
Birmingham	1,572	2,330
Coventry	1,684	2,469
Dudley	1,490	2,098
Sandwell	1,681	2,349
Solihull	1,574	2,217
Walsall	1,672	2,281
Wolverhampton	1,357	2,300
Knowsley	1,485	2,243
Liverpool	1,586	2,613
St. Helens	1,605	2,315
Sefton	1,448	2,204
Wirral	1,552	2,299
Bolton	1,581	2,119
Bury	1,432	1,979
Manchester	1,547	2,328
Oldham	1,645	2,278
Rochdale	1,307	1,974
Salford	1,505	2,215
Stockport	1,466	2,310
Tameside	1,442	2,095
Trafford	1,428	2,156
Wigan	1,437	2,141
Barnsley	1,539	2,101
Doncaster	1,425	2,022
Rotherham	1,723	2,271
Sheffield	1,573	2,119
Bradford	1,654	1,969
Calderdale	1,607	2,162
Kirklees	1,579	2,207
Leeds	1,647	2,164
Wakefield	1,577	2,150
Gateshead	1,664	2,252
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,697	2,187
North Tyneside	1,469	1,995
South Tyneside	1,463	1,948
Sunderland	1,509	2,114
Other counties		
Avon	1,571	2,288
Bedfordshire	1,639	2,103
Berkshire	1,592	2,214
Buckinghamshire	1,735	2,286
Cambridgeshire	1,534	1,956
Cheshire	1,483	2,106
Cleveland	1,461	2,129
Cornwall	1,535	2,160
Cumbria	1,667	2,216
Derbyshire	1,600	2,214
Devon	1,503	2,157
Dorset	1,485	2,065
Durham	1,664	2,114
East Sussex	1,643	2,270
Essex	1,724	2,286
Gloucestershire	1,523	2,084
Hampshire	1,583	2,180
Hereford and Worcester	1,617	2,038
Hertfordshire	1,664	2,245
Humberside	1,621	2,257
Isles of Scilly	2,401	4,415
Isle of Wight	1,598	2,027
Kent	1,397	2,079
Lancashire	1,669	2,347
Leicestershire	1,629	2,263
Lincolnshire	1,496	2,322
Norfolk	1,585	2,309
North Yorkshire	1,555	2,187
Northamptonshire	1,522	2,125
Northumberland	1,686	2,083
Nottinghamshire	1,653	2,381
Oxfordshire	1,765	2,191
Shropshire	1,577	2,354
Somerset	1,583	2,138
Staffordshire	1,534	2,078
Suffolk	1,673	2,190
Surrey	1,701	2,215
Warwickshire	1,555	2,420
West Sussex	1,579	2,467
Wiltshire	1,521	2,379
England	1,630	2,245

Cost per pupil in LEA-maintained schools

Net institutional expenditure per pupil	*1993–94* *Pre-primary/primary* £	*Secondary* £
Welsh counties[1]		
Clywd	1,534	2,357
Dyfed	1,859	2,258
Gwent	1,531	2,363
Gwynedd	1,725	2,503
Mid Glamorgan	1,626	2,427
Powys	1,782	2,224
South Glamorgan	1,552	2,228
West Glamorgan	1,854	2,592
Wales	1,657	2,375

[1] 1992–93 at constant 1993–94 prices.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the average unit cost per pupil for part-time provision in *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* nursery classes in primary schools and *(c)* playgroups, at the latest available date. [36175]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows estimates of unit costs in maintained schools for 1993–94, based on the assumption that part-time pupils attend for half the normal attendance time of full-time pupils, and, on average, cost half as much as a full-time pupil.

1993–94 estimated unit costs (£)

	Full-time equivalent	*Part-time (50 per cent.)*
Nursery school	3,250	1,625
Nursery class in primary school	2,660	1,330

Note:
Because expenditure returns do not distinguish spending on nursery schools and classes from other primary school spending, the figures above are estimates based on apportionment of total expenditure.

Unit costs in play groups are not collected centrally.

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proposals she has to promote the equal treatment of women. [35891]

Mrs. Gillan: The Government will continue to promote the interests of women at work, in education and beyond, and to promote effective equality of opportunity at work. In addition to a strong legislative base, this policy has meant that the United Kingdom has one of the lowest rates of women's unemployment in the European Union, and that the gap between men's and women's earnings continues to narrow.

Dance Education

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when she expects to reach a decision on the future of discretionary awards for dance education. [37169]

Mr. Forth: The Government are continuing to review this issue. Any plans for change would be announced to Parliament in the usual way.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) how many postgraduate students during the current academic year received the maximum contribution towards their bills; and what percentage this was of the total number of post-graduates; [37303]

(2) what proportion of British postgraduate students during the last academic year received a state grant for maintenance. [37249]

Mr. Forth: Information is not available in the form requested.

In the academic year 1993–94, the latest year for which data are available, there were 43,800 postgraduate award holders in the United Kingdom—22 per cent. of the postgraduate population. Information on the level of maintenance paid is not collected by the Department for all these award holders.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, how many postgraduate students during the last academic year received support from access funds; and what was the average level of support. [37250]

Mr. Forth: Information for the last academic year will be available later in the year.

During the academic year 1993–94, 9,267 postgraduate students at higher education institutions in England received support from the access funds. On average, these students receive £463 each.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what estimate her Department has of the average amount of the careers development loans currently held by postgraduates. [37254]

Mr. Forth: The average loan amount for career development loans approved for postgraduates currently in training is £4,429.39.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proportion of British postgraduates during the last academic year paid their own tuition fees. [37302]

Mr. Forth: Figures for the academic year 1994–95 show that at 31 December 1995 there were 231,000 United Kingdom-domiciled postgraduates—full time and part time in UK higher education institutions, including the Open university, of whom 35 per cent. paid their own tuition fees.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what estimate her Department has of the number of postgraduate students in British universities during the last academic year; and what proportion of these students were British born and educated. [37301]

Mr. Forth: Figures for the academic year 1994–95 show that at 31 December 1995, there were 290,000 full-time and part-time postgraduate students in United Kingdom higher education institutions, including the Open university, of which 80 per cent. were domiciled in the UK.

Public Access Job-broking Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the future of the public access job-broking service; how many stand-alone offices providing such a service were in use in *(a)* 1980 *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1995; and if she will list the year of closure of each office and its location. [37205]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 17 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the future of the public access job broking service and the stand alone offices providing such a service.

We do not maintain detailed records concerning the numbers of offices although I am able to advise that at the start of the project in 1989/90 to integrate our benefit offices and Jobcentres, the Employment Service (ES) had a total of 1,800 offices. By the end of 1990, 300 integrated offices had been opened. This number has risen to 950 by September this year. The total number of offices is currently 1,124.

It is expected that the public access job broking service will continue to be provided by the ES as at present. The current system is geared to the needs of unemployed people, particularly those at a disadvantage in the labour market. It is also used by people seeking to change work, including those facing redundancy.

The service will be enhanced by a new computer system, the Labour Market System (LMS), which is being piloted in some Jobcentres at present. National implementation of LMS is scheduled to take place during 1996.

LMS will, for the first time, give Jobcentre people access to client, job opportunities, programme and other information via one computer system. This will enable us to provide a more professional service to all our clients, through for example, searching for suitable vacancies or opportunities quickly and easily.

Availability for Work Rules

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what guidance and instructions apply in respect of people deemed capable of work under the all-work test when such people are unable to work full time as defined by the availability for work regulations. [37026]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 17 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about what guidance and instructions apply in respect of people deemed capable of work under the all work test when such people are unable to work full time as defined by the availability for work regulations.

It may help if I explain that the receipt of unemployment benefits is conditional upon a person being available for and actively seeking employment. This means that they must be available to start work immediately; must not place such restrictions on the work they are willing to do which would leave them with no real prospects of finding a job and must take those steps, each week, which offer them their best prospects of obtaining work.

Unemployed clients are not required to work full-time. Indeed there is no definition of "full-time" in the unemployment benefit regulations. However they must be available to work some hours every day they claim benefit.

If a client imposes restrictions on any of the conditions of employment they are willing to accept, they may nevertheless satisfy the availability for work condition provided they have reasonable prospects of getting a job within those restrictions. However, if a client with health problems or disability imposes restrictions, and those restrictions are reasonable in view of their physical and, or, mental condition, they do not have to satisfy the requirement of having reasonable prospects.

People who have been deemed capable of work as a result of the all work test for incapacity benefit and who subsequently claim unemployment benefits, are seen by one of my client advisers. I recognise that people who have been taken off incapacity benefit may need specialist help to get back to work. In addition to the extra programmes and opportunities introduced for these clients, I have also issued my advisers with additional guidance to help them understand the problems faced by these clients, many of whom will have been out of the labour market for some time. As well as informing clients about jobs and other opportunities open to them, my people will agree with them the type of work they can reasonably be expected to do. My advisers will also explain the availability and actively seeking employment conditions and advise clients what they must do in order to satisfy these conditions.

If an adviser decides that a client needs more specialised help, they may refer them to a Disability Employment Adviser who is specially trained to advise people with health problems or disability which may affect their ability to get, and hold down, a job.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobcentre, Kings Norton

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what current plans there are to open an Employment Service jobcentre in Kings Norton, Birmingham. [37032]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, Dated 17 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question regarding any current plans to open an Employment Service Jobcentre in Kings Norton, Birmingham.

The Employment Service has no plans at present to open a Jobcentre in Kings Norton itself. At present unemployed clients who live in the Kings Norton catchment area are handled by Selly Oak Employment Service Jobcentre.

I hope this is helpful.

Employment Service Staff

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what reductions in staffing levels in the Employment Service are planned in *(a)* 1996–97, *(b)* 1997–98 and *(c)* 1998–99; and how many of these are as a result of targeted efficiency savings arising from the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance; [37030]

(2) what is the planned number of staff to be transferred from the Employment Service to the Benefits Agency to administer the jobseeker's allowance. [37029]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 17 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the planned staffing levels in the Employment Services (ES) over the next four years and the expected numbers who will transfer from ES to the Benefit Agency (BA) to process Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) payments.

The latest estimates available of staffing in the ES over the years in question are contained in the Employment Department's 1995 Departmental Report, a copy of which is in the library. As at March 1995, the estimates for staffing in 1996–97 were 40,960 and 39,148 in 1997–98. No estimate was made for 1998–99.

These figures are being looked at again as part of this year's Public Expenditure Survey and are likely to change, particularly because under the JSA responsibility for paying unemployment benefits will transfer from the ES to BA. This will help streamline the administrative process. However, there is no target for specific efficiency savings in staff numbers as a result of the introduction of the JSA.

Currently, within the JSA Project, design work is being done on the business processes for its implementation, Each business process details the activities which need to be done in order to complete a specific task, for example Taking a New Claim from a Jobseeker.

From these business processes, we will be able to assess the number of people required to transfer from ES to BA to process payment of JSA. This area of work is ongoing and numbers have yet to be finalised.

I hope this is helpful.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list *(a)* the number of (i) male and (ii) female employees, *(b)* the number of officials employed at each of the principal grades and the numbers and percentages of women employed at these grades and *(c)* the number of staff employed at administrative grades and the number and percentages of these staff that are women, in her Department and for each of the executive agencies for each year since 1985. [35683]

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* Figures for the former Employment Department Group and its executive agency, the Employment Service, can be found in table 5 of "Civil Service Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library. Figures for 1995 will be published later this year.

Figures for the former Department for Education, which are not shown separately in "Civil Service Statistics", are set out in the table for 1993 to 1995. Figures for previous years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Head Teacher Training

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what procedures exist for ensuring that training providers measure up to the standards envisaged in head teacher training. [36270]

Mr. Robin Squire: I will ask the chairman of the Teacher Training Agency to write to the hon. Member about the quality assurance procedures applied to Headlamp training providers.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what advice she decides the training needs of newly qualified head teachers. [36274]

Mr. Squire: The Headlamp scheme allows governors and head teachers to decide the specific training needs to be met under the scheme. I will ask the chairman of the Teacher Training Agency to write to the hon. Member about the general Headlamp criteria.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what organisations her Department plans to involve in the Headlamp scheme; and what expertise each brings to this work; [36284]

(2) how many teachers she expects to take part in the Headlamp scheme in its first year of operation; [36294]

(3) of those teachers taking part in Headlamp during its first year how many *(a)* are practising head teachers and *(b)* are practising deputy heads; [36295]

(4) what consultation has taken place with *(a)* teacher unions, *(b)* school governors or bodies representing them and *(c)* parents and bodies representing them in developing the Headlamp programme. [36271]

Mr. Squire: The development and management of Headlamp is a matter for the Teacher Training Agency. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what is the expected cost of the Headlamp scheme in *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97; and what was the budgetary provision for the training of head teachers in 1994–95. [36292]

Mr. Squire: In the grant for education support and training programme for 1994–95, £1.3 million was made available for head teacher mentoring. Schools and local education authorities could also support headteacher training from the separate GEST support for school management, totalling £22.4 million. In the GEST programme for 1995–96, these are covered by school effectiveness grant, which supports expenditure of £121.5 million. Grant-maintained schools may use special purpose grant (development) to pay for head teacher training. I will ask the chairman of the Teacher Training Agency to write to the hon. Member about the expected cost of Headlamp .

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, on what criteria she decides the training needs of newly qualified head teachers. [36275]

Mr. Squire: The Headlamp scheme allows governors and head teachers to decide the specific training needs to be met under the scheme. I will ask the chairman of the Teacher Training Agency to write to the hon. Member about the general Headlamp criteria.

School Advertising

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what rules exist governing the use of broadcast advertising by schools seeking to attract pupils to enrol. [36173]

Mr. Robin Squire: Schools are not prohibited from broadcast advertising and educational services in general are not unacceptable under the Independent Television Commission code. But any advertisements for schools would be subject to the same rules as apply to all other advertisements under the code.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what are the rental charges and associated costs on her Department's premises, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith street. [35777]

Mr. Robin Squire: In the current financial year, the rental charges and associated costs amount to £12.9 million.

Students with Disabilities

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many physically disabled people there are over *(a)* 18 and *(b)* 30 years of age currently engaged in higher or further education. [36141]

Mr. Forth: Provisional estimates for 1994–95 indicate that 44,200 students with all types of learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 18 or over, were engaged in further education. Of these, 26,500 were aged 30 or over. Specific information on the numbers of students with physical disabilities is not collected centrally. Information on the numbers of such students in higher education is currently not held centrally.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when she expects the Further Education Funding Council to publish a definitive policy for physically disabled students; and if she will make a statement on her policy in this area. [36140]

Mr. Forth: The Further Education Funding Council has established its learning difficulties and/or disabilities committee to advise the council on how it can best fulfil its legal responsibilities towards students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The committee will report to the FEFC in 1996. The FEFC has published its policy about provision for students with disabilities in a number of circulars.

The Government's policy is that learning difficulty or disability should not be a bar to access to further education. The provisions in education legislation governing further education for people with disabilities are comprehensive, covering the complementary responsibilities of the FEFC, local education authorities and educational institutions. They recognise the requirement to make available further education which is appropriate to the needs of individual students, in an accessible setting with associated support.

The Government plan to build on these provisions through the current Disability Discrimination Bill by placing a duty on the FEFC to require further education sector colleges, as a condition of grant, to produce disability statements outlining their provisions for disabled students. The FEFC will also be required annually to report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on its progress to date and future plans for the provision of further education for students with disabilities.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 October 1995

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Transfers, East Hampshire

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about irregularities in the conduct of the consultation with tenants over the proposed large-scale voluntary transfer of housing in East Hampshire district council.

Mr. Clappison: Six letters have been received complaining that the consultation period was too short and alleging that the council's campaign was biased towards the transfer. Of these, four were from the Liphook Tenants Association. The Secretary of State carefully considers all objections before deciding whether to give his consent to a transfer.

Valuation Appeals

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in total and by each valuation office the number of appeals that have been received against council tax bandings; how many have been resolved; how many remain outstanding; when he estimates this process will be completed; and if he will make a statement. [37497]

Sir Paul Beresford: I am placing in the Library a table which sets out, by valuation office region and office in England, the number of valid proposals to alter the valuation list which were received by 30 September 1995, the number settled and the number outstanding.

Virtually all proposals received during the initial appeal period, up to 30 November 1993, have now been settled. The Valuation Office Agency currently receives around 8,000 proposals to alter valuation lists each month, and aims, in co-operation with the valuation tribunals, to settle all cases received after 1 April 1995 within 12 months of receipt.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in total and by each valuation office the number of appeals that have been received against the 1995 rating list; how many have been resolved; how many remain outstanding; when he estimates that this process will be completed; and if he will make a statement. [37498]

Sir Paul Beresford: I am placing in the Library a table which sets out, by valuation office region and office in England, the number of valid proposals to alter the 1995 rating lists which were received by 30 September, the number settled and the number outstanding.

It is still too early to gauge with any accuracy the volume and timing of appeals against the entries in the 1995 lists, which may be made at any time, in some cases up to 31 March 2001.

Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the procedures for designating SNCI areas which lie on privately owned land; and what is his policy on voluntary co-operation and compulsory obligation. [37573]

Mr. Clappison: The Government encourage local authorities to identify and adopt appropriate policies in their development plans to protect such sites from inappropriate development. In accord with the voluntary principles of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 local authorities may enter into management agreements. In the last resort they have powers of compulsory purchase, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for sites of particular local importance.

Local Government, Leicestershire

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest position on local government reorganisation in Leicestershire. [37940]

Sir Paul Beresford: During the summer the social services inspectorate has considered the capability of a unitary Rutland to fulfil its responsibilities for social services. The inspectorate has now completed its report and is content that Rutland will be a viable social services authority.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Library Guidance

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about the issue of public library guidance to local authorities. [38350]

Mr. Sproat: Following consultation with public librarians and the local authority associations, I have authorised today publication of guidance to local authorities about the provision of public library services. The guidance is intended to help in particular those authorities assuming public library responsibilities for the first time following reorganisation of local government in the English shire counties. Printing and despatch of copies to all English library authorities and other interested parties will take place over the next few days. Meanwhile, I have deposited advance copies in the Library of the house and I have sent one to the Library Association.

Tourism

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans she has to promote the South West tourist industry in the coming year. [36721]

Mr. Sproat: Government support for tourism is channelled through the statutory British Tourist Authority and English tourist board. Through the ETB, support is made available to the 11 non-statutory regional tourist boards, including the West Country tourist board, which helps them undertake a variety of marketing and development activities of benefit to the tourism industry in their regions. The WCTB received a subvention of £614,073 from the ETB in 1994–95.

Tourism in south west England will also benefit from the overseas marketing work of the BTA and from the action programme announced earlier this year in my Department's document, "Tourism: Competing with the Best".

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of each English region's economy is estimated to be generated by the tourist sector. [36717]

Mr. Sproat: Figures for tourism's contribution to each region's economy are not available. However, the figures for the number of employees in tourism-related industries, when shown as a proportion of the total number of employees in employment, give an indication of the importance of tourism in that region. The figures provided are for the latest month available and have been calculated on a new basis following changes to the standard employment classifications. The figures for each English region at June 1995 were:

	Number of employees in tourism related industries	*Total number of employees in employment*	*Percentage of total number of employees employed in tourism related industries* Percentage
Greater London	229,000	3,189,000	7
Rest of South East	264,000	3,914,000	7
South West	151,000	1,762,000	9
East Anglia	52,000	819,000	6
North	83,000	1,090,000	8
North West	169,000	2,284,000	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	135,000	1,854,000	7
East Midlands	102,000	1,527,000	7
West Midlands	118,000	1,979,000	6

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bermuda

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount Her Majesty's Government have paid to Bermuda in each of the last three financial years in respect of *(a)* development projects, *(b)* administration and *(c)* other services. [37061]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: We have made no payments to Bermuda in each of the last three financial years in respect of any of the categories mentioned.

Territorial Waters

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the delineation of the territorial sea boundaries between the United Kingdom and *(a)* France, *(b)* Belgium and *(c)* the Irish Republic. [37286]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The agreement with France relating to the territorial sea boundary in the straits of Dover, Cm 733, entered into force on 6 April 1989. The territorial seas of the United Kingdom and Belgium do not meet, but there is an agreement for the delimitation of the continental shelf between the United Kingdom and Belgium, Cm 2499. The delimitation of the continental shelf between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic is the subject of a 1988 agreement, Cm 990 and a 1992 protocol, Cm 2227.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many nautical square miles of the United Kingdom's territorial seas are claimed by the Irish Republic in its constitution; and what percentage of the total United Kingdom territorial seas that represents. [37287]

Mr. Rifkind: We do not recognise the claim by the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland or its territorial sea. No delimination of Northern Ireland waters has taken place as the British and Irish Governments have not discussed this issue. In the circumstances the information requested is not available and cannot accurately be calculated.

Montserrat (Volcanic Activity)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about problems facing Montserrat because of the threatened volcanic eruption; and if present rules for Montserratians entering the United Kingdom will be waived for a short period. [37285]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Since mid-July, scientists have been monitoring closely the volcanic activity on Montserrat and keeping Her Majesty's Government and the local Government advised on the likelihood of a major eruption. Contingency plans are in place for a partial or full evacuation of threatened areas of the island, depending on the gravity of the situation.

Immigration matters are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Applications from Montserratians will continue to be considered under the immigration rules, having regard to all the relevant circumstances.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the European Commission regarding its application of articles 34, 35, 36 and 37, respectively, of the Euratom treaty to French nuclear tests. [37327]

Mr. David Davis: We have received no formal communication on this subject from the European Commission. However, we are aware of bilateral contacts between the Commission and the French Government on this issue.

Mr. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the issues in regard to nuclear testing discussed at the informal Foreign Affairs General Council meeting in Santander on 9 and 10 September. [37256]

Mr. Davis: The informal meeting at Santander was an opportunity for confidential discussion between European Union Foreign Ministers. I do not intend to make a statement on specific issues discussed.

European Ombudsman

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many candidates were considered by the European Parliament for the post of European ombudsman; what was the procedure under which candidates were asked to apply; what is the salary of the ombudsman; and how many staff he will employ. [47194]

Mr. David Davis: Six candidates were considered by the European Parliament for the post of ombudsman. The procedures for the appointment of the ombudsman are set out in the European Parliament's decision of 9 March 1994, *Official Journal of the European Communities-Legislation*, volume 113 of 4 May 1994, pages 15-18, and the European Parliament's rules of procedures 159, as amended on 16 May 1995, 160 and 161. Copies have been placed in the House Library. Article 10(2) of the European Parliament's decision to appoint the ombudsman states that the ombudsman will have the same salary and benefits as a judge at the European Court of Justice. The ombudsman currently employs one member of staff, but is entitled to increase this to 10.

EU Overseas Citizens

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the rules *(a)* relating to migration to European Community states by Dutch Caribbean, Spanish African and French Overseas Department residents. [37284]

Mr. David Davis: The rules governing the entry and stay in member states of the European Union of persons from the Dutch Caribbean, Spanish Africa or French overseas department depend on the nationality held by the individual resident, not only the status of a particular territory. Nationals of the Netherlands, Spain and France, like other nationals of member states of the European economic area, which comprises the EU member states plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, are free to enter other member states to take employment, to establish themselves in self-employment or business, or to provide or receive services for payment. They are also entitled to reside in member states in a non-economic capacity, provided that they have sufficient resources to avoid becoming a burden on public funds.

Iraqi Weapons Programmes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information has been provided to Her Majesty's Government by the Jordanian authorities or the United States Government on the status of the Iraqi nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programmes following the defections from the Iraqi Government and debriefing of Hussein Kamil Hassan and Saddam Kamil Hassan in August. [37338]

Mr. David Davis: It would not be appropriate to comment on our contacts with other countries on this matter. However, the UNSCOM and IAEA reports on the implementation of resolutions 687 and 715, presented to the UN Security Council on 11 October 1995, take account of useful information given by Hussein Kamil and describe developments following his defection and the subsequent disclosure by Iraq of large quantities of documents relating to past weapons programmes. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Northern Ireland (Broadcasting Penetration)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are proposed to effect the greater penetration of Northern Ireland by Telefis Eireann; and what changes are required and have been put into effect by the authorities in the Irish Republic to bring about equal and reciprocal transmission of United Kingdom terrestrial channels. [37164]

Mr. Rifkind: Greater penetration of RTE into Northern Ireland could be achieved by a number of means, notably cable, satellite and through changes to the terrestrial UHF networks in the two countries. The British Government fully support RTE's wish to enhance its service to Northern Ireland, but there are certain technical difficulties. British and Irish officials are discussing the possible solutions but have not reached any agreed conclusions.

As a result of decisions taken by the Irish authorities planning the RTE transmitter network, UK terrestrial channels can be received in many parts of the Republic of Ireland from transmitters in the UK.

UK Dependent Territories

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current population of each of the United Kingdom's dependent territories, excluding Hong Kong. [37282]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) gave to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 8 February 1995, *Official Report*, column 285.

European Parliament (Cost)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated cost of the European Parliament in 1995; and if he will list the allowances payable to members. [37153]

Mr. David Davis: The budget of the European Parliament for 1995 is 843 million ecu or £703.4 million. This includes operational costs for 723 million ecu or £603.4 million, and special capital costs of 120 million ecu or £100.1 million for the new offices of the European Parliament in Brussels.

The following allowances are available to Members in 1995:

Telephone and fax—unlimited use from European Parliament offices.

Travel—within the union, 0.76 ecu or £0.634 for every km up to 400 km, and 0.38 ecu or £0.317 for every km thereafter. Outside the Union, the cost of the return air fare by the most direct route.

Subsistence on official travel—within the Union 213 ecu or £177.75 per day. Half this amount, plus hotel costs, outside the Union.

General office expenses—2,926 ecu or £2,441.75 per month.

Secretarial assistance—8,000 ecu or £6,676 per month.

Cyprus (EU Accession)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the admission of Cyprus to the EU would affect Britain's obligations and rights as a guarantor. [37160]

Mr. David Davis: The UK remains committed to its role as guarantor. We shall continue to keep under review any possible implications for that role of developments on an intercommunal settlement and the future EU accession negotiations.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36825]

Mr. Lang: The parliamentary ombudsman has, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, jurisdiction to investigate complaints from members of the public about maladministration by Government Departments, other public sector bodies engaged in the work of central Government, and those acting on their behalf. As a consequence, the ombudsman can investigate complaints of maladministration about any projects or service carried out by or on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry that are funded through the private finance initiative.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36359

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Civil servants in DTI using their own vehicle for official business are entitled to claim the following rates for motor mileage allowance:

	Engine size		
	up to 1500cc	*1501–2000cc*	*over 2000cc*
Up to 4,000 miles (Standard Rate)	34p	43p	46p
Over 4,000 miles (Lower Standard rate)	19p	23p	31p
Rates payable from 6 April 1995			

Dr. Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36360]

Mr. Evans: The DTI does not record mileage separately from other travel and subsistence expenses paid on official business. To provide the information requested would entail disproportionate cost.

Exports

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate his Department has made of the volume and value in percentage terms of exports in *(a)* cars, *(b)* televisions and *(c)* video recorders made last year by foreign companies which have invested in production in Britain. [37418]

Mr. Page: My Department has not made estimates concerning exports of individual products based on whether or not the manufacturer is a British-owned company. Information obtained from the British Radio and Electronic Equipment Manufacturers Association indicates that all televisions and video recorders exported from the UK were made by foreign-owned companies.

Statutory Consumer Councils

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provisions of the treaty of Rome, as amended, and any consequential regulation or directive constrain the sole duties or activities of statutory consumer councils as established and operating prior to preparations for, or changes consequent to, accession to the treaty. [37260]

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* I am not aware of any such constraints on the duties and activities of the statutory consumer councils.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Departmental Minutes

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the three departmental minutes which the Overseas Development Administration laid before the House during the summer recess. [38446]

Mr. Hanley: The departmental minutes refer to projects which are being supported by the Overseas Development Administration under the aid and trade provision soft loan financing arrangements which enable the banks to lend at concessional rates. Under new arrangements for ATP agreed in 1992, the ODA pays the aid portion of a soft loan to the bank or banks making the loan during the implementation period of the project, rather than, as previously, during the period over which the soft loan is disbursed. The former is much shorter than the latter. As a result, the banks would be exposed to additional charges if the tax regime relating to the lump sum payments were to change over the disbursement period of the loan. To safeguard the banks against such a potential liability the ODA provides an indemnity against possible tax changes. This indemnity creates a contingent liability on the aid programme, which therefore falls to be reported to Parliament.

The departmental minutes reported the estimated cost of these contingent liabilities as a result of making concessional loans to developing countries to finance the following projects:

Country	*Project*	*Amount of Liability* £
Thailand	Mini Hydros	1,346,909
Indonesia	Samarinda Power Plant	3,856,568
Indonesia	Samarinda Transmission Line	500,778
Indonesia	Piston Engine Research Laboratory	1,436,633
China	New Nanjing Airport	2,657,844

The contingent liabilities for projects 1 and 2 were incurred in, respectively, August 1994 and March 1995 and it is regretted that they were not brought to the attention of the House at the proper time. Those for projects 3, 4 and 5 were incurred during the summer recess. It was necessary to give the indemnities urgently to avoid delaying the start of the projects. The minutes were placed in the Libraries of both Houses and copies were sent to the Public Accounts Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Comoros Islands

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he has received for the appraisal mission, sponsored by the World bank executive board, to the Comoros Islands in September, with particular reference to the coelacanth and other endangered species. [37397]

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* Following the World bank—United Nations development programme appraisal mission in September, it is envisaged that a request for funding for a project to protect the coelacanth and other endangered species will be submitted by UNDP to the global environment facility. The report will be available in due course through the World bank's public information centre. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses when it is available.

Commodity Exchanges

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been given by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* EU aid to establish or develop commodity exchanges for cocoa, coffee or sugar in developing countries; and if he will list the date, location and value of any aid projects of this type approved by his Department or the EU in the past five years. [34301]

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to his answer, 13 July 1995, c. 688–89]:* We have been unable to obtain a list of EU-funded projects which directly support either commodity exchanges for cocoa, coffee or sugar or these particular markets in developing countries.

Two EU-funded projects have supported commodity marketing and development in developing countries:

Cote d'Ivoire: Grant 12 mecu: construction of wholesale market at Bouake (agricultural products)

All African, Caribbean and Pacific states, overseas countries and territories: Grant 7.75 mecu: grant to assist marketing and sales and promotion of their products.

TRANSPORT

A3 Trunk Road

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has taken to reduce noise volume for residents on the A3 trunk road in the region of Onslow village, Guildford; and if he will make on-site assessments of the noise level following the completion of recent works with particular reference to the effect of the laying of porous asphalt. [37574]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Howell, dated 18 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what measures have been taken to reduce noise volume for residents on the A3 trunk road in the region of Onslow Village, Guildford; and if on-site assessments of the noise level will be made following the completion of recent works with particular reference to the effect of the laying of porous asphalt.

The Highways Agency has provided noise barriers and porous asphalt to limit noise levels from the A3 trunk road at the worst affected properties in the region of Onslow Village.

An evaluation to the effect of these noise measures has been carried out using the calculation procedures prescribed in the Noise Insulation Regulations. The calculation method is preferred because it applies a consistent technique for assessment which overcomes the many variables that affect noise over a period of time. The Agency has no proposals for carrying out on-site assessments.

MOT Hotline

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the MOT hotline was established; how many calls it has received each year and for the first six months of 1995–96; what is the cost of running the scheme; and what income the scheme receives from the hotline number. [37502]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency.

I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mr. Paddy Tipping, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question on when the MOT hotline was established, the number of calls it has received, the cost of running the scheme and the income the scheme receives from the hotline number.

The scheme was introduced in September 1994. Since that date there have been 14,521 calls made to the hotline, of which 6,347 were made in the first 6 months of 1995 (ie January to June). The costs of running the scheme for the first year were approximately £5,500, and the income £3,425.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Justice and Home Affairs Council held on 25 and 26 September. [38347]

Mr. Howard: The United Kingdom was represented at the Council by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department. The main matters dealt with at the Council were as follows.

The Council adopted as "A" points, among other things, a regulation establishing a common visa list, a resolution on burden sharing of refugees, an action programme for judicial co-operation with the central and eastern European states and a decision on funding operational activity in the third pillar.

The Council discussed in an open session the principle issues raised by the draft convention on enforcement of decisions and rules of jurisdiction in matrimonial matters, known as the Brussels II convention. It agreed that work would continue on developing the convention, and that a new draft text should be submitted for consideration by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November.

The text of a draft convention on insolvency proceedings was initialled by the representatives of all member states. The presidency hoped that the convention would be ready for signature at the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November.

The Council welcomed in principle a draft joint action against racism and xenophobia. The purpose of the instrument would be to promote a comparable response by member states' criminal justice systems to racist and xenophobic acts committed within the European Union. The subject was examined by Ministers at the Informal Council on 14 and 15 October, with a view to concluding the joint action at the November Justice and Home Affairs Council.

The Council discussed a number of points arising from the negotiations on the draft regulations implementing the Europol convention, and agreed that work should continue on them at official level.

The Council considered requests from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the temporary protection of refugees and displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia. The Council instructed the K4 committee to examine this matter further at its next meeting in the light of a presentation by a representative from the UNHCR.

The presidency condemned terrorist acts and welcomed efforts among the member states to tackle this problem through reinforced co-operation and improved exchanges of information.

Ministers of the member states met their counterparts from the central and eastern European states, the Baltic states and Cyprus and Malta to continue the pre-accession structured dialogue with those countries on justice and home affairs. On the second day of the Council, the troika held meetings on third pillar matters with representatives from Norway, Switzerland, Morocco and the Andean pact countries.

National Lottery

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what directions he has given to the National Lottery Charities Board on how it is to consider applications for grants and how lottery money should be spent. [38348]

Mr. Howard: I have issued directions to the National Lottery Charities Board under the terms of sections 26 and 39 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 in respect of various policy and financial matters. The policy directions are meant to ensure, inter alia, that the board achieves over time the distribution of money to a reasonably wide spread of recipients, including small organisations and those operating purely at a local level, and across a reasonably wide range of charitable—whether or not charitable in law—benevolent and philanthropic activity.

The directions also require the board:

to have regard from the outset to: to the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole; the interests of the different parts of the United Kingdom; and the relative population sizes of, and appropriate socio-economic factors applicable to, the different parts of the United Kingdom;

to consider the interests of organisations with a base in the United Kingdom and working overseas;

to distribute grants in the light of these considerations.

The financial directions regulate the payment of grants and put in place safeguards to ensure that grants are used for the purposes for which they were given.

I have today placed in the Library copies of the policy and financial directions.

Roger Casement

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the review of the records relating to Roger Casement has been completed. [38349]

Mr. Howard: The review of the Roger Casement records, requested by the Institute of Contemporary History under the open government initiative, has been completed. I am pleased to announce that my Department's records will today be released at the Public Record Office.

Probation and Bail Hostels

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many instances local objections have been made to the siting of an approved probation and bail hostel since 1990; and if he will list those objections. [37185]

Mr. Howard: Since 1990, 24 approved probation and bail hostels have been opened. In all cases there were some local objections, including representations to the local planning authority and the Home Office; but it is not practicable to provide an exhaustive list.

Police Cautions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles and young persons had been cautioned by the police on *(a)* three occasions, *(b)* four occasions and *(c)* more than five occasions. [37179]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected routinely. The table shows results from a special study of all 4,500 offenders cautioned for indictable offences in one week of 1994 in England and Wales.

Persons cautioned in one week of November, 1994

England and Wales *Percentages*

Number of previous cautions	*Under 18*	*18 to 20*	*Age 21 and over*	*All*
None	82	87	89	85
One	12	9	8	10
Two	4	[2](2)	[2](2)	3
Three	[2](2)	[2](1)	[2](1)	1
Four or more	[2](1)	[2](0)	[2](1)	[2](1)

[1] Not necessarily in the study year.
[2] () Figures based on fewer than 50 people.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young persons, who were formally cautioned by the police in England and Wales, did not subsequently become the subject of a further arrest and further caution in each of the last three years for which figures each are available. [37180]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected routinely. The tables show results from special studies of those cautioned for indictable offences in England and Wales in one sample week each in 1985, 1988 and 1991. Table 1 shows the percentage of offenders in each sample not subsequently convicted within two years of being cautioned. More detail for part of the 1991 sample on subsequent convictions and cautions for part of the 1991 sample is included in table 2.

Table 1: The proportion of offenders who had not been convicted of a further offence within two years of being cautioned

England and Wales *Percentages*

Age at caution	*Year of study 1985*	*1988*	*1991*
Under 18	83	80	79
18 to 20	(85)	77	77

Table 2: The proportion of offenders who had not been subsequently convicted or recautioned within two years of being cautioned[1]

England and Wales

Age at caution	*Percentage not recautioned*	*Percentage not subsequently convicted*	*Percentage neither recautioned nor subsequently convicted*
Under 18	69	76	55
18 to 20	[2](92)	[2](78)	[2](71)

[1] Based on information supplied by 10 police forces on 422 offenders cautioned in one week on November 1991.
[2] Figures based on fewer than 50 people.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 15, *(b)* 16 and *(c)* 17 year-old-boys were sentenced to a period of custody during (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992. [37187]

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table.

Number of boys aged 15, 16 and 17 sentenced to immediate custody[1] at all courts 1990 to 1992

England and Wales

Age	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
15	477	573	519
16	1,070	1,047	981
17	2,699	2,482	2,287

[1] Detention in a young offender institution.

Combination Orders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many combination orders were made under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 in *(a)* each quarter and *(b)* each full year since the provisions came into force. [37183]

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table.

Number of combination orders[1] made by type of offence, year and quarter 1992 to 1994[2]

England and Wales

Year/quarter	*Indictable offences*	*Summary non-motoring offences*	*Summary motoring offices*	*All offences*
1992	897	103	274	1,274
1993	6,090	780	2,070	8,940
1994[2]	8,110	1,080	3,209	12,399
1992 Q4	897	103	274	1,274
1993 Q1	1,275	169	407	1,851
Q2	1,421	167	440	1,028
Q3	1,595	202	563	2,360
Q4	1,799	242	660	2,701
1994 Q1[2]	2,137	257	781	3,175
Q2[2]	1,818	242	766	2,826
Q3[2]	2,135	269	816	3,220
Q4[2]	2,020	312	846	3,178

[1] Introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which came into effect on 1 October 1992.
[2] Provisional.

Handcuffs

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of rigid and chain link handcuffs used by police officers are manufactured in the United Kingdom. [37079]

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have suffered injury from the use of rigid handcuffs in the latest period for which figures are available. [37078]

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held centrally. I understand that in 1994 the Police Complaints Authority received some 300 complaints about handcuffs, including both the traditional style and the rigid handcuff.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effect of the use of rigid handcuffs on the level of assaults upon police officers. [37080]

Mr. Maclean: I understand that this type of handcuff is quicker to apply and provides a more effective restraint upon a prisoner than the traditional design. I have no information as to the effect of the rigid handcuff on the level of assaults on police officers.

Supervision Orders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many supervision orders with residential requirements have been made by the courts in England and Wales since the implementation of the Children Act 1989. [37188]

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table.

Number of supervision orders with residential requirements[1] made by type of court 1991[2] to 1994[3]

England and Wales

Type of court/Year	*Total supervision orders*	*Supervision order with residential requirement*
Magistrates court		
1991	5,948	(2)
1992	5,616	164
1993	6,987	172
1994[3]	8,847	226
Crown Court		
1991	339	(2)
1992	330	10
1993	308	14
1994[3]	343	12
All courts		
1991	6,287	(2)
1992	5,946	174
1993	7,295	186
1994[3]	9,190	238

[1] Introduced under provisions of Children and Young Person Act 1969, section 12AA, as amended by Children Act 1989 which came into effect 14 October 1991.
[2] Not available. Data not collected separately for this disposal until 1 January 1992.
[3] Provisional.

SCOTLAND

Local Services

16. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local services. [36044]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 10 November.

Local Government Reorganisation

17. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the implementation of the reorganisation of local government. [36046]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 10 November.

26. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss reorganisation of local government. [36055]

Mr. Kynoch: My right hon. Friend and I are scheduled to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 10 November as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Scottish Economy

18. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the problems of the Scottish economy. [36047]

19. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the General Council of the Scottish Trade Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement. [36048]

20. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy. [36049]

Mr. Kynoch: My right hon. Friend meets representatives of the Scottish TUC from time to time to discuss a range of issues concerning the Scottish economy. Over the summer he met STUC representatives on two such occasions.

Training

21. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on responsibility for training in Scotland. [36050]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The Secretary of State for Scotland has had responsibility for training policy and public expenditure provision for training programmes in Scotland since 1 April last year; and he exercises this responsibility within the framework of overall strategic priorities for Britain.

Local Government (Corruption and Nepotism)

22. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to ensure Scottish local authorities are free from corruption and nepotism. [36051]

Mr. Kynoch: Together with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has appointed a task force to review existing mechanisms and procedures governing local government conduct in Scotland.

European Regional Fund

23. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional fund since the fund's inception. [36052]

Mr. Kynoch: Since the inception of the European regional development fund in 1975, Scotland has benefited from awards totalling almost £1.5 billion.

Governance of Scotland

24. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he plans to introduce relating to the governance of Scotland. [36053]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am actively considering a number of measures which will improve the governance of Scotland.

Acute Service Provision, Lanarkshire

25. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the level of acute service provision in Lanarkshire. [36054]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the responsibility of all health boards in Scotland to provide safe and efficient health care which best meets the overall needs and priorities of the population.

Lanarkshire health board seeks continually to improve the full range of health services it purchases for the people of Lanarkshire.

Local Government Services

27. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government services. [36056]

Mr. Kynoch: My right hon. Friend and I are scheduled to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 10 November as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Public Transport, Fife

28. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the provision of public transport in Fife. [36057]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The provision of public transport services in Fife is a matter for the train operating companies and the bus companies. Fife regional council also takes an active interest in promoting public transport in the area.

In February 1994, following consultation with Fife regional council, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agreed to provide additional capital allocations of up to £8.8 million to Fife for planned improvements to rail services. The regional council and ScotRail are now taking this forward.

The future of rail services in Fife has been contractually assured for the first time by their inclusion in the ScotRail and InterCity east coast passenger service requirements.

Scottish Parliament

29. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received calling for a Scottish Parliament. [36059]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since I assumed office as Secretary of State in July, I have received 14 letters on constitutional matters, of which only three were in support of a Scottish Parliament.

Health Boards

30. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the health boards in Scotland to discuss finance. [36060]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I meet chairmen of health boards regularly to discuss a wide range of strategic issues affecting the management of the NHS in Scotland. Many of those issues may have financial implications. The next such meeting will take place on 8 December 1995.

31. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of health boards to discuss the health service [36061]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I met the chairmen of all Scotland's health boards and NHS trusts on 5 October.

33. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to amend the functions of health boards in Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [36063]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no such plans.

However, I have established a working group, chaired by Professor Sir Robert Shields, to produce and consolidate guidance on the developing roles and responsibilities of health boards. A copy of the group's remit and a list of members has been placed in the library.

Road Upgrading, Gordon

32. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the upgrading of the A96 and A92 within the constituency of Gordon. [36062]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In December 1988, I announced a comprehensive six-point plan to improve the A96 comprising dual carriageways, bypasses, increased overtaking opportunities and accident remedial measures. Bypasses have been constructed at Inverurie, Bucksburn and Lhanbryde and others have completed their public local inquiry stages. In Gordon, work is progressing on the preparation of bypasses at Kintore and Blackburn.

On the A92, good progress is being made on the preparation of the improvement between Balmedie and Tipperty. Earlier design work has been reviewed and draft orders can be published once the final phase of evaluation has been completed. Other improvements are being made on the A92 and speed cameras have been introduced to improve road safety.

Housing (Glasgow)

34. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet Glasgow district council to discuss housing conditions. [36064]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. However, one of my first visits as Housing Minister was to Easterhouse in Glasgow on 8 August 1995. I saw at first hand the problems of that estate and the significant investment programmes being devoted to tackling them. Scottish Homes expects to invest around £15 million in Easterhouse in 1995–96. The specific developments I viewed involved over 100 new or improved units costing just over £6 million.

I have also accepted invitations from the council to speak at the city housing conference on energy which is being held in November and to visit the district later in the year to see the housing conditions for myself and to learn how the council is utilising the £116 million capital resources available to it for housing investment this year. I look forward to hearing more about the council's efforts to involve the private sector in meeting Glasgow's housing needs.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number and area of Forestry Commission woods in *(a)* England *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales sold since 1981; and, of those, the total number and area of woods in each country sold for which legal agreements were made and are currently enforceable to protect public access on foot. [37499]

Mr. Kynoch: The number and area of Forestry Commission woods sold since 1981 are as follows:

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
Number of woods sold	986	801	848
Area of woods sold (hectares)	33,629	73,780	16,462

The number and area of Forestry Commission woods sold since the introduction of access agreements in 1991 are as follows:

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
Number of woods sold	185	220	253
Area of woods sold (hectares)	4,037	26,508	4,688
Number of public access agreements	6	1	16
Area covered by agreements (hectares)	136	20	350

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to publish a comprehensive guide for sale to the public of all woods owned by the Forestry Commission to which public access on foot is freely available. [37501]

Mr. Kynoch: The Forestry Commission already provides guides, leaflets and other publicity and it is considering ways of providing further information about those of its woodlands which are freely open to the public on foot.

Monklands District Council

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps the Government are taking about the operation of Monklands district council. [36058]

Mr. Kynoch: The inquiry announced by the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), on 28 June is under way and any follow-up action will be determined in the light of its conclusions.

Housing Stock (Berwickshire)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to make a statement on the proposed transfer of Berwickshire district council's housing stock to Berwickshire housing association. [36045]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved Berwickshire district council's application for consent to transfer the stock on 30 August and the transfer has now been completed.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Contributions Agency

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list *(a)* as at May 1994 and *(b)* as at the latest available date the addresses of bases of clerical staff of the Contributions Agency; [37221]

(2) what plans he has further to centralise the activities of the Contributions Agency; and if he will make a statement; [37222]

(3) to what extent the Contributions Agency office at Inverness is affected by plans to centralise activities of the Contributions Agency. [37223]

Mr. Heald: The administration of the Contributions Agency is a matter for Mrs. Faith Boardman, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mrs. Faith Boardman to Mrs. Margaret Ewing, dated 17 October 1995:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency, I have responsibility for answering questions about operational matters relating to the Agency. I have been asked to reply to your questions about the addresses of bases of the Agency's clerical staff, plans to centralise the Agency's activities and the effects on the Agency's office in Inverness of these plans. In view of the nature of the questions I have combined the responses.

The tables in Annex 1 show the offices with a clerical presence in the Agency's Field Operations in May 1994 while those at Annex 2 show the position at September 1995. In addition to our Field Operations, clerical staff were also based (both in May 1994 and September 1995) at our Centre in Newcastle and Civil Recoveries Sections in Bootle, Cardiff, Edinburgh and King's Lynn.

A recent business analysis of our Field Operations and a review of the pay and grading structure have recommended significant changes to the organisation.

In 1991, the Agency began to move towards a Field Operations network of some 184 Field Offices supported by 90 National Insurance Outsations. Current research has shown that there is a need to match more closely Contributions Agency outlets to customer requirements while still maintaining nationwide cover for the administration of the NI scheme. Information has been obtained about density of business, density of population and locations of the

self-employed. This information has been incorporated into the design of a new network to consist of around 100–115 locations, comprising 70–75 Field Offices and 30–40 Inspector outstations, which will maintain the commitment to service delivery outlined in the Contributions Agency Contributors' and Employers' Charters. It is proposed to achieve the rationalisation of the Field Operations network within the next two to five years. There are no further plans to centralise beyond the current proposals.

In Scotland, it is proposed that clerical processing work which does not require face to face contact will be centred in the major cities. A network of National Insurance Inspector outlets will be developed to provide a local service to the Agency's customers by appointment at a local office of the Department of Social Security, or by visit.

Under these proposals the Contributions Agency office at Inverness will operate as a National Insurance outlet with clerical processing at either Aberdeen or Edinburgh.

I hope that my reply proves helpful. Please let me know if I can be of any more assistance.

Contributions Agency Field Operations Clerical Processing Locations as at May 1994

Aberdare
Aberdeen North
Aberystwyth
Accrington
Acton
Airdrie
Aldershot
Andover
Ashford
Ashington
Ashton under Lyne
Aylesbury
Ayr
Balham
Banbury
Barking
Barnet
Barnsley East
Barrow
Basildon
Basingstoke
Bath
Bathgate
Bedford
Bexley
Birmingham Ladywood
Birmingham Perry Barr
Birmingham Ravenhurst
Birmingham South Yardley
Blackpool North
Blackpool South
Bloomsbury
Boston
Bournemouth
Bracknell
Bradford West
Brighton
Bristol South
Bristol West
Bristol Horfield
Brixton
Bromley
Bury St. Edmonds
Bury
Caernarfon
Cambridge
Cannock
Canterbury
Cardiff Gabalfa
Carlisle
Chatham
Carmarthen
Chelmsford
Chester le Street
Chester
Chesterfield
Chichester
Clydebank
Colchester
Colwyn Bay
Coventry
Crawley
Cricklewood
Crewe
Croydon
Cumbernauld
Cwmbran
Darlington
Dartford
Dewsbury
Derby Heritage Gate
Doncaster East
Dover
Dudley North
Dumfries
Dumbarton
Dundee East
Ealing
Eastbourne
Ebbw Vale
East Kilbride
Edgware
Edmonton
Edinburgh (Argyle House)
Epsom
Eston
Euston
Exeter
Falkirk
Fareham
Farnworth
Fulham
Galashiels
Gateshead
Glasgow North
Glasgow South
Glasgow Laurieston
Gloucester
Grays

Greenock
Guildford
Halifax
Hamilton
Harlow
Harrow
Hartlepool
Hastings
Havant
Havering
Haywards Heath
Hemel Hempstead
Hereford
Hertford
Highgate
High Wycombe
Hither Green
Hounslow
Hoxton
Huddersfield
Hull
Ilford
Ilkeston
Inverness
Ipswich
Keighley
Kennington Park
Kensington
Kidderminster
Kilmarnock
Kings Lynn
Kingston
Kirkcaldy
Lancaster
Launceston
Leamington Spa
Leicester (Leicester House)
Leeds East
Leeds North
Leeds North West
Leeds West
Lincoln
Liverpool (St. Martins House)
Llangefni
London City
Lowestoft
Luton
Maidstone
Manchester Bishopsgate
Mansfield
Manchester Chorlton
Mansfield
Milton Keynes
Neasden
Newbury
New Forest
Newcastle upon Tyne (St. James)
Newham
New Malden
Nothallerton
Northampton
North Shields
Nottingham (Shakespeare St.)
Nottingham (Station St.)
Nuneaton
Norwich Chantry
Norwich Mountergate
Oldham
Oxford
Paddington
Paisley
Peckham
Penzance
Peterborough
Peterlee
Plymouth
Pontypridd
Poole
Poplar
Portsmouth North
Preston
Reading
Redditch
Redhill
Rhyl
Rochdale
Rossendale
Rotherham South
Salisbury
Salford South
Scarborough
Scunthorpe
Sheffield (Hutton Buildings)
Shrewsbury
Skelmerdale
Slough
Southampton
Southend
Southport
Southwick
St. Albans
St. Austell
St. Helens
Stevenage
Stirling
Stockport North
Stockton
Stoke
Sunderland North
Sutton
Swansea
Thames North (Scarborough St.)
Torbay
Tunbridge Wells
Uxbridge
Wakefield

Wallasey
Walsall
Walthamstow
Warrington
Watford
Wellingborough
West Bromwich
Weymouth
Wigan
Winchester
Wishaw
Woking
Wolverhampton North
Wood Green
Woolwich
Worcester
Workington
Wrexham
York

Annex 2

Clerical Processing Locations as at September 1995

Aberdeen North
Aberystwyth
Accrington
Aldershot
Ashington
Aylesbury
Ayr
Balham
Banbury
Barking
Barnet
Barnsley East
Barrow
Basildon
Bath
Bathgate
Bedford
Birmingham Ladywood
Birmingham Perry Barr
Birmingham Ravenhurst
Birmingham South Yardley
Bexley
Blackpool South
Bloomsbury
Boston
Bournemouth
Bradford West
Bristol Horfield
Bromley
Bury St. Edmunds
Caernarfon
Cambridge
Cannock
Cardiff Gabalfa
Carlisle
Chatham
Carmarthen
Chelmsford
Chester
Chichester
Colchester
Colwyn Bay
Coventry
Cricklewood
Crewe
Croydon
Cwmbran
Darlington
Dartford
Dewsbury
Derby Heritage Gate
Doncaster East
Dover
Dudley North
Dundee East
Ealing
Ebbw Vale
Edgware
Edmonton
Epsom
Edinburgh (Argyle House)
Eston
Euston
Exeter
Falkirk
Fareham
Farnworth
Fulham
Gateshead
Glasgow North
Glasgow South
Gloucester
Guildford
Halifax
Hamilton
Harlow
Harrow
Hartlepool
Hastings
Haverfordwest
Havering
Hendon
Haywards Heath
Hemel Hempstead
Hereford
Hertford
Highgate
High Wycombe
Hoxton
Huddersfield
Hull
Ilford
Inverness
Ipswich

Kings Lynn
Kingston
Lancaster
Launceston
Leamington Spa
Leicester (Wellington St.)
Leeds East
Leeds North West
Leeds West
Lincoln
Liverpool (St. Martins House)
Llangefni
London City
Lowestoft
Luton
Maidstone
Manchester Bishopsgate
Mansfield
Milton Keynes
Neasden
Newham
New Malden
Northallerton
Northampton
Nuneaton
Nottingham (Shakespeare St.)
Nottingham (Station St.)
Norwich Chantry
Oxford
Paddington
Paisley
Peckham
Penzance
Peterborough
Plymouth
Pontypridd
Poole
Poplar
Portsmouth North
Preston
Reading
Redditch
Rhyl
Rotherham South
Salisbury
Scarborough
Shrewsbury
Sheffield (Hutton Buildings)
Slough
Southampton
Southend
St. Albans
St. Austell
Stevenage
Stockport North
Stockton
Stoke (Hanley)
Sutton
Sunderland North
Swansea
Thames North (Scarborough St.)
Torbay
Tunbridge Wells
Wakefield
Wallasey
Walthamstow
Warrington
Watford
Wellingborough
West Bromwich
Weymouth
Wigan
Wolverhampton North
Wood Green
Woolwich
Worcester
Workington
Wrexham
York

Disclosure of Information

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the matters which staff of his Department are precluded by employment conditions from discussing with their Member of Parliament. [37101]

Mr. Burt: The rules of the disclosure of information by civil servants are set out in the civil service management code, a copy of which is in the Library. Additionally, staff in his Department are prohibited by the Social Security Administration Act 1992 from disclosing, without lawful authority, any information relating to individuals which they have acquired during the course of their employment and which has not officially been made public.

Unemployment Benefits

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what regulations apply in the case of those claimants who are deemed to be capable of some work as a result of the all-work test and have been continuously employed for two years or more. [37028]

Mr. Roger Evans: Claimants who are capable of some work and claim unemployment benefit have to satisfy the normal conditions for receipt, including the need to be available for and actively seek work. Claimants are allowed to restrict their availability if the restrictions are reasonable in view of their physical or mental condition. They need not relinquish their contract of employment in order to be unemployed, provided no earnings or retention fees are received, no work is done and there is no obligation to remain at the employer's disposal.

Travel Allowances

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of States for Social Security if he will list the total cost of travel expenses claimed by civil servants using their own vehicles for official business in each of the last five years

in his Department; and what would have been the saving in the last year if the maximum rate that could be claimed was set at the lowest rate. [36620]

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what rates of travel allowance may be claimed by civil servants in his Department when using their own vehicles for official business. [36619]

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

DSS mileage allowances
Part 1—Standard rate mileage allowances

Engine capacity (cc)	*Up to 1500*	*Over 1500*
(1) Motor cars		
Rate per mile for the first 5,000 miles	34p	43p
Rate for each mile beyond 5,000 miles	19p	23p

Engine capacity (cc)	*Up to 125*	*Over 125*
(2) Motor cycles		
Rate per mile for the first 4,000 miles		
(a) third party insurance	14.6p	22.1p
(b) comprehensive insurance	16.2p	25.3p
Rate for each mile beyond 4,000 miles	6.1p	9.0p

(3) Official passenger and equipment supplements	
First passenger	2p per mile
Each additional passenger	1p per mile
Equipment	2p per mile

PART 2—PUBLIC TRANSPORT RATE ALLOWANCES (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE COVER)

(1) Motor cars

Up to 1500cc: 19p per mile

Over 1500 cc: 23p per mile

(2) Official passenger supplement

First passenger: 2p per mile

Each additional passenger: 1p per mile

PART 3—PEDAL CYCLE RATE

6p per mile

Housing Benefit

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what housing benefit exists in each EU country; and if he will make a statement. [36417]

Mr. Roger Evans: Information currently available on EU countries is as follows[1]:

Austria:

The federal provinces provide social assistance payments to cover some or all of the costs of public or private rented housing and associated heating costs.

Belgium

There is no separate, generalised system of housing benefit. Some social assistance payments may include a supplementary allowance towards housing costs.

Denmark:

A housing allowance is payable to those on low incomes and social assistance to meet housing costs above a level determined by the family circumstances of the claimant.

Finland:

The social assistance allowance may include a supplementary element the level of which is at the discretion of the local welfare office, to cover reasonable housing costs. Besides social assistance there are three income-related schemes paying housing allowances to people on low incomes, pensioners and students. Allowances may be granted for both owned and rented accommodation and may cover up to 80 per cent. of housing costs. Those in receipt of social assistance may receive additional help to meet the remaining 20 per cent. of costs.

France:

Income-related housing benefits are available to assist with mortgage interest payments and rents in social and private rented accommodation.

Germany:

Those claiming social assistance receive supplementary amounts to cover reasonable housing costs. Owner occupiers may receive payments of mortgage interest up to a specified level which varies according to local circumstances and, if they have no realisable savings, loans to cover capital repayments. An income-related housing benefit is payable to those living in private or social rented housing and to owner occupiers.

Greece:

Housing benefit is available to those aged over 65 without social insurance cover and whose only resources are the minimum pension allowance. The benefit covers rents in the private sector only and is paid directly to landlords.

Ireland:

Rent and mortgage supplements are available under the supplementary welfare allowance schemes. Rent supplements may be paid to people in privately rented housing and social housing provided by voluntary housing associations. Mortgage supplements to cover mortgage interest payments only may be paid to owner-occupiers.

Italy:

There is no housing benefit scheme.

Luxembourg:

Rent allowances, based on the difference between gross rent and 10 per cent. of the amount of the main income support benefit—RMG—payable to the claimant, up to a fixed monthly maximum are available as part of the RMG.

Netherlands:

A means-tested housing benefit is available to those claiming General Assistance whose rent or mortgage interest is above as specified level and below a set limit. The benefit is only available for flats and houses: people renting a single room are not eligible. Where the rent or mortgage interest is higher than the specified ceiling, a temporary housing cost supplement may be paid through general assistance.

Portugal:

A means-tested housing allowance is available for those in public, social and private rented housing. An emergency housing benefit is available for those in sudden need as a result of a death, unemployment or invalidity.

Spain:

There is no system of housing benefit. Discretionary one-off payments may be made to assist with housing costs in cases of particular need.

Sweden:

There are three forms of housing assistance: (i) people on social assistance may have reasonable housing costs (rent or mortgage interest) added to the social assistance standard from which their level of benefit is calculated; (ii) a general housing benefit, the level of which is dependent on the composition of the household, the income of the household and the cost of the accommodation, and which is counted as income when calculating social assistance; (iii) for pensioners, an income tested housing supplement, the level of which varies between municipalities.

Note:

1. International comparisons of housing benefit are complex and should be treated with caution. In many countries help with housing costs differs from that in the UK because of their different social, cultural and economic traditions and circumstances, including different social security and taxation systems and different emphasis on bricks-and-mortar subsidies as opposed to personal subsidies. In addition, housing standards and housing costs vary considerably, both between and within countries, and in some countries housing benefits form part of the system of social assistance.

Mr. Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to equalise the subsidy effect of housing benefit between landlords with protected tenants and other landlords; and if he will make a statement. [36785]

Mr. Evans: We have no plans to introduce changes to the current arrangements for subsidising local authorities' housing benefit expenditure for rent allowances paid in respect of protected tenancies or other tenancies.

War Pensions (Nuclear Test Veterans)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are available to ex-service personnel accepted by the War Pensions Agency as suffering chromosome damage attributable to service. [37504]

Mr. Heald: War disablement pensions or gratuities may be awarded to ex-service personnel for any disablement which is attributable to service in the Armed Forces.

The amount payable depends upon the medically assessed degree of disablement.

Supplementary allowances may be payable in addition to the basic pension or gratuity.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the service personnel involved in the British nuclear test programme have been found to be suffering from chromosome damage attributable to service. [37505]

Mr. Heald: A pensions appeal tribunal has found, in one particular case, a claimant to be suffering from chromosome damage attributable to service.

The Secretary of State has applied for leave to appeal to the High Court on the ground that the tribunal's decision is wrong in law.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war pensions have been awarded in *(a)* 1980 to 1985, *(b)* 1986 to 1990 and *(c)* 1991 to 1995 to ex-service personnel as a result of injury or medical conditions attributable to participation in the British nuclear test programmes in Australia and the South Pacific. [37506]

Mr. Heald: The information in the table relates to war disablement pensions or gratuities awarded to ex-service personnel who, during their career, participated in the British nuclear weapons tests programme. These records do not specify whether the accepted injuries or other medical condition are related to service at the test sites or to some other period of service.

Period	*Number of awards*
1980 to 1985	1
1986 to 1990	4
1991 to 1995	289

TREASURY

Income Tax

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total cost of tax-free allowances and other tax breaks to individuals; and if he will indicate the proportion of income tax which would not need to be levied if the allowances and breaks were not in place. [37073]

Mr. Jack: This depends on what the hon. Member considers a "tax break". Table 1.6 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1995, a copy of which can be found in the Library, shows the estimated cost of allowances, tax expenditures and structural reliefs against income tax.

A tax system without allowances, which charges tax from the first £1 of income would bring many more people into tax, including 7 million pensioners and the unemployed.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the EC Budget Council meeting held on 24 July. [37743]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I represented the United Kingdom at the Budget Council on 24 July. The Council considered that Commission's preliminary draft budget for 1996. The draft budget established by the Council totalled 86.0 billion ecu or £71.8 billion in commitment appropriations and 81.4 billion ecu or £67.9 billion in payment appropriations. The draft budget would require own resources totalling 1.1885 per cent. of Community gross national product, compared with the existing own resources ceiling of 1.20 per cent. of Community GNP. The draft budget is within the financial perspective ceilings.

The Council also discussed a proposal by the French for an increase in transport Trans-European Networks of 100 mecu or £83.4 million. The Council agreed to accept an increase of 50 mecu or £41.7 million, with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands voting against. No other formal votes were taken.

The summary table compares the outcome of the Budget Council with the proposals in the Commission's amended preliminary draft budget by reference to the financial perspective ceilings.

	Financial Perspective Expenditure ceilings[1]		Preliminary draft budget[2]		Budget Council draft budget	
	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million
Commitment appropriations						
1. Common agricultural policy	40,828	34,069	40,828	34,069	40,828	34,069
2. Structural operations	29,131	24,308	29,131	24,308	29,131	23,308
3. Internal policies	5,337	4,453	5,267	4,395	5,082	4,241
4. External action	5,264	4,393	5,157	4,303	5,104	4,259
5. Administrative expenditure	4,191	3,497	4,132	3,448	4,022	3,356
6. Reserves	1,152	961	1,152	961	1,152	961
7. Compensation	701	585	701	585	701	585
Total Commitments	86,604	72,267	86,368	72,069	86,020	71,779
Total payment appropriations	82,192	68,685	82,015	68,437	81,360	67,890

[1] Throughout this reply the rate of £1=1.1984 ecu has been used—the rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last month, 29 September.

[2] As amended in letter of amendment No. 1 from the figure which appeared in the Commission's overview of the PDB for 1996 to take account of the higher bid for agriculture under category 1.

Note:

Further information is contained in the explanatory memorandum 9145/95 on the draft budget, which was deposited to Parliament on 5 October.

The European Parliament will consider the draft budget for 1996 at its plenary in October. The Parliament's amendments and modifications will be considered at the Second Budget Council in November. The European Parliament's Second Reading is likely to be in mid-December.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Engagements

Mr. Hain: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) if he will list the meetings he attended and the people he met on *(a)* Wednesday 19 July, *(b)* Tuesday 18 July and *(c)* Monday 17 July; [36758]

(2) if he will list his engagements for the first two weeks of October. [37625]

The Deputy Prime Minister: On each day, I had a number of meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) if he will list his engagements for August; [37623]

(2) if he will list his engagements for September. [37624]

The Deputy Prime Minister: On those days when I was in the office, I had a number of meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

HEALTH

Winter Mortality

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is held by his Department on excess winter deaths in *(a)* countries of the European Union and *(b)* other G7 countries over the last 10 years; what is the average temperature in the relevant four-month period in each of these countries; and if he will set out the information showing excess winter mortality in numerical and percentage terms. [37313]

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available centrally on either excess winter deaths or temperature in other countries. Data on temperature in England and Wales is held by the Meteorological Office and is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

The table shows excess winter mortality in England and Wales over the last 10 years.

Excess winter mortality, England and Wales

Period	Excess winter deaths	Percentage
1984–85	42,278	26.5
1985–86	49,446	27.7
1986–87	26,449	14.9
1987–88	33,098	18.4
1988–89	21,235	11.8
1989–90	47,083	26.3
1990–91	37,845	21.5
1991–92	24,845	19.9
1992–93	25,656	14.5
1993–94	25,890	14.2

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the success or otherwise of the private finance initiative in hospital capital works; and if he will make a statement. [37569]

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) on 16 October and to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) on 28 June at col *594*.

Read Codes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give details of the tendering procedure for the contract for the development of a Read codes system to apply to the national health service; what business case was presented before signing the contract; and if he will list any significant revisions to the contract subsequent to signing it; [37570]

(2) if the arrangements for the contract awarded to Loughborough university for the development of Read codes and its application to the national health service complied with European Commission rules on public sector tendering; whether variations in the conventional departmental and Treasury rules were required in the placing of the contract; and if he will give the value of the contract in year 1 and prospectively in years 2 and 3; [37571]

(3) if he will make a statement on the development contract for the introduction of Read codes as the basis for computerised coding in the national health service. [37572]

Mr. Sackville: In 1990 all rights to Read codes were purchased on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health from their inventor Dr. James Read. The purchase price was independently assessed at the time by experts from Hambros Bank Ltd. Further development of the codes was then given to the national health service for coding and classification, an NHS body located in Loughborough which was created for the purpose and is a part of the NHS Executive. There has therefore never been a development contract with Loughborough university or any other body and the questions of tendering and associated procedures do not apply.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government intend to respond to the third report of the Health Committee on Breast Cancer Services, HC 324; and if he will make a statement. [38327]

Mr. Sackville: Copies of the Government's response to the Health Committee's third report on Breast Cancer Services have been laid before the House today. I warmly welcome the Committee's report, particularly its commendation of the achievements of the national health service breast screening programme and its support for the new strategic framework for the development of cancer services.

WALES

Modern Apprenticeships

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people under the modern manufacturing apprenticeships scheme enjoy employed status. [37020]

Mr. Richards: A total of 498 young people started modern apprenticeships in manufacturing engineering in Wales in 1994–95. Of these, 473 or 95 per cent. now have employed status.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are in receipt of a bursary under the modern manufacturing apprenticeship scheme and what proportion this is of the total number of such apprenticeships. [37019]

Mr. Richards: A total of 498 young people started modern apprenticeships in manufacturing engineering in Wales in 1994–95. Of these, 188 or 37.75 per cent., were in receipt of a bursary. All but a few have completed their first year of training and are now in employment. Figures for the 1995–96 apprentice intake are not yet available.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total Government expenditure to date upon the modern manufacturing apprenticeship scheme. [37023]

Mr. Richards: Modern apprenticeships in manufacturing engineering were introduced in Wales in 1994–95. Total Government expenditure, through Welsh training and enterprise councils, in support of modern apprenticeships in 1994–95 was £9.5 million.

Rates of Pay

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the average hourly rate of pay for men employed in manufacturing *(a)* in Mid Glamorgan and *(b)* in Wales; and what percentage these represent of the United Kingdom average. [37244]

Mr. Richards: The available information covers Great Britain only and is shown in the following table:

Average hourly earnings of full-time men in manufacturing[1]: 1994

	Average hourly earnings excluding overtime (pence)	*Per cent. of GB average*
Mid Glamorgan	677	83.4
Wales	752	92.6
Great Britain	812	100.0

Source:
New Earnings Survey.
[1] At April, full-time men on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the average hourly rate of pay in food retailing in *(a)* Mid Glamorgan and *(b)* Wales; and what percentage these represent of the United Kingdom average. [37245]

Mr. Richards: Reliable estimates are not available.

Residential Homes

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales; (1) what estimate his Department has made of the number of complaints made about care in *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes last year. [37011]

(2) what estimate his Department has made of the number of care assistants in residential homes that have nursing qualifications; [37016]

(3) what estimate his Department has made of the average gross and net profits made by private residential and nursing homes. [37017]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has of the number of residential homes and nursing homes in Wales. [37014]

Mr. Richards: There were 681 residential care homes and 391 private nursing homes open on 31 March 1994.

Unemployment

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many men are currently out of work in Wales: how

many of these have been unemployed for more than *(a)* six months and *(b)* 12 months and what percentages these are of the total numbers out of work; and what were the equivalent figures in 1979. [37403]

Mr. Richards: The number of men on the claimant unemployment count, not seasonally adjusted, in Wales at August 1995 was 83,118. The latest figures by duration of unemployment are for July 1995, when 46,007 men on the claimant count in Wales had been unemployed for more than six months and 30,167 had been unemployed for more than 12 months, representing 55 per cent. and 36 per cent. respectively of all men on the claimant count. Equivalent figures for 1979 are not available.

Student Grants

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated average value of a maintenance grant for students in local further education made by each county council in Wales last year. [37217]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is in the following table.

Average Discretionary Awards made for maintenance to students in further education in Welsh LEAs for 1993–94

LEA	*Average award per recipient £*
Clwyd	250
Dyfed	590
Gwent	550
Gwynedd	220
Mid Glamorgan	370
Powys	660
South Glamorgan	70
West Glamorgan	550
Wales Total[1]	350

Note:

[1] Wales total has been grossed to compensate for partial returns. Average figures have been rounded to the nearest £10.

Source:

F503G.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many maintenance grants have been awarded in each county to assist students in local further education during each of the last three years. [37216]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is in the following table:

Total number of discretionary awards made to students in further education by Welsh LEAS

LEA	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Clwyd	2,240	3,090	1,860
Dyfed	1,980	1,600	990
Gwent	70	4,460	4,510
Gwynedd	3,020	3,200	3,210
Mid Glamorgan	4.500	4,950	3,570
Powys	780	410	630
South Glamorgan	390	2,630	3,550
West Glamorgan	430	280	890
Wales Total[1]	13,400	20,610	19,210

[1] Wales total has been grossed to compensate for partial returns.

Source:

F503G.

Training Expenditure

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department has spent on youth training and adult training in *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1994 and *(c)* 1995. [37057]

Mr. Richards: The information requested for the financial years 1992–93 to 1994–95 is as follows:

£000's

	Youth training including youth credits	*Adult training*[1]
1992–93	39,408	53,508
1993–94	40,424	54,854
1994–95	42,683	63,981

Note:

Comparable information for 1995–96 will not be available until the Appropriation Accounts are completed next year.

[1]Employment training and employment action was replaced by training for work in April 1993.

Source:

Appropriation accounts.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of each Welsh TEC's budget is spent on training unemployed *(a)* adults and *(b)* 16 and 17-year-olds. [37056]

Mr. Richards: The percentage of each Welsh TEC's budget spent on training unemployed adults during 1994–95 financial year is shown in the following table. The figures include trainees who were without jobs prior to the start of their training but who acquired employed status on or during the course of that training. Comparable information for 16 and 17-year-olds is not available separately and is therefore provided for those young people, within the 16 to 24 age group who are eligible for youth training.

Percentage of welsh TEC budgets spent on training unemployed during 1994–95

	(a) Adults	*(b) 16 to 24-year-olds*
Gwent	24 per cent.	36 per cent.
Mid Glamorgan	23 per cent.	38 per cent.
North East Wales	16 per cent.	39 per cent.
Powys	15 per cent.	32 per cent.
South Glamorgan	24 per cent.	35 per cent.
Targed	20 per cent.	35 per cent.
West Wales	22 per cent.	36 per cent.

Training for Work

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list comparative figures on the number of adults entering training for work programmes for *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1994 and *(c)* 1995 to date. [37306]

Mr. Richards: The information requested, by financial year, is as follows:

Training for Work

	Starts
1993–94	18,995
1994–95	19,439
1995–96[1]	5,072

[1]To 10 September

Source:

TEC Management Information.

Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date his Department first received representations in relation to the acquisition of land from Associated British Ports for the purposes of constructing the proposed Cardiff Bay opera house; on what date representations were received with particular reference to potential conflicts of interest; on what date the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust transaction with Associated British Ports was completed; and on what date the conflict of interest issue was resolved. [35234]

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his answer, 18 July 1995, c. 1200-1]:* I regret that there was an error in the original reply. The reference to the Cardiff Bay development corporation was incorrect and should have read the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust. The parties to the heads of agreement were the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust and Associated British Ports.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Board

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish a revised framework document for the Intervention Board executive agency. [38031]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am pleased to say that a revised policy and resources framework document for 1995 has been published and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 25 September and if he will make a statement. [38030]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At this meeting, the Council set the rate of rotational set-aside for arable crops to be harvested in 1996 at 10 per cent. It also set the rate for non-rotational set-aside at the same level. This compares with 1995 rates of 12 per cent. and 17 per cent.—12 per cent. and 15 per cent. in the United Kingdom—for the two types of set-aside respectively. The decision was taken by qualified majority vote, with Portugal voting against.

The decision is a good compromise between the aim of ensuring adequate supplies and avoiding a renewed build up of stocks with a risk of increased budgetary costs. A single set-aside rate will make the scheme simpler for farmers which I welcome as wholly in keeping with my desire for greater deregulation.

At my insistence, the Commission has promised, for the current marketing year as well as for 1996–97, to manage the market so as to ensure that cereals market prices are consistent with the aims of the 1992 reforms, and that priority in supply is given to consumers within the European Union in particular livestock farmers. I intend to make sure this undertaking is properly fulfilled.

The Council also adopted a directive which will impose licensing and registration arrangements on manufacturers and users of a range of non-medicinal additives in animal feed. I voted against, on the grounds that no adequate justification has been given, in terms of risk to animal or human health, for introducing these requirements.

The Council had an initial exchange of views on the Commission's proposals for changes to the support system for rice.

The meeting was joined for part of the time by nine Ministers of Agriculture from the countries of central and eastern Europe, including the Baltic states. These Ministers explained the aims of their existing agriculture policies and their expectations for the development of their farm sectors, as well as their views on the common agricultural policy in the light of their hopes for the eventual accession of their countries to the European Union.

Cropping Systems

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the letter of the Minister of State, 1349, of 30 June, if he will make a statement on the purpose of the less intensive farming and environmental project of non-intensive farming and the environment, SCARAB or pesticides and TALISMANS on the economic and agronomic effects of reduced input systems. [37278]

Mr. Boswell: SCARAB—seeking confirmation about results at Boxworth—and TALISMAN—towards a low input system minimising agrochemicals—and agrochemicals nitrogen—are complementary projects designed to determine whether the conclusions of the earlier Boxworth project of 1981 to 1988 are valid for different soils and crop rotations. These projects seek to compare the environmental, economic and agronomic effects, including yield penalties, of adopting cropping systems which use lower inputs of agrochemicals than conventional cropping systems. SCARAB focuses on environmental and ecological effects of pesticide applications on non-target invertebrates and soil micro-organisms, whereas TALISMAN primarily seeks to measure economic effects.

The less intensive farming and environmental research project—LIFE—aims to provide fundamental information on the effects, interactions and ecological implications of an integrated farming systems approach and to develop less intensive systems which are economically and ecologically sound and sustainable in the long-term.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Farm Sizes

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of farms of the size *(a)* 1–25 hectares, *(b)* 26–50 hectares, *(c)* 51–75 hectares, *(d)* 76–100 hectares, *(e)* 101–150 hectares, *(f)* 151–200 hectares and *(g)* 201 or more hectares for (i) the last available year and (ii) 1985. [36433]

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the table:

Number of farms of size (hectares)	*1985*	*1994 (hectares)*
Less than 26	19,272	15,353
26–50.9	8,083	7,324
51–75.9	2,762	3,059
76–100.9	1,102	1,222
101–150.9	757	931
151–200.9	235	264
201 and over	215	251
All farms	32,426	28,404

Children (Northern Ireland) Order

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the reasons for the delay in bringing the Children (Northern Ireland) Order into force; and if he will make a statement. [37317]

Mr. Moss: I do not recognise that there will be any unnecessary delay in implementing the Children Order. As I told the House during the debate on the draft order on 8 February at column 427 we envisaged the order coming into operation during the 1996–97 financial year. It has been agreed with all agencies involved that the new legislation will come into operation in October 1996. Substantial preparatory work is necessary across all the statutory and voluntary agencies involved. This work, which includes the training of staff in a wide range of disciplines, the creation of a guardian ad litem service and the preparation of a considerable volume of regulations, guidance and court rules, is proceeding according to plan.

Working Mothers

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he made to the Secretary of State for Employment seeking a Northern Ireland input to the publication, "Mothers in Employment"; what was the response; and if he will make a statement. [37314]

Mr. Ancram: None. The former Department of the Employment took responsibility for providing input on behalf of the Government. I have nothing to add to those inputs or to the Government's final response which was also prepared by the Department of Employment.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations underlie the differential in treatment of working mothers between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom mainland. [37316]

Mr. Ancram: The reason why there are some differentials in administration and implementation is because of different financial priorities and organisational arrangements. There is, however, no differential in either legal provision or general policy.

Compensation Agency

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date the revised framework document and the corporate and business plans for the Compensation Agency were published.

Sir John Wheeler: The documents were published on 2 August 1995. The framework document takes account of the recent triennial review of that agency. The prior options study, completed as part of the review, recommended that the agency should retain agency status from 1 April 1995. An evaluation of the agency which was also carried out under the review confirmed that the agency has been a success, realising benefits for both the public and Government. Copies of the framework document and evaluation report and of the agency's corporate and business plans have been placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Nursery Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the progress of her plans for nursery education for four-year-olds. [36841]

Mr. Robin Squire: It was announced yesterday that phase 1 of the pre-school education voucher scheme would take place in Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.

My right hon. Friend is currently consulting on various elements of the new pre-school education voucher scheme. She will publish detailed proposals for implementation of the new scheme later in the year, after considering consultation responses.

Around 160 companies expressed interest in administering the voucher scheme. A shortlist of companies have been invited to tender for the contract, and the contractor will be appointed around the end of October.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the approximate additional cost for places per year for any local education authority entering the original pilot scheme for nursery school vouchers; which authorities have made firm applications to participate; and what are the net additional costs or financial benefits to each such authority. [37226]

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on recent progress in respect of implementing her policy of vouchers for pre-school nursery education; and if she will list participating local education authorities indicating in each case their political control. [37065]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is currently consulting on various elements of the new pre-school education voucher scheme. She will publish detailed proposals for implementation of the new scheme later in the year, after considering consultation responses.

It was announced yesterday that the local education authorities participating in phase 1 of the voucher scheme will be Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. These are all Conservative-controlled authorities.

The additional costs or financial benefit to each authority will depend on the level at which it currently funds places, decisions on the provision of new places in maintained schools and the operation of parental choice.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517-19, if additional funding, above the value of the voucher, will be provided for children defined as at risk under the Children Act 1989. [36180]

Mr. Robin Squire: It will be for local authorities to continue to spend resources in addition to the value of the voucher on children defined as at risk under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517-19, where responsibility for planning the provision of pre-school places for all four year olds will rest. [36171]

Mr. Robin Squire: Pre-school places for four year olds will be provided by the maintained, private and voluntary sectors in response to parental demand expressed through the vouchers parents will receive.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517–19, how she envisages that parents will make an informed choice between the providers available locally. [36153]

Mr. Robin Squire: Parents will be able to obtain information about all providers in their locality. To be eligible to redeem pre-school education vouchers, each institution will be required to publish information about its activities, which will allow parents to make an informed choice.

Surplus Places, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much capital allocation has been given to Liverpool city council since 1985 to remove surplus places in schools. [36438]

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is available only for the period from April 1990. Over that period, Liverpool education authority has been allocated some £12 million in annual capital guidelines for the removal of surplus places in its schools. A further £9 million in grant aid, representing 85 per cent. of governors' costs, has been approved for the removal of surplus places in voluntary aided schools. The total amount is therefore £21 million.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list each county's standard assessment funding per primary school pupil and per secondary school pupil and the average of all English and Welsh counties for this financial year. [36767]

Mr. Robin Squire: The allocations per pupil for the 1995–96 education standard spending assessment for each English county, and the average allocation of all English counties, are set out in the table. There are no standard spending assessments for education in Wales, where county councils' SSAs include provision for education.

Unit SSA allocations 1995–96

£

County	*Primary per 5–10 pupil*	*Secondary per 11–15 pupil*
Avon	1,838	2,460
Bedfordshire	1,995	2,664
Berkshire	1,988	2,664
Buckinghamshire	1,966	2,630
Cambridgeshire	1,876	2,508
Cheshire	1,817	2,408
Cleveland	1,940	2,589
Cornwall	1,893	2,522
Cumbria	1,856	2,470
Derbyshire	1,812	2,415
Devon	1,879	2,506
Dorset	1,833	2,440
Durham	1,884	2,512
East Sussex	2,000	2,672
Essex	1,989	2,647
Gloucestershire	1,836	2,435
Hampshire	1,930	2,575
Hereford and Worcester	1,827	2,439
Hertfordshire	2,010	2,663
Humberside	1,891	2,509
Isle of Wight	2,016	2,696
Kent	1,968	2,620
Lancashire	1,877	2,502
Leicestershire	1,864	2,483
Lincolnshire	1,873	2,483
Norfolk	1,881	2,508
North Yorkshire	1,827	2,422
Northamptonshire	1,836	2,448
Northumberland	1,825	2,421
Nottinghamshire	1,883	2,506
Oxfordshire	1,933	2,575
Shropshire	1,862	2,479
Somerset	1,846	2,489
Staffordshire	1,805	2,398
Suffolk	1,820	2,422
Surrey	1,998	2,679
Warwickshire	1,822	2,433
West Sussex	1,932	2,571
Wiltshire	1,835	2,451
Average for English Shire Counties	1,895	2,525

Surplus Places

Mr. Matthew Taylor : To ask (1) the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) if she will list the proportion of school places in each English and Welsh county that her Department has identified as surplus in each of the last three years in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools; [36775]

(2) if she will list the proportion of surplus school places in each English and Welsh county in the last three financial years in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools. [36770]

Mrs. Gillan: The most recent figures available for England are in respect of the position in January 1994. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend gave the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 9 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *410–14*, which gave for each local education authority the total number of unfilled places in schools where the number of places is greater than the number of pupils. Figures from the 1995 survey are currently being processed.

Matters in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

School Budgets

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proportion of funding has been delegated to the schools budget in this financial year in each English and Welsh county. [36769]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows the percentage of the potential schools budget delegated to schools in 1995–96 by each county local education authority in England. The funding of schools in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Local Education Authority	*PSB delegated per cent.*
Avon	88.1
Bedfordshire	91.2
Berkshire	93.1
Buckinghamshire	88.4
Cambridgeshire	89.3
Cheshire	90.9
Cleveland	89.4
Cornwall	89.0
Cumbria	91.8
Derbyshire	89.3
Devon	91.9
Dorset	89.7
Durham	88.5
East Sussex	88.9
Essex	89.0
Gloucestershire	91.1
Hampshire	88.6
Hereford and Worcester	90.8
Hertfordshire	94.1
Humberside	88.7
Isle of Wight	90.2
Isles of Scilly	85.1
Kent	87.5
Lancashire	87.7
Leicestershire	88.4
Lincolnshire	89.5
Norfolk	91.4
North Yorkshire	89.8
Northamptonshire	92.9
Northumberland	90.8
Nottinghamshire	88.8
Oxfordshire	91.6
Shropshire	88.2
Somerset	91.1
Staffordshire	92.8
Suffolk	90.6
Surrey	89.8
Warwickshire	88.4
West Sussex	88.9
Wiltshire	89.6

Complaints

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in her Department. [36834]

Mr. Robin Squire: The Parliamentary Ombudsman has, subject to the conditions of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, jurisdiction to investigate complaints from members of the public about the way in which they have been treated by Government Departments, other public sector bodies engaged in the work of central Government and those acting on their behalf. The ombudsman can investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by or on behalf of a Department or public body within his jurisdiction—that is, those bodies listed in schedule 2 to the 1967 Act. The Department for Education and Employment falls within the scope of schedule 2, as does the Education Assets Board and the Office for Standards in Education.

I should stress that projects or services funded by the private finance initiative at individual universities, colleges and schools are unlikely to fall into the category of projects or services carried out by or on behalf of the DFEE, and therefore the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration has no role in relation to complaints about them.

Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974, the Local Commissioner for Administration may investigate complaints about local authorities and those acting on their behalf. The local ombudsman can therefore investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by or on behalf of a local education authority in the exercise of its administrative functions.

Training Programmes

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what plans she has to relax the eligibility rule for entry into Government-funded training and jobsearch programmes in *(a)* Mid-Glamorgan, *(b)* Merthyr and *(c)* Rhymney; [37054]

(2) how many entrants to the job club programmes in Wales have entered employment in each year since the programme began; [37052]

(3) how many entrants to the job club programme in each district of Wales entered employment last year. [37053]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Ted Rowlands, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about Government funded training and Jobsearch programmes and Jobclub performance in Wales.

There are no plans to relax the eligibility rules for entry into Government funded training and Jobsearch programmes.

The information on Jobclub entrants who have entered employment since the programme began in 1987 is contained in the attached table 1.

The information on Jobclub entrants entering employment in each district in Wales in the last financial year is contained in table 2.

I hope this is helpful.

Modern Manufacturing Apprenticeship Scheme

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many people under the modern manufacturing apprenticeship scheme enjoy employed status. [37022]

Mr. Paice: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many people are in receipt of bursaries under the modern manufacturing apprenticeship scheme; and what proportion is that of the total undertaking apprenticeships. [37021]

Mr. Paice: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Fraud Detection (Mandatory Awards)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what special measures have been put in place to detect fraudulent application for mandatory awards in respect of full-time students. [37067]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for making mandatory awards rests with local education authorities, and it is for them to ensure that adequate systems and controls for making payments are in place. The Department is currently providing funds to enable the universities and colleges admissions service to purchase a computer system which will help it to identify fraudulent applications for places at higher education institutions which are often made concurrently by those fraudulently applying for awards.

Disability Employment Advisers

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list the changes in the role of disability employment advisers consequent upon the Jobseekers Act 1944. [37152]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tom Clarke, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the changes in the role of Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) consequent upon the Jobseekers' Act 1994.

I do not expect the DEA role to change significantly as a result of the Act.

Like all Employment Service client advisers, DEAs will need to carry out their functions in accordance with the principles of the Act. However, they will retain responsibility for their existing client group - people who have complex employment barriers result from disability - and for the Job Seekers Allowance related processes affecting them.

Training Allowances

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the training allowance paid to unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds on youth training programmes in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* in the last year for which figures are available in real terms. [37055]

Mr. Paice: The minimum levels of training allowance paid to 16 and 17-year-olds on youth training programmes were *(a)* £29.50 and £35 in 1988–89 and *(b)* £21.39 and £25.37 in 1995–96, at 1988–89 prices.

Figures are available only for the minimum level of allowance. Employers and training providers are encouraged to top up minimum levels of allowance and many do.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what estimate her Department has made of the number of post-graduate students that are in receipt of career development loans. [37253]

Mr. Paice: The number of career development loan-funded students currently in training on a post-graduate course is 3,290

Placement Successes (Jobcentres)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Educationa and Employment if she will list the placement success for each jobcentre office in Wales in the past financial year, expressed *(a)* as numbers of jobs and *(b)* as shares of the Welsh total. [37206]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the placement successes for jobcentres in Wales in the last financial year.

The information you have requested is contained in the attached table.

I am pleased to be able to report that total placings achieved in Wales in 1994–95 was 8.9% above target and showed an increase of 11% on the achievement in 1993–94.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what evaluation she has made of the relative success in job placements as between stand-alone jobcentres and integrated jobcentre and benefit offices; and if she will make a statement. [37204]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the relative success in job placements between stand alone Jobcentres and integrated Jobcentre and Benefit Offices.

I think it would be helpful to explain the background and rationale for the move from stand alone Jobcentres to integrated Jobcentres. Over the past five years we have worked to establish a new network of offices which bring Jobcentres and Benefit Office services together under one roof. By doing so, this provides an improved one stop service offering the full range of services to help people back to work.

In establishing this network we have, wherever possible, made use of our existing estate to ensure value for money for the tax payer and the minimum of inconvenience to our clients.

There has been no formal evaluation relating to job placements and the integration process. However, I am pleased to be able to tell you the Jobcentre placings of unemployed people rose from 1.39 million in 1990/91 to 1.87 million in 1994/95. We also take account of what users of our services tell us; our National Customer Satisfaction Survey has confirmed that there is a continuing high level of client satisfaction with integrated Jobcentres and a public preference for them rather than separate offices.

I hope this is helpful.

Employment Service (Resources)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what additional resources have been allocated to the Employment Service to conduct the additional work associated with the transfer of claimants from incapacity benefit to unemployment benefit. [37027]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about what additional resources have been allocated to the Employment Service to help people leaving Incapacity Benefit (IB).

We are keen to ensure that people no longer entitled to IB who make a claim for unemployment benefit (UB) and are given effective help with returning to work. We therefore provide a comprehensive package of additional help for them.

That help begins with the full advisory interview given to all ex-IB clients when they make their claim for UB. This interview provides the opportunity for a full discussion of the client's job goals and of the most appropriate means for achieving them.

In addition clients no longer entitled to IB are eligible for immediate entry to a number of our programmes. As a result a number of additional places on Jobplan Workshop (JPW), and Jobclub/Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) scheme are being funded, details of which are as follows.

Year	*Places*	*Programme*	*Cost £*
1995 to 1996	86,000	JPW	9,630,000
	70,000	Jobclub/JIG	13,230,000
1996 to 1997	66,700	JPW	7,837,000
	58,000	Jobclub/JIG	11,063,000
1996 to 1998	15,400	JPW	1,900.000
	14,000	Jobclub/JIG	2,683,000

Those people who are identified at an initial interview as needing specialist help are referred to Placing, Assessment and Counselling Teams, the number of additional places and costs are estimated as follows:

Year	*Places*	*Cost £*
1995 to 1996	40,000	11,840,000
1996 to 1997	29,000	8,787,000
1997 to 1998	15,000	3,266,000

I hope this information is helpful and assures you of our intent to provide clients who were previously claiming IB with practical advice and information which is geared to their individual needs.

I hope this is helpful.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many school playing fields have been sold since 1979. [36221]

Mrs. Gillan: There is no reliable historical information on the level of school playing field disposals. The Sports Council's register of recreational land, which is not yet complete, is designed to ensure that better information is available in future.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what has been the total amount allocated to capital grant for grant-maintained schools; and in each case, how much has been allocated to *(a)* committed expenditure, *(b)* formula allocation, *(c)* basic need provision, *(d)* change of character proposals, *(e)* named projects and *(f)* other purposes in each financial year since 1990. [35808]

Mr. Robin Squire: These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked its chairman to write to the hon. Member with this information.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what was the total sum paid in speakers' expenses to head teachers and governors of grant-maintained schools speaking at meetings on grant-maintained status; and, in each case, what was the number of meetings for which claims were received, and from how many individuals in the financial years 1993–94 and 1994–95. [36151]

Mr. Robin Squire: The total sum paid in GM speakers' expenses for the financial year 1993–94 was £33,488. The equivalent sum for 1994–95 was £27,947.

Records of the number of speaking engagements undertaken or the number of individuals to whom payment was made prior to April 1994 are no longer available. During the financial year 1994–95, claims were received from approximately 175 GM speakers who undertook over 450 speaking engagements.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is *(a)* the actual or estimated total value of cash protection included in the central annual maintenance grant of grant-maintained schools and *(b)* the number of grant-maintained schools actually or estimated to be in receipt of cash protection for each of the financial years 1993–94 to 1999–2000. [36159]

Mr. Robin Squire: The calculation and payment of annual maintenance grant to grant-maintained schools, including the cash protection element, have been the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools since 1 April 1994. It also holds grant information relating to previous financial years. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member about the cash protection figures for the years up to and including 1995–96.

As the hon. Member is aware, we announced earlier this year, and have reaffirmed in a consultation paper issued in July, our intention to phase out cash protection over the four years 1995–96 to 1998–99, so that none remains in 1999–2000. It is not possible to provide realistic estimates of amounts of cash protection for 1996–97 onwards: these will depend on a number of unpredictable factors.

Further Education Colleges (Advertising)

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will publish the rules on use by further education colleges of public funds to advertise on television and radio in order to attract students to enrol. [36169]

Mr. Paice: Further education colleges may use public funds for anything which is within their powers. There are no specific rules or restrictions on the use of public funds by colleges for advertising. Any advertisements for colleges would be subject to the same rules as apply to all other advertisements under the Independent Television Commission code.

School Lavatories

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many schools currently use permanently constructed lavatories accessible only externally. [36187]

Mrs. Gillan: The information is not held centrally.

School Exclusions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary school children have been permanently excluded in each of the last five years. [35836]

Mr. Robin Squire: Returns made under the national exclusions reporting system showed that 2,190 pupils were permanently excluded between April 1990 and April 1991, and 3,883 between April 1991 and April 1992. Of these, 13 per cent. were primary pupils in year one, and 14 per cent. in year two. Figures for the academic year 1992–93 are not available centrally.

A survey published by the Department in July showed that, in the academic year 1993–94, 8,960 secondary and 1,230 primary pupils were permanently excluded in the 101 LEAs that responded; in addition 434 pupils were permanently excluded from special schools.

Schools Budget

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will show for each local education authority for the year 1995–96 the element of the potential schools budget which is not delegated to schools through the aggregated schools budget, expressed *(a)* as a percentage of the potential schools budget and *(b)* as a sum of money per pupil in schools covered by the local management of schools scheme. [25037]

Mr. Robin Squire *[pursuant to his reply, 24 May 1994, c. 614-15]:*

The following revised and updated table, setting out the percentage of the potential schools budget not delegated by each LEA for 1995–96, should be substituted for the table contained in the answer given to the hon. Member on 24 May.

Local education authority	*Potential schools budget percentage not delegated*
Avon	11.9
Barking and Dagenham	10.9
Barnet	9.8
Barnsley	10.9
Bedfordshire	8.7
Berkshire	7.1
Bexley	8.8
Birmingham	9.7
Bolton	11.1
Bradford	11.9
Brent	7.0
Bromley	12.2
Buckinghamshire	11.6
Bury	8.2
Calderdale	10.9
Cambridgeshire	10.7
Camden	12.6
Cheshire	9.1
City	11.0
Cleveland	10.6
Cornwall	11.1
Coventry	8.7
Croydon	10.0
Cumbria	8.2
Derbyshire	10.6
Devon	8.1
Doncaster	10.0
Dorset	10.4
Dudley	4.2
Durham	11.5
Ealing	10.1
East Sussex	10.8
Enfield	10.6
Essex	11.0
Gateshead	13.4
Gloucestershire	8.9
Greenwich	7.3
Hackney	13.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	9.0
Hampshire	11.4
Haringey	12.8
Harrow	9.8
Havering	8.3

Local education authority	Potential schools budget percentage not delegated
Hereford and Worcester	9.0
Hertfordshire	5.8
Hillingdon	10.1
Hounslow	11.0
Humberside	11.3
Isle of Wight	9.8
Isles of Scilly	n/a
Islington	5.9
Kensington and Chelsea	10.0
Kent	12.5
Kingston	10.8
Kirklees	12.9
Knowsley	6.1
Lambeth	13.6
Lancashire	12.3
Leeds	6.6
Leicestershire	11.6
Lewisham	12.5
Lincolnshire	10.5
Liverpool	7.7
Manchester	8.0
Merton	10.8
Newcastle	11.8
Newham	14.0
Norfolk	8.6
North Tyneside	8.2
North Yorkshire	10.2
Northamptonshire	7.1
Northumberland	9.2
Nottinghamshire	11.2
Oldham	9.4
Oxfordshire	8.4
Redbridge	9.4
Richmond	9.6
Rochdale	7.1
Rotherham	10.6
Salford	9.3
Sandwell	11.9
Sefton	11.0
Sheffield	12.2
Shropshire	11.8
Solihull	6.0
Somerset	8.9
South Tyneside	10.8
Southwark	12.0
St. Helens	14.5
Staffordshire	7.2
Stockport	9.1
Suffolk	9.4
Sunderland	7.7
Surrey	10.2
Sutton	9.8
Tameside	10.7
Tower Hamlets	9.0
Trafford	11.4
Wakefield	12.1
Walsall	9.7
Waltham Forest	6.1
Wandsworth	14.6
Warwickshire	11.6
West Sussex	11.1
Westminster	9.8
Wigan	7.3
Wiltshire	10.4
Wirral	9.7
Wolverhampton	8.1

Notes:
1. "n/a": budget statement not yet received.
2. Figures rounded to one decimal place where given to two places in LEA's statement.

School Premises Regulations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when she will publish the review of the school premises regulations announced by her predecessor on 2 October 1990 and cited in "DES News", 318/90.

Mrs. Gillan: The Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), outlined the conclusion of the review in a parliamentary announcement on 14 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *829-837*. Those conclusions are very fully explained in the draft School Premises Regulations and the accompanying draft circular that are currently out to consultation.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 October 1995

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Employees' Salaries

Mr. Rooker: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many employees of each department of the House have an annual salary greater then *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the lowest paid Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Beith: The numbers of staff, by department, with annual salaries greater than *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the lowest paid Minister of the Crown (Government Whip/Assistant Whip) are as follows:

Department	*(a)*	*(b)*
Speaker's Office	1	1
Clerk's	47	36
Serjeant's	7	5
Library	15	8
Finance and Administration	8	3
Official Report	15	4
Refreshment	3	1

Charity Payroll Giving

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many right hon. and hon. Members are signed up to the charity payroll giving arrangement operated by the Fees Office. [37398]

Mr. Newton: As at 30 September, 45 right hon. and hon. Members are signed up to the charity payroll giving arrangement operated by the Fees Office.

Members' Staff (Contracts)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many right hon. and hon. Members have failed to lodge contracts of employment at the Fees Office for employees paid by the Fees Office from the office costs allowance; and how many employees are affected. [37399]

Mr. Newton: There are 24 right hon. and hon. Members who have failed to lodge contracts of employment with the Fees Office for employees paid from the office costs allowance and 59 current employees are affected.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many grants of national lottery funding have been made to date to applicants from Ashfield; and how much money was awarded in each case. [37919]

Mr. Sproat: There has been one award to date to an applicant from Ashfield. The Millennium Commission has awarded £587,500 to Brierley Forest Park, a project which covers Ashfield and Mansfield. This award is for the reclamation of 125 hectares of derelict land to create woodland, landscape and wetland areas for recreation and education.

Millennium Commission

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what steps she, or any body accountable to her, is taking to ensure effective co-ordination of transport services within London serving permanent, or temporary, sites of millennium significance; [37258]

(2) what criteria in respect of the purpose, content and similarities or otherwise to its predecessors of 1851 and 1951 the Millennium Commission has been set by Her Majesty's Government or has been set for the applicants seeking to operate the site of the proposed millennium exhibition. [37331]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* This is a matter for the Millennium Commission. I shall reply to the hon. Member in my capacity as chairman of the commission and place copies of my reply in the Libraries of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what meetings he has had with the First Secretary of State since July to discuss the co-ordination of Government policy. [36748]

The Prime Minister: I have had regular meetings with ministerial colleagues since July.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36843]

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 October. [36844]

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ex-service Affairs Unit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what further representations he has had from the Royal British Legion in relation to its campaign for an ex-service affairs unit in Whitehall; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement. [37228]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, none.

General Pinochet

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister which members of Her Majesty's Government met General Pinochet during his recent visit to London; and what effort was made to condemn the regime he presided over in Chile from 1973 to 1990. [37979]

The Prime Minister: No members of Her Majesty's Government met General Pinochet during his recent visit. Our views on the military regime of 1973 to 1990 are well known.

Conservative Party Leadership

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants, including special advisers, were involved in the recent campaign in official time or in their own time for the election of the leader of the Conservative party and for which candidate; and what are the normal working hours of these civil servants. [38000]

The Prime Minister: Special advisers taking part in political activities, such as the election for the leader of the Conservative party, are required to do so during leave or in their own time in addition to fulfilling their normal duties. In these circumstances, it is not appropriate to give details of those involved. Special advisers normally work a five-day week of 41 hours including meal breaks, which is standard for civil servants in the London area.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Guatemala

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent actions have been taken by British representatives at the UN concerning the abuse of human rights in Guatemala. [37974]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The UK, together with our EU partners, co-sponsored a resolution at the UN General Assembly on 14 September to extend the UN human rights verification mission, MINUGUA, for a further six months. The vital role being played by MINUGUA was underlined by the mission's swift production of a preliminary report into the disturbing incident on 5 October in which an army patrol opened fire on a group of returned refugees. The independent expert of the UN Commission on Human Rights was also present in the country at the time; the UK has consistently supported extension of Ms Pinto's mandate at successive sessions of the commission.

The UK has consistently urged both the Guatemalan Government and the URNG guerrillas to reach a peaceful settlement to the dispute between them, which would help to bring an end to human rights abuses.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of Guatemala concerning human rights abuses, the operation of the Truth commission and legal processes against alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses. [37982]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The EU issued a statement deploring the massacre by Guatemalan troops of returned refugees in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala on 5 October. We have demanded an immediate investigation into the massacre and the punishment of those guilty of it.

The British ambassador in Guatemala takes every appropriate opportunity, individually or through the EU, to express to the authorities the concern felt by the British Government and people about abuses of human rights.

At a British suggestion, the EU raised with the Guatemalan Foreign Minister our unhappiness at the circumstances surrounding the death of Reverend Saquic Vasquez. We shall press for a satisfactory outcome to the work of the Truth commission when it is set up on the signing of a final peace agreement.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held with human rights groups in Guatemala by the British embassy in each of the past five years; and which groups were involved. [37973]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: So far this year, the embassy has held meetings with eight groups concerned with human rights. In several cases, more than one meeting has taken place. The groups include UNHCR—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—MINUGUA—United Nations observer force—Ninos Refugiados—refugee children—Christian Aid, Peace Brigades International, Casa Alianza and the Toybox charity—street children—Centre for Human Rights Legal Action and the Central American Human Rights Committee.

In addition, the embassy has taken part in EU discussions with a number of other human rights groups. The embassy maintains regular contact with the Guatemalan procurator for human rights as a matter of course. Meetings with these human rights groups and others have taken place at various times over the last five years.

General Pinochet

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what facilities were offered to General Pinochet of Chile during his recent visit to the United Kingdom. [37976]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: No special facilities were accorded General Pinochet during his recent visit other than the customary VIP courtesy facilities at the airport on arrival and departure extended to all Heads of Foreign Defence Service. Under the Chilean constitution, General Pinochet is commander in chief of the Chilean army.

ENVIRONMENT

Treasury Building

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) in which papers and which countries the Treasury building was advertised for sale; [37121]

(2) what restrictions have been put on the use of the Treasury building if it is sold; [37122]

(3) if he will list the expressions of interest in purchasing the Treasury building which have been received so far. [37123]

Sir Paul Beresford: Property Holdings advertised for a private sector partner for the refurbishment of the Treasury building internationally.

Outright sale of the freehold is not currently envisaged.

It would be inappropriate to list all the expressions of interest at this time, as the selection of a short list of candidates is currently taking place.

Plant and Machinery Rating

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the cost implications for small businesses of the recommendations of the Wood committee report on the rating of plant and machinery. [36946]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Wood committee estimated that its recommendations would reduce aggregate rateable value by up to 0.5 per cent. in England and Wales. Their implementation, in the 1995 non-domestic revaluation, will have tended to increase rates bills for some properties and reduce them for others, but the effects are not distinguishable from those of the revaluation as a whole.

National Exhibition Facilities

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what applications he has had for financial assistance towards the development of national exhibition facilities in London's east end from private developers. [37579]

Sir Paul Beresford: None.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in respect of the provision of financial assistance towards the development of national exhibition facilities in London's east end by private developers. [57580]

Sir Paul Beresford: I am aware of only one such proposed development for a site in the London docklands which is being pursued as a private finance initiative. There will be no public subsidy for this project. It will go forward only if the market considers it a viable proposition.

Mining Accidents

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if he will make a statement on the accident that occurred at Thoresby colliery, Nottinghamshire on 12 October; what steps have been taken to identify the cause of the accident and lessons to be learned from it; and when the interim report of the mines inspectorate might be published. [37690]

Sir Paul Beresford: On 12 October 1995 an incident occurred leading to the death of a mine worker at Thoresby mine, Nottinghamshire. HSE officials attended the incident immediately on notification.

The investigation into the case(s) of the incident has already began. It is being undertaken by the HSE's inspectorate of mines. Until this is complete and the findings known it would be inappropriate to speculate. Any recommendations that are made as the result of the investigation will be acted upon.

Reports of investigations are not normally published and it is not planned to do so in this case. However, I will write to the hon. Member for Sherwood when the investigation has been completed.

The coroner will, of course, be conducting an inquest into the accident and this will be open to the public.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the accident records for each colliery for the first and second quarters of 1995. [37691]

Sir Paul Beresford: Information for individual mines is not produced. Statistics for the industry are produced as an aggregate figure and published in the Health and Safety Commission annual report, copies of which are placed in the House Library. Figures for the first quarter January to March 1995 have not been validated and will not be confirmed until HSC's annual report is published in November 1995 at which stage they will appear in an aggregate table for the year. Figures for the second quarter April to June 1995 will not be available until November 1996.

TREASURY

Customs and Excise

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the *(a)* public, *(b)* business and *(c)* community bodies which have been consulted regarding the strategic review of Customs and Excise offices in the north-west of Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [37229]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs has not consulted the public, business or community bodies regarding its strategic review of offices in the north-west of Scotland. Customs staff in these offices are largely involved in intelligence gathering and the prevention of drug smuggling and it would not be in the public interest for customs to discuss its plans in detail.

There is no intention to erode the current level of trade facilitation given to business and ports in north-west Scotland. There will be consultation on this once the review has been completed.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the Customs and Excise offices which have closed since 1 January 1990. [37230]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The offices listed were closed in the period between 1 April 1990 and 1 October 1995. Because records are kept on the basis of the financial year, data are not available for the three months from January to March 1990. The operational and administrative functions in the offices closed were relocated either to new accommodation acquired for these functions or to existing departmental accommodation.

	Offices
Northern Ireland	
Belfast	Corporation Square
Aughnacloy	102–104 Moore Street
Omagh	12 Holmview Terrace
Kilkeel	Coast Preventative Office
Coleraine	Adelaide Avenue
Belleek	681 Loughshore Road

	Offices
Newtownbutler	Station Road
Belfast	Waterguard Office
Armagh	9 Monaghan Road
Ballymena	38–54 High Street
Omagh	Campsie Road
Strabane	Railway Road
Warrenpoint	Harbour Estate
Belfast	9–15 Bedford Street
Belfast	Head Post Office
Belfast	185–189 Lisburn Road
Portavogie	Harbour Masters Office
Londonderry	Meadow Bank
Belcoo	Main Street
Breandrum	Belfast Road
England	
Wolverhampton	Chapel Ash
Stafford	Eastgate Street
Dudley	Wolverhampton Street
Birmingham	Rednal
Dover	Terrapin Export Freight Shed
Folkestone	EPU
Folkstone	Custom House
Rye	Custom House
Ramsgate	Custom House
Canterbury	50 New Dover Road
Dover	Port Services Block
Whitstable	1st Floor Over Public Toilets
Canterbury	Park House
Maidstone	Lower Stone Street
Ashford	Tufton Street
Hastings	Selecombe Road
Rye	Harbour Office
Dover	Marine Car Hall
Dover	EPU
Dover	Transit Shed A
Dover	Preventive Freight Lane
Dover	Townwall Street
Dover	Southern House
Dover	Hoverport Offices
Dover	Room 44 Control Building
Burnham	Quayside
Colchester	Portal House
Harwich	Eastern Station
Harwich	Western Station
Harwich	CRV
Harwich	Navy Yard Wharf
Harwich	Train Ferry Terminal
Chelmsford	11–23 Springfield Road
Colchester	Wellington House
Colchester	Harbourmasters Office
West Mersea	Lookout Hut
Burnham on Crouch	Quayside
Ipswich	Dock Head
Brightlingsea	Waterside
Ipswich	Wherstead Road
Great Yarmouth	North Quay
Burton on Trent	Crown House
Chesterfield	St. Marys House
Castle Donington	Boarding Office
Castle Donington	Freight Office
Sheffield	Church Street
Sutton in Ashfield	Freight Terminal
Felixstowe	Tomline House
Grimsby	Excise Garage
Grimsby	Custom House Royal Dock
Grimsby	Bacon Terminal
Derby	LOE Midland Road
Grimsby	Provincial House
Worksop	Copthall House
Sheffield	3–7 Charter Row
Mansfield	Queen Street
Scunthorpe	Oswald Road
Nottingham	CIU Garage

	Offices
Stanmore	Canons Park
Woolwich	Woolwich Arsenal
Southend on Sea	Baxter Avenue
Liverpool	Wilberforce House
Bootle	Daniel House
Bootle	St. Johns House
Liverpool	Richmond House
Salford	New Bailey Street
London	Harmsworth House
Goole	Stanhope Street
Leeds	Boar Lane
Leeds	Park Place
Leeds	7 Eastgate
Liverpool	157 Regent Road
Crewe	Wistaston
Liverpool	North Dock Island
Liverpool	Pier Head
Blackpool	Terminal Building
Lytham St. Annes	St. Georges Road
Bootle	North Quay
Runcorn	Docks
Lancaster	Mitre Yard
Chester	Northgate Street
Hayes	236 Nestles Avenue
Heathrow	Hounslow
Gatwick	Room 30 Concorde House
Gatwick	Rooms 3341–3344
Heathrow	Jubilee Way
Heathrow	Building 139
Heathrow	Building 581
Heathrow	Building 520
Heathrow	Building 501
Heathrow	Hangar No. 3
Heathrow	Queens Building
Heathrow	Building 558
Heathrow	Building 552
Heathrow	South Perimeter Road
Stansted	Old Terminal
Romford	250 Main Road
Romford	Normanhurst
Dartford	Ferry Terminal
Romford	Crown Building
West Thurrock	Translink House
Woodgrange	Park House
Stanford-le-hope	Shell Haven
Stratford	Central House
Dartford	Dartford International
Grays	Station Masters House
Tilbury	East of Tidal Basin
Stratford	LIFT
Gillingham	Gillingham Gate
Cheadle	Carrs Road
Bolton	Bradshawgate
Accrington	Oak Street
Blackburn	Ainsworth Street
Manchester	17–21 Chorlton Street
Wilmslow	Church Street
Urmston	Barton Dock Road
Bedford	Goldington Road
Kettering	North Park
Leicester	31–33 Millstone Lane
Peterborough	Fletton Avenue
Northampton	Cliftonville Road
Hartlepool	Avenue Road
Seaham	Seaham House
Blyth	Ridley Street
Newcastle	Cale Cross House
Darlington	Thornlea
Hartlepool	Bovis House
Kendal	Highgate
Carlisle	London Road
Plymouth	Millbay Road
Plymouth	North Street
Dartmouth	Bayards Cove

	Offices
Plymouth	Royal Parade
Launceston	Western Road
Brixham	Sub Centre
Yeovil	19 Hendford
Salcombe	Whitestrand Quay
Watchet	Harbour Road
Southampton	Cougar Marine
Southampton	206 Berry
Christchurch	Mudeford Quay
Southampton	Green Lane
Southampton	204 Berry
Southampton	Depot
Newport	High Street
Reading	95–107 Southampton Street
Abingdon	Milton Trading Estate
Abingdon	Peachcroft Shopping
Balham	Steel House
Kennington	Kennington Park Road
Westminster	Tufton Street
London	Shaftesbury Avenue
Kingsway	Africa House
Southwark	Keyworth House
Euston	Woburn Place
Sunderland	West Sunniside
Birkenhead	Price Street
Birkenhead	Vittoria Dock
Eastham	QE II Dock
Fleetwood	Fish Market
Kirkby	Newtown Gardens
Liverpool	Derby Square
Oldham	Oliver Street
Preston	London Road
Worthing	Teville Gate
Cosham	High Street
Brighton	Old Cottage
Brighton	Preston Road
Eastbourne	Trinity Trees
Poole	Custom House
Poole	CFT
Yarmouth	The Quay
Eastleigh	Airport
Redhill	Queensway House
Redhill	Tower House
Maidenhead	Marlow House
Maidenhead	Thames House
Hull	Alexandra Dock
Hull	King George East Dock
London	Clements House
London	Tavis House
London	Northgate House
Scotland	
Edinburgh	9 St. Andrew Square
Kirkcaldy	High Street
Edinburgh	Waterguard Office
Stirling	Corn Exchange Road
Dundee	Dock Street
Perth	Jeanfield House
Broxburn	East Mains Industrial Estate
Elgin	Gordan Street
Methill	Dockhead
Dundee	49 North Lindsay Street
Elgin	15 High Street
Dundee	Victoria Road
Grangemouth	Grange Dock
Keith	Mid Street
Hamilton	Barrack Street
Inverness	Academy Street
Campbeltown	Lochead Street
Greenock	Princes Pier
Coatbridge	Whifflet
Dumbarton	High Street
Dumfries	147 High Street
Glasgow	Parcel Office
Rothes	Breich Street
Fraserburgh	Office
Grangedock	Portakabin
Alloa	Drysdale Street
Buckie	Queen Street
Aberlour	Elchies Road
Aberdeen	Sinclair Road
Blair Atholl	Distillery
Cameron Bridge	Distillery
Glenlossie	Distillery
Miltonduff	Distillery
Glenlivet	Distillery
Wales	
Holyhead	Vehicle Compound
Holyhead	Custom House
Caernarfon	North Penrallt
Swansea	Waterguard Office
Pembroke Dock	Ferry Terminal
Barry	Barry Dock
Cardiff	Roath Basin
Bridgend	Angel Street
Wrexham	Rhosddu Road
Mostyn	Dock Office

Taxation Immunity

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors are taken into account when granting foreign nationals residing in the United Kingdom immunity from United Kingdom taxes. [37070]

Mr. Jack: Immunity from direct taxation is accorded to income and gains beneficially owned by foreign Heads of State and their Governments. This treatment has its origins in a principle of international law, which has been recognised by successive Governments in this country.

There is no immunity from Customs and Excise duties and taxes.

ECOFIN

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the informal Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers and central bank governors of the European Union held in Valencia on 30 September. [37741]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Governor of the Bank of England and I represented the UK at an informal meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers and central bank governors of the European Union held in Valencia 30 September.

The meeting was devoted almost exclusively to discussion of economic and monetary union and, in particular, to various issues that the Council was asked to consider by the Cannes European Council, including the reference scenario for the transition to a single currency. It was agreed that further work would be needed in the run-up to the Madrid European Council.

The Council also considered the terms of European investment bank lending to Palestine.

The Council discussed the US proposal to establish a middle east development bank and decided that it required more work.

Mr. Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers of the European Union held in Brussels on 18 September. [37742]

Mr. Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Brussels on 18 September.

The Council considered Sweden's convergence programme under article 103/3. It discussed the format of the report on employment to be submitted to the Madrid European Council.

The Council had a preparatory discussion about its meeting with Finance Ministers of the central and east European countries on 23 October, which will consider the financial services in those countries and the need for further report.

The Council considered the constraints imposed on Community lending to third countries by the loan guarantee fund. The guarantee fund covers the European investment bank, Euratom and macro-economic lending. I argued that there should be no relaxation of the budgetary discipline imposed by the mechanism. No decisions were made and the Council will return to this issue at a later date.

The Council adopted, by qualified majority voting, the cross-border payments directive, which seeks to improve the transparency and efficiency of payments made between member states. I made it clear that, although we support the principle of the directive, the UK opposed the proposed limits to the scope of the directive and the proposed separate limits on the level of payments which would extract the money-back guarantee in the event of loss. I noted that this weakened the protection which the directive would give to small businesses and private individuals when making cross-border payments. The UK accordingly abstained in the vote.

Over lunch with the Finance Ministers of the EFTA nations we discussed unemployment and in particular approaches to tackling youth unemployment.

North Sea Revenue

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of revenue to the Exchequer from north sea oil and gas since 1979. [37912]

Mr. Jack: Total revenues to the Exchequer from north sea oil and gas production from 1979–80 to 1995–96 are expected to be £77 billion.

Privatisation Proceeds

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum received to date from the sale of privatised industries. [37913]

Mr. Jack: Between 1979–80 and 1994–95 privatisation proceeds totalled some £61.6 billion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ROPA Scheme

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the realising our potential award—ROPA—scheme. [38689]

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am pleased to announce that I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a report on the first two years' operation of the ROPA scheme.

It is clear from the report that the ROPA scheme is fully living up to expectations. It encourages academic researchers to collaborate with industry on strategic research, and it provides responsive-mode funding for them to carry out undirected, curiosity-driven research of their own choosing.

Over the two years, there has been an excellent demand for ROPA awards with a total of 1,521 applications, resulting in 719 awards having been made, worth a total of some £71.1 million over the lifetime of the projects.

ROPA scheme applicants have stated that they are involved in basic or strategic research projects funded by industry or commerce to the value of about £260 million. This in itself is a tribute to the excellence and relevance of much of the science and engineering based and industry's appreciation of it.

The Government are committed to the need to ensure excellence in research. ROPA awards have gone to some first-rate scientists and departments to fund some innovative research projects. An analysis in the report shows that across all research councils, of those ROPAs which went to university departments within the scope of the 1992 research assessment exercise, 67 per cent. went to departments rated 4 or 5—the top two ratings—compared to 65 per cent. for councils' other grants. It also shows that the success rates of applicants to ROPA was about 47 per cent. overall, which is consistent with the range of success rates for councils other schemes—some 20 to 60 per cent.

The scheme has been widely welcomed both by industry and by academics. The evaluation contained in the report shows that the scheme has been successful and has justified its introduction.

National Exhibition Facilities

Mr. Corbett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what applications he has had for financial assistance towards the development of national exhibition facilities in London's east end from private developers. [37581]

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy in respect of the provision of financial assistance towards the development of national exhibition facilities in London's east end by private developers. [37582]

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment today.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Servants (Salaries)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* other public sector employees now have gross salaries of £50,000 or more per annum. [37883]

Mr. Horam: The information available centrally covers 96 per cent. of the home civil service. Of these, on 1 April 1995 some 1,800 staff or 0.4 per cent. were in receipt of a full-time equivalent gross salary in excess of £50,000 per annum. Information for other public sector employees is not available centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many community psychiatric nurses were working in north and west Belfast in each of the last five years. [37554]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Community psychiatric nurses*
1991	18
1992	21
1993	21
1994	20
1995	20

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many community psychiatric nurses have been employed on temporary contracts in north and west Belfast in each of the past five years; [37555]

(2) how many community psychiatric nurses are currently employed on temporary contracts within north and west Belfast. [37556]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Community psychiatric nurses*
1991	0
1992	2
1993	2
1994	0
1995[1]	1

[1] Most recent available date.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of community psychiatric nurses currently working in north and west Belfast. [37552]

Mr. Moss: At 31 March 1995, there were 20 community psychiatric nurses working in north and west Belfast health and social services trust.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of community psychiatric nurses currently working in south and east Belfast. [37558]

Mr. Moss: At 31 March 1995, there were 21 community psychiatric nurses working in south and east Belfast HSS trust.

Planning Permission (Mill Sites)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the replacement of water turbine machinery in existing mill sites require planning permission. [37529]

Mr. Moss: The need, or otherwise, for planning permission would depend on the nature of the proposal under consideration. Advice on specific cases can be obtained from the divisional planning office in whose area the site is located.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Development Divisions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the future work of each of the development divisions of his Department; and what forecast he has made of the likely change in their activities consequent on planned changes in the aid budget. [37576]

Mr. Hanley: Decisions on the allocation of resources and future development priorities in countries where we give aid will be made in the light of the outcome of the public expenditure survey. Discussions on this year's survey are now under way.

Contingency Reserves

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions the contingency reserve specified in table 30 "Breakdown of Aid budget" of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's 1995 departmental report has been included in aid budgets in previous years; and if he will list the level of the contingency reserve incorporated in the 1994 plans for 1994–95 indicating how the money was eventually allocated to programmes; and if he will give equivalent information for the 1993 plans for 1993–94, the 1992 plans for 1992–93, the 1991 plans for 1991–92 and the 1990 plans for 1990–91. [37227]

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 18 October 1995]:* It is standard practice for a contingency reserve to be set aside in the aid budget. The information requested, covering the period 1990–91 to 1994–95, is set out in the table.

Aid Programme Contingency Reserve

£'000

	1990–91	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Planned allocation	40,000	75,000	70,000	70,000	75,000
Country programmes	8,580	4,000	13,500	6,472	4,500
Sectoral programmes	2,309	2,400	5,580	3,465	4,258
Emergency assistance	14,800	28,600	28,777	51,692	52,000
Multilateral aid	3,235	37,043	11,088	8,371	3,406
Aid administration	6,035	720	150	—	—
Natural Resources Institute	—	550	—	—	—
Commonwealth Development Corporation	5,000	—	5,000	—	5,860
Total allocated	39,959	73,413	64,275	70,000	70,024

TRANSPORT

Train Drivers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he is making for the future training and inspection of railway locomotive drivers following recruitment of those already experienced and qualified who will be transferred to Transrail or similar operating companies. [37575]

Mr. Watts: The Railways (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994 require employers to ensure that all railway staff who carry out work defined as safety critical, including train drivers, are competent and fit to carry out their duties safely.

The regulations are monitored and enforced by the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate.

Cyclists (Islington and Haringey)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations led his Department to advise cyclists not to use the A1 red route in Islington and Haringey during recent re-surfacing; and if he will make a statement. [37977]

Mr. Norris: For safety reasons, the Highways Agency felt it necessary to advise cyclists to find alternative routes while essential repairs were being carried out on the A1. To keep traffic moving and to protect the work force it was necessary to operate with very narrow lanes. With the Archway road being steep and with insufficient room for motorists to pass cyclists, it was considered that cyclists would be at risk from impatient drivers or those exercising poor judgment.

SCOTLAND

Sex Offenders

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been released from Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland since 1985, having served sentences for sexual offences, are subsequently known to have reoffended with the same category of offences. [36339]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Traffic Flows

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the legal upper limit for the daily flow of traffic on single carriageways in Scotland. [36409]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no legal limit to the level of traffic flow on a single carriageway. Capacity of a road can be influenced by factors such as the quality of the road, the percentage of heavy goods vehicles or how hilly the road is. Research by the Transport Research Laboratory suggests that the maximum sustainable two-way flow for a high-quality standard single carriageway could range between annual average daily traffic flows of 14,000 to 19,000 with 0 to 30 per cent. HGVs and 21,000 to 28,000 for a similar wide single carriageway with the same range of HGVs. These figures inform the design guidance on which the assessment of new roads is based.

A92

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has had made of whether the A92 north of Dundee to Arbroath and Montrose fulfils the requirements set out in paragraph 2.1 of "Shaping the Trunk Road Network" in respect of industry, agriculture, tourism and access to ports; and if he will make a statement. [36406]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The intention of "Shaping the Trunk Road Network" was to provide the road user with a coherent and continuous system of routes serving destinations of importance to industry, commerce, agriculture and tourism. It also sought to define nationally important routes which will be developed in line with strategic national transport demands while ensuring that those roads which are of predominantly local importance are managed locally. The Government's decision on who should manage a particular road related not only to the volume of traffic on that road but to the nature of that traffic and where the economic benefit derived from that traffic fell. Although there is heavy traffic on the A92 near Dundee, the majority of trips on this road are local in nature. On this basis, the Government decided that, in national strategic terms, the route north from Dundee to Aberdeen is best served by the recently upgraded A90, while the A92, having greater importance locally, should remain under local management.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average daily traffic flow on each 10-mile section of the A92 between Dundee and Arbroath and Montrose; what percentage of traffic consisted of heavy

goods vehicles; what was the average journey time between Dundee and Arbroath at peak times; and what was the accident rate in the years *(a)* 1993–1994 and *(b)* 1994–1995. [36410]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Traffic data on the Scottish road traffic database are stored by "link" rather than on a "mile by mile" basis. It is therefore not possible to list these data in 10-mile sections. Information on the annual average daily flow and percentage of heavy goods vehicles by each such "link" for 1994 is set out in the table:

	Link number	*Length (km)*	*AADF (number of vehicles)*	*Percentage of HGV*
From Dundee	254005	5.9	11,561	11
	254010	6.4	9,176	13
	245015	7.2	9,439	10
To Arbroath	254020	0.9	9,357	10
From Arbroath	254030	0.5	10,351	6
	254035	9.3	5,089	11
	254040	8.4	4,834	13
	254045	1.1	7,459	11
	254050	2.3	11,764	10
To Montrose	254055	0.55	10,599	7

The Scottish Office national roads directorate has no information on the average journey time between Dundee and Arbroath at peak times.

It is not possible to provide information on the accident rate—accidents per 1 million vehicle kilometres—as such data for local roads are not stored on a link basis and is therefore not consistent with that held by The Scottish Office to trunk roads. Information on the number of accidents on the A92 from Dundee to Montrose is stored by calendar year and is set out in the following table:

Road Section	*Year*	*Accident Severity* *Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
Claypotts, Dundee to Arbroath town centre	1993	2	6	21	29
	1994	1	5	19	25
Arbroath town centre to Ferryden, Montrose	1993	1	10	9	20
	1994	1	7	15	23

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details and costings of feasibility studies for section of the A92, including *(a)* junctions leading to Monifieth and Carnoustie, *(b)* bypasses at Muirdrum and Marywell, *(c)* the Montrose bridge, *(d)* the bridge over the north Esk and *(e)* trunk road spurs leading to Arbroath and Montrose. [36411]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office national roads directorate has carried out no such feasibility studies on the A92. The section of the A92 from the roundabout with the A972 Kingsway east in Dundee to the junction with the A90 at the south end of the Stonehaven bypass is a local road and the responsibility for improvements rests with the local roads authorities.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the average daily traffic flows on trunk road spurs leading to Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Wick for *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95; and what are the accident rates on these roads. [36412]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the annual average daily flow for such trunk roads is as follows:

Trunk road	*AADF 1993*	*1994*
A92 (south of Peterhead)	3,338	3,505
A952 (south of Peterhead	7,501	5,113
A952 (north of Peterhead)	5,019	5,358
A92 (south of Fraserburgh)	6,215	6,420
A98 (west of Fraserburgh	2,036	2,074
A9 (south of Wick)	1,288	1,312

The accident rate—average for 1992 to 1994—on these roads is as follows:

Trunk road	*Accident rate (Accidents per 1 million vehicle kilometres)*
A92/A952 Aberdeen-Fraserburgh (via Peterhead)	
Dual Carriageway	0.174
Single Carriageway	0.343
A9 Tore–Wick	0.173

Electoral Divisions

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the electorates of *(a)* those parts of Strathclyde electoral division 46 (Chryston) included in the areas of (i) North Lanarkshire council and (ii) East Dunbartonshire council, *(b)* those parts of Strathclyde electoral division 35 (Kings Park/Toryglen) included in the areas of (iii) City of Glasgow council and (iv) South Lanarkshire council, *(c)* those parts of Strathclyde electoral division 8 (Vale of Leven) included in the areas of (v) Dumbarton and Clydebank council and (vi) Argyll and Bute council and *(d)* those parts of Tayside electoral division 31 (Sidlaw) included in the areas of (vii) Angus council, (viii) Perth and Kinross council and (ix) City of Dundee council, as of 16 February. [37150]

Mr. Kynoch: The information is as follows:

(a) Estimates of Strathclyde Electoral Division 46 (Chryston) electorate included in:

(i) North Lanarkshire Council—12,442

(ii) East Dunbartonshire Council—3,865

(b) Estimates of Strathclyde Electoral Division 35 (Kings Park/Toryglen) electorate included in:

(iii) City of Glasgow Council—8,330

(iv) South Lanarkshire Council—8,099

(c) Estimates of Strathclyde Electoral Division 8 (Vale of Leven) electorate included in:

(v) Dumbarton and Clydebank Council—19,752

(vi) Argyll and Bute Council—320

(d) Estimates of Tayside Electoral Division 31 (Sidlaw) electorate included in:

(vii) Angus Council—4,504

(viii) Perthshire and Kinross Council—2,242

(ix) Dundee City Council—248

Source: GRO (Scotland).

Mr. Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the electorates of the electoral divisions of each region and islands area; and what were the electorates of the wards in each of the new council areas in Scotland, as of 16 February. [37151]

Mr. Kynoch: I will arrange for the information to be placed in the Library.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will amend the Tenants Rights etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 so that tenants of council houses whose titles disclose rights of pre-emption to superiors or prohibitions against sub-division are entitled to the right to buy. [37191]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The Department is currently considering what action, including legislative change, may be needed to enable tenants in these circumstances to exercise the right to buy. We will announce the outcome as soon as possible.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations have been received and from which bodies that the Tenants Rights etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 should be amended in order to ensure tenants have a statutory right to purchase properties whose titles contain rights of pre-emption or prohibition against sub-division. [37192]

Mr. Robertson *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* Since March, representations to this effect have been received from four Members of Parliament, from Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey and Ross and Cromarty district councils, the Society of Directors of Administration in Scotland and the Association of Chief Housing Officers, northern area.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Trials (Press Reports)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his policy and guidance framework for members of the judiciary facing similar circumstances in future, in respect of the suspension of the trial Regina v. Mr. Geoffrey Knights by Harrow Crown court as a result of advance press reports. [37693]

The Attorney-General: When a broadcast, press report or other publication which might prejudice a fair trial is brought to my attention I consider whether to bring proceedings for contempt of court against those responsible before the divisional court.

I apply the statutory test under the Contempt of Court Act 1981—namely, whether such a broadcast or publication has given rise to a substantial risk of serious prejudice to the administration of justice in the relevant case and have regard to the public interest. In so doing, I am exercising my function as guardian of the public interest in the enforcement of the criminal law.

I do not, however, give guidance to the judiciary. This is a matter not for me but for the higher judiciary.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many public interest immunity certificates his Department has issued in each year since 1986. [36686]

Mr. Boswell: No central record has been kept of the number of public interest immunity certificates issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food since 1986, and this could be drawn up only at disproportionate cost. However, a recent search of the files going back to 1992 has identified one certificate which has been issued since that date.

Case	*Minister*	*Date*
Littlewood (listeria claim)	Mrs. Shephard	1993

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what money has been given by the European Union to finance environmentally sensitive areas for each year since 1992; and if he will break down the figures for each of the nations of the United Kingdom. [36457]

Mr. Boswell: The following sums were paid by the EU towards the UK's environmentally sensitive areas schemes:

£ thousands

	1 January 1992 to 15 October 1992	*16 October 1992 to 15 October 1993*	*16 October 1993 to 15 October 1994*	*16 October 1994 to date*
England	—	4,150	4,404	9,689
Scotland	217	451	540	513
Wales	414	395	374	582
Northern Ireland	231	271	374	302
Total	862	5,267	5,692	11,086

The ESA schemes are funded under the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund. As part of the CAP reform, funding for these schemes switched in 1993 from the guidance section of the EAGGF, which reimbursed the UK annually in arrears, to guarantee funding, which funds expenditure in-year. In some cases, therefore, the total reimbursement relates to more than one year's expenditure.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums are being made available for decommissioning of inshore or medium distance

fishing vessels in the years 1995–96 and 1996—97; what conditions are placed on the disposal or future use of craft where hulls are of *(a)* wooden and *(b)* metal construction; and what is the legislative basis for paying these sums. [37321]

Mr. Boswell: Some £12 million pounds is available for decommissioning in 1995–96 under the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1995. The scheme applies to vessels over 10 m in length. A further £12 million will be available in 1996–97 under a scheme to be laid in due course.

Grant is paid for the surrender of all licences issued in respect of a vessel by fisheries departments and for the vessel to be rendered permanently unseaworthy. The majority of vessels have been scrapped, although a limited number have been presented to museums and other charitable institutions after the above conditions have been met. No distinction is made in respect of the material of construction.

Copies of the application form and explanatory leaflet for the 1995 scheme, which set out in full the conditions for disposal of vessels, have been placed in the Library of the House.

European Funding

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list those projects which he has agreed to fund in partnership with the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund in England; and if he will list the amounts involved in each case; [37685]

(2) when he will announce the level of matching funding for the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund in England; [37686]

(3) how much matching funding will be available from his Department for European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund financed projects in cash and percentage terms in this and the next five years in England. [37688]

Mr. Baldry: Programmes which are co-financed by the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund with this Department are as follows:

Guarantee Section

- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Nitrate Sensitive Areas (Environmental Protection (nutrients))
- Moorland Scheme
- Countryside Access Scheme
- Conservation, Habitat Scheme and Access
- Organic Farming
- Farm Woodlands

Guidance Section

- Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances
- Farm Grants
- Improved Marketing

Details of expenditure on these programmes, including planned expenditure for the next three years, and the amounts funded by the relevant section of the EAGGF, can be found in chapters 3 and 4 of the 1995 departmental report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board, copies of which can be found in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Allowances

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of state for Social Security (1) if he will consult *(a)* mothers and *(b)* hon. Members and right hon. Members about the nature and value of cash allowances for children; [36969]

(2) what changes to the child benefit system of cash allowances for children he is considering. [36968]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The Government have a clear manifesto commitment to maintaining child benefit as the cornerstone of our policy for all families with children. We will continue to honour this.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36826]

Mr. Burt: Complaints about projects or services carried out on behalf of the Department and its agencies and funded through the private finance initiative remain within the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the parliamentary ombudsman. Members of the public have the same rights of complaint to the ombudsman as for complaints directly against Government Departments.

Unemployment

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the estimated cost of male unemployment in 1979; and what is the current annual cost. [37402]

Mr. Burt: Benefit expenditure on the unemployed was previously published in Government expenditure plans and is now given in the annual departmental report. Copies of both are held in the Library. The available information does not provide for an estimate of the cost of male unemployment.

Share Options

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce proposals to outlaw companies using share options as a means of payment to low-paid employees unless such payments count for national insurance purposes. [37075]

Mr. Heald: Payments made by way of share options do count for national insurance contributions purposes. The exception is where employees are paid by the way of shares or share options in their own company. This policy helps employers to give employees a direct stake in their employing business and promotes wider share ownership.

We do not wish to prevent low-paid employees from benefiting from share options and therefore have no plans to change our policy.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many outstanding claims are with the War Pensions Agency from ex-service personnel related to participation in the British nuclear test programme. [37503]

Mr. Heald: This is a matter for Mr. John Sheppard, the acting chief executive of the War Pensions Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Sheppard to Mr. Jeff Rooker, dated 18 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of outstanding War Pension claims from ex-service personnel who participated in the British nuclear test program.

The information requested is shown below and is broken down into those claims relating to the test in 1. The South Pacific and 2. Australia.

Outstanding claims

	South Pacific	*Australia*	*Total*
First claims to War Pension	22	11	33
Claims for further conditions	6	3	9
Totals	28	14	42

I hope you find my reply helpful.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Identity Cards

10. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the possible introduction of ID cards. [36515]

Mr. Howard: I published a consultation document on identity cards in May and asked for comments by the end of September. Some 3,000 replies have been received and I will be looking very carefully at all these responses before we consider whether and, if so, how an identity card should be introduced.

Young Offenders

20. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total annual cost of dealing with young people in the judicial and custodial systems; and if he will make a statement. [36525]

Mr. Maclean: Including the costs to the courts, police, Crown Prosecution Service, legal aid and Prison Service of dealing with defendants aged 10 to 20, the total cost in 1993–94 was about £650 million.

Life Sentences

21. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in relation to the tariff system for remission of life sentences. [36526]

Miss Widdecombe: I have received various representations about the tariff system for mandatory life sentence prisoners.

Private Security Industry

22. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce statutory regulation of the private security industry. [36527]

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Newham, North-West, (Mr. Banks).

Private Detective Agencies

23. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to issue guidelines on the use of private detective agencies by Government Departments. [36528]

Mr. Maclean: We have no such plans.

Probation Service

24. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the probation service. [36529]

Mr. Kirkhope: Recent representations have included comments on the proposed arrangements for the recruitment and qualifying training of probation officers; the resources available for probation work; and changes to the boundaries of certain probation areas.

Police Grant Settlement

25. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the police grant settlement. [36530]

Mr. Maclean: Representations about the police grant settlement for 1995–96 were received from 21 chief constables. Correspondence was also received from hon. Members, police and local authorities and members of the public.

Victims Helpline

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many calls the victims helpline has received since its inception; what has been the cost to date of the helpline to the public purse; and if he will make a statement on the feedback callers receive about action taken on their calls. [37692]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 19 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the Victims Helpline.

From its inception on 5 December 1994 to 4 October 1995 the Helpline had received 230 calls. The total cost over the same period is estimated to be in the region of £26,000 including the start-up cost of £8,400.

The Helpline passes the victims' concerns on to the relevant prison or young offender establishment and the caller is informed of the referral. At establishments, the nature of the action taken and feedback to callers will depend on the circumstances of the individual case.

Minority Languages

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the expected effect of the European Council of Ministers' decision to end funding for European minority languages and cultures *(a)* in total cash terms *(b)* on projects which currently are in receipt of European aid; [37682]

(2) what discussions he has had with his colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland concerning future European funding for minority languages and cultures; [37683]

(3) what decision the Council of Ministers has reached on the European funds for the promotion and safeguarding of minority languages and cultures from next year's European budget; and when that decision was taken; [37684]

(4) what discussions he has had with colleagues concerning the proposal by the European Council of Ministers to end European funding for minority languages and cultures. [37680]

Mr. Kirkhope: I am also replying on behalf of the Secretary of State for Wales.

At the First Reading of the 1996 European Budget on 24 July 1995, the Budget Council of the European Union reduced all budget lines for which it was agreed that there was no legal base, including this one, to a token entry to cover existing commitments only. This budget line has therefore been reduced from 3.5 mecu to zero.

The European Parliament will have its First Reading of the European Budget on 26 October and, as the expenditure is not compulsory, it remains open to the Assembly to reinstate the budget line as in previous years.

As the European Union Budget Council accepts that there is no legal base for this budget line, there is no case for holding discussions at ministerial level on the substantive merits of the expenditure.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reviewed the use of public interest immunity certificates following judgments of the Court of Appeal in the Ordtech case. [36749]

Mr. Howard: No. The Court of Appeal upheld in full the certificates signed by the former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, me and the deputy assistant commissioner for the Metropolitan police. As regards the material in respect of which public interest immunity certificates were made, the court ruled that the public interest immunity claims were well-founded and directed disclosure only of such parts of the material—or summaries thereof—as the signatories of the certificates had proposed and had volunteered for disclosure.

Public interest immunity certificates are one of the subjects under consideration by Sir Richard Scott. The Government will take careful note of any conclusions and recommendations in his report.

Police Horses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police horses are currently in service with the Metropolitan police; what were the figures *(a)* one and *(b)* two years ago; what costs were involved in each case; and if he will make a statement. [36842]

Mr. Maclean: I am advised by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis of the information set out in the table.

	In service	*Annual cost per horse*[1] £
Current	160	3,000 to 4,000
As at 31 March 1994	193	3,000 to 4,000
As at 31 March 1993	190	2,000 to 3,000

[1] The annual cost is an average figure and does not include staff costs.

Air Weapons

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the legislation which applies to age limits on owners of air weapons; and what plans he has to review this legislation. [37507]

Mr. Maclean: The acquisition, possession and use of air weapons are regulated by the Firearms Act 1968 which prohibits their sale or hire to anyone under the age of 17. Young people under 14 may not buy, hire, be given, or own an air weapon and may use one only if they are supervised by someone who is 21 or over. Those air weapons which are classified as "specially dangerous" under the Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969 are subject to firearm certificate control.

In its second annual report, the Firearms Consultative Committee, the independent statutory body established to advise Government on the firearms legislation, concluded that the existing law was adequate to deal with levels of misuse. The committee has this year re-examined the legislation surrounding the use of all firearms by young people generally, including air weapons. It has concluded that the existing provisions, while adequate, are complex and recommended that consideration should be given to simplifying them. This recommendation is currently under consideration.

General Pinochet

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what identity General Pinochet recently visited Britain; and what special protection he was offered. [37980]

Mr. Howard: I have no reason to believe that General Pinochet visited in other than his own name. It is not practice to comment on matters bearing on the security of individuals.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what entry requirements were made of General Pinochet during his recent visit to the United Kingdom. [37981]

Mr. Kirkhope: General Pinochet was admitted to the United Kingdom as a visitor in accordance with the immigration rules.

Guatemalan Military Visitors

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visas to visit Britain have been granted to representatives of the Guatemalan military in each of the past five years. [37983]

Mr. Kirkhope: The available information shows that entry clearances have been issued under the Foreign and Commonwealth United Kingdom military training assistance scheme to three serving Guatemalan officers in 1995 to attend military training courses in the United Kingdom. In addition, five teachers working for the Guatemalan military authorities have been issued with entry clearances in 1995 to attend short English language training courses in the United Kingdom, under a scheme linked to UKMTAS. No entry clearances for journeys to the United Kingdom for this purpose were issued prior to 1995.

Prisoners (Early Release)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received with regards to the early release of prisoners convicted for terrorism. [36509]

Mr. Howard: I have received a number of representations from Members of the House, members of the public and others arguing for and against the early release of terrorist prisoners.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he proposes in the visiting arrangements for prisoners. [36510]

Miss Widdecombe: The Learmont report into prison security makes a number of recommendations to improve the supervision of visits for prisoners. As my right hon. and learned Friend indicated to the House on 16 October, *Official Report*, columns 30–33, he accepts the broad thrust of Sir John Learmont's analysis and shall give the House a full response in due course.

Youth Crime

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he intends to take to tackle youth crime. [36531]

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend announced last week the setting up of an important new ministerial committee on preventing juvenile crime. The committee will ensure the effective co-ordination of the wide range of measures that are already being taken across Departments as well as initiating new steps to strengthen these.

Ethnic Minorities (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from Manchester city council in relation to section 11 funding to meet the special needs of minority ethnic communities; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kirkhope: The leader of the council wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend on 6 October. We are considering the points made and a reply will be sent shortly.

Circus Animals

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the legislation concerning the use of animals in circuses. [37509]

Mr. Kirkhope: None. I have received no evidence to suggest that the current law provides inadequate safeguards for circus animals.

Crime Prevention

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of those local authorities which have established designated units with a specific responsibility to reduce the fear of crime and improve crime prevention measures, reporting directly to the chief executive, by party of control. [37524]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Bail

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons aged *(a)* 10 to 16 years, *(b)* 17 to 21 years and *(c)* over 21 years were on magistrates court bail at the latest date available; how many in each age group were the subject of a bail condition; what were those bail conditions; and for each age group, how many were re-arrested and subsequently charged with an additional offence; [37177]

(2) how many of those persons bailed from magistrates courts in England and Wales were bailed *(a)* unconditionally, *(b)* with a condition of residence, *(c)* with a condition of reporting to the police, *(d)* with a condition of loss of passport, *(e)* with a condition of a hostel and *(f)* with any other condition at the latest date available; and what percentage of each group were subsequently re-arrested and charged; [37175]

(3) how many persons were subject of *(a)* police bail and *(b)* magistrates court bail at the latest date available; and to how many were conditions attached; [37174]

(4) what percentage of all persons granted magistrates court bail was re-arrested and subsequently charged with a further offence. [37176]

Mr. Maclean: The available statistics are published annually in chapter 8 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", particularly tables 8.5 and 8.6. Information by age group for indicatable offences is given in table 1. Information of persons found guilty or cautioned for absconding after release on bail is given in table 2.

Information on bail conditions imposed by magistrates courts is not routinely collected. Provisional figures from a sample survey for the proportion given any bail condition are given in table 3. Information on the use of different types of bail conditions is given in a report published by the Institute of Local Government Studies

for the Home Office in July 1995, "Conditional Bail or Bail with Conditions: the use and effectiveness of Bail Conditions", a copy of which is in the Library.

Information on offending on bail was given in Home Office research paper No. 65 "Offending while on bail: a survey of recent studies". More up-to-date figures are given in a 1994 report of the Hampshire police and probation service and show that 14 per cent. of persons given bail committed an offence during a period of police or court bail.

Table 1: Persons proceeded against at magistrates courts for indictable offences, who were remanded by age group, 1993.

England and Wales — *Number[1], percentage*

	10–16	17–20	21 and over	All ages
Number proceeded against[2]	44,100	141,200	401,600	586,900
Number of persons remanded[3]	27,500	91,600	253,800	373,000
Percentage of persons proceeded against who were remanded	62	65	63	64
Number of persons remanded on ball	25,800	80,800	226,000	332,600
Number of persons remanded in custody[4]	1,800	10,800	27,800	40,400
Persons remanded in custody as percentage of total remanded	6	12	11	11

[1] The figures quoted in this table should be taken as broad estimates only, due to date quality problems.

[2] Includes those who failed to appear following summons or police bail.

[3] Excludes those who failed to appear following summons or police bail.

[4] Includes those remanded in custody at any stage of proceedings at magistrates courts, who may also have been given bail at some stage of those proceedings.

Table 2: Persons found guilty or cautioned for absconding after release on bail[1] by age group, 1993 and 1994.

England and Wales — *Number*

	10–16	17–20	21 and over	All ages
1993	457	5,465	13,616	19,538
1994	599	5,415	14,794	20,808

[1] Section 6, Bail Act 1976.

Table 3: percentage of persons granted court bail for whom conditions were attached[1]

Age group	Percentage
10-16	26
17–20	26
21 and over	29
All ages	27

[1] Based on a sample of 200 people granted bail in 1994.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Home Office last carried out a comprehensive review of the Bail Act 1976; to what extent the review compared the effectiveness of different bail conditions; and if he will publish the results. [37178]

Mr. Maclean: Bail provisions are kept under review in various ways. Work on analysing the bail process in a number of areas took place in 1993 and 1994 and a first report was published by the Home Office research and planning unit in December 1994, RPU paper 90. A further report is expected next year.

A separate research report undertaken for the Home Office on the effectiveness of bail conditions was published earlier this year by Birmingham university.

Copies of both reports have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail information schemes are currently operating in *(a)* courts and *(b)* prisons; and what assessment he has made of their impact in respect of avoiding remands into custody. [37184]

Mr. Kirkhope: The most recent available information is that in March 1995 there were 235 schemes, most court based. Studies have shown that schemes have typically led to a reduction of about 10 per cent. in the proportion of relevant cases in which a custodial remand took place.

Police Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest level of recorded assaults upon police officers. [37081]

Mr. Maclean: The information provided by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary shows that there were 17,950 assaults on officers during 1993, the latest year for which figures are currently available. The corresponding figure for 1992 was 18,108. Figures for the financial year 1994–95 are expected to be published later this month.

Police Cautions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many juveniles and young persons were informally cautioned by the police for each of the last three years; [37181]

(2) how many juveniles in England and Wales were known to have received *(a)* one informal caution, *(b)* two informal cautions, *(c)* three informal cautions, and *(d)* four or more informal cautions for the latest available data. [37182]

Mr. Maclean: No information is collected centrally on the extent of any police informal action. Some results from a sample of police forces on the method of police disposal of cases—prosecution, caution and "other means"—are being collected and will be published in due course.

Victim Support

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the delays in agreeing an automatic referral policy from the police to Victim Support arising from data protection considerations. [37077]

Mr. Kirkhope: Following meetings with the Data Protection Registrar, the police and Victim Support, it was agreed earlier this year that the police could continue to operate the automatic referral arrangements under which they routinely passed information about victims of crime to local victim support schemes. Police forces and victim support schemes were notified accordingly.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives his Department undertook to improve electoral registration for the recent annual registration process. [37083]

Mr. Kirkhope: We continue to give general guidance to electoral registration officers and to advise them on best practice based on annual research which we commission. We also run an annual publicity campaign to coincide with the canvass. This year, a new television advertisement with associated posters was commissioned and produced at a cost of £800,000.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward changes to election law to allow challenges to be made to the use of a vote by a person who is falsely registered. [37076]

Mr. Kirkhope: We are examining ways in which the possible risk of fraudulent electoral registration might be reduced and hope to reach conclusions soon.

Recorded Crimes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded in each borough by the Metropolitan police within each category of crime in the year to June 1995; how many incidents of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and of theft from a motor vehicle were recorded in each borough; and how many of the burglaries recorded in each borough were *(a)* in a dwelling and *(b)* in another building. [37167]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested has been supplied by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is contained in the table. These figures have been revised since the publication of the recorded crime figures.

Notifiable offences recorded in the metropolitan police district by borough district
Metropolitan Police District—12 months to June 1995

Number of offences

	Barking	*Barnet*	*Bexley*	*Brent*	*Bromley*	*Camden*	*Croydon*	*Ealing*	*Enfield*	*Greenwich*
Total	13,930	24,147	17,510	24,421	26,619	34,937	32,900	27,029	20,966	40,942
Violence against the person	508	707	704	1,177	1,145	1,209	2,101	1,287	1,181	2,316
Sexual offences	250	159	133	204	179	161	251	204	136	481
Robbery	226	485	198	1,863	264	1,305	817	825	466	987
Burglary going equipped	3,316	5,463	4,628	4,903	5,691	6,152	7,086	5,163	5,069	10,081
Theft and handling stolen goods	6,217	11,117	7,513	9,975	12,465	19,349	14,300	11,861	9,080	17,098
Fraud and forgery	431	911	508	1,076	836	1,088	1,353	1,072	780	1,423
Criminal damage	2,876	5,170	3,713	5,025	5,841	5,443	6,731	6,400	4,135	8,161
Other	106	135	113	198	198	230	261	217	119	395
Theft of vehicle	1,177	1,070	1,157	950	1,314	1,262	1,408	1,365	1,140	1,883
Theft from vehicle	1,919	3,562	2,560	3,168	4,446	5,452	4,613	3,437	3,111	5,460
Burglary in a dwelling	1,864	3,468	2,694	3,327	3,541	3,350	4,847	3,401	3,061	7,055
Burglary in another building	1,443	1,981	1,921	1,554	2,111	2,751	2,192	1,735	1,988	2,965

	Hackney	*Hammersmith*	*Haringey*	*Harrow*	*Havering*	*Hillingdon*	*Hounslow*	*Islington*	*Kensington and Chelsea*	*Kingston*
Total	28,213	13,085	22,609	13,019	16,276	21,972	23,332	27,835	25,831	16,527
Violence against the person	1,355	671	1,225	513	393	1,019	1,290	1,727	840	697
Sexual offences	197	73	166	80	233	123	256	208	114	97
Robbery	2,031	519	1,299	231	113	165	292	1,309	1,076	173
Burglary going equipped	7,743	2,049	4,768	2,648	3,461	4,760	4,734	5,517	4,433	3,949
Theft and handling stolen goods	11,300	6,732	10,068	5,805	8,305	9,555	10,215	13,090	15,284	7,736
Fraud and forgery	1,026	396	818	524	604	587	1,279	861	897	547
Criminal damage	4,259	2,502	4,098	3,148	3,096	5,676	4,998	4,843	2,974	3,134
Other	302	143	167	70	71	87	268	280	213	194
Theft of vehicle	1,422	739	1,424	417	1,681	998	745	1,211	872	318
Theft from vehicle	3,721	2,650	2,679	2,042	2,155	4,068	2,977	4,527	3,279	2,110
Burglary in a dwelling	5,322	1,404	3,417	1,760	1,667	2,720	2,827	3,036	3,560	2,441
Burglary in another building	2,368	624	1,333	873	1,785	2,029	1,876	2,163	832	1,491

	Lambeth	Lewisham	Merton	Newham	Redbridge	Richmond	Southwark	Sutton	Tower Hamlets	Wandsworth
Total	36,505	30,281	14,998	28,103	18,891	12,742	39,799	11,060	24,100	31,196
Violence against the person	2,327	1,910	624	1,393	873	593	2,791	489	1,039	1,373
Sexual offences	319	327	72	257	119	71	298	154	197	278
Robbery	2,675	1,452	209	1,127	225	151	2,392	104	589	1,224
Burglary going equipped	7,219	7,067	3,168	5,962	4,096	3,100	8,342	2,673	5,114	5,621
Theft and handling stolen goods	15,527	12,699	6,637	12,809	9,210	5,859	17,421	4,913	11,761	15,086
Fraud and forgery	1,237	938	771	798	858	452	1,333	477	655	1,286
Criminal damage	6,778	5,387	3,392	5,533	3,359	2,388	6,750	2,172	4,509	5,797
Other	423	501	125	224	151	128	472	78	236	531
Theft of vehicle	1,616	1,771	591	2,331	1,959	338	1,886	576	1,307	1,273
Theft from vehicle	5,019	4,141	2,188	4,020	2,554	1,776	5,835	1,260	4,394	5,379
Burglary in a dwelling	5,495	5,120	1,926	3,410	2,556	1,869	5,554	1,639	2,236	3,857
Burglary in another building	1,660	1,917	1,226	2,529	1,512	1,218	2,717	1,021	2,833	1,726

	Waltham Forest	Westminster	Broxbourne(part)	Elmbridge(part)	Epping Forest(part)	Epsom and Well(part)	Hertmere	Reigate and Banstead(part)	Spelthorne	Welwyn Hatfield(part)
Total	20,622	59,273	4,069	4	3,598	6,933	4,796	2,629	6,526	53
Violence against the person	1,107	1,881	251	0	231	281	122	98	351	1
Sexual offences	156	279	9	0	14	50	32	6	40	0
Robbery	658	2,254	31	0	30	52	34	5	36	0
Burglary going equipped	4,522	7,433	717	0	644	1,905	802	547	1,292	17
Theft and handling stolen goods	9,395	38,332	2,011	3	1,740	2,720	2,407	1,187	2,942	22
Fraud and forge	745	3,049	98	0	136	231	172	95	550	1
Criminal damage	3,918	5,440	931	1	774	1,645	1,207	660	1,236	12
Other	121	605	21	0	29	49	20	31	79	0
Theft of vehicle	1,487	877	221	0	289	208	190	74	186	2
Theft from vehicle	2,367	4,792	796	1	521	904	993	572	1,123	10
Burglary in a dwelling	2,863	3,590	329	0	359	1,124	361	307	547	8
Burglary in another building	1,635	3,729	383	0	282	774	429	233	733	9

	Heathrow Airport	Thames	Central Cheque Squad	MPD Total
Total	4,503	157	880	833,818
Violence against the person	20	2	0	39,822
Sexual offences	7	0	0	6,390
Robbery	5	0	0	27,897
Burglary going equipped	43	14	0	171,912
Theft and handling stolen goods	3,339	107	39	393,231
Fraud and forgery	793	0	758	32,450
Criminal damage	186	34	72	154,404
Other	110	0	11	7,712
Theft of vehicle	64	4	0	39,803
Theft from vehicle	412	0	0	116,993
Burglary in a dwelling	1	4	0	108,187
Burglary in another building	39	10	0	62,63

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded by each police force in England and Wales within each category of crime in the year to June 1995; how many incidents of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and of theft from a motor vehicle were recorded by each force; and how many of the burglaries recorded by each police force in England and Wales in the year to June 1995 were *(a)* in a dwelling and *(b)* in another building. [37166]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in the following table.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area
England and Wales—12 months to June 1995

Number of offences

	Avon and Somerset	Bedfordshire	Cambridgeshire	Cheshire	Cleveland	Cumbria	Derbyshire	Devon and Cornwall	Dorset	Durham
Total	158,815	50,815	63,569	74,753	82,866	41,318	82,439	104,044	55,193	61,398
Violence against the person	6,948	1,847	2,719	3,361	2,569	2,261	3,825	4,415	1,890	2,291

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area
England and Wales—12 months to June 1995

Number of offences

	Avon and Somerset	Bedfordshire	Cambridgeshire	Cheshire	Cleveland	Cumbria	Derbyshire	Devon and Cornwall	Dorset	Durham
Sexual offences	995	384	373	573	222	231	514	819	338	474
Robbery	1,627	575	268	260	490	79	398	390	150	151
Burglary	36,126	11,854	14,359	18,621	21,166	9,852	21,074	27,755	11,129	14,171
Theft and handling stolen goods	86,586	26,684	35,103	35,233	41,287	19,467	38,417	52,887	30,429	29,395
Fraud and forgery	3,846	1,732	1,335	2,673	1,096	1,017	1,574	2,858	2,307	2,132
Criminal damage	21,723	7,283	8,997	12,467	15,019	8,055	15,870	13,631	8,195	11,988
Other	964	456	415	1,565	617	366	767	1,289	755	796
Theft of vehicle	19,145	6,491	6,251	6,962	11,972	2,414	8,601	6,158	3,687	7,305
Theft from vehicle	32,803	10,252	11,248	12,112	11,575	6,964	13,848	21,025	10,339	8,389
Burglary in a dwelling	17,809	5,440	6,413	8,879	12,606	4,171	8,652	13,757	6,438	7,735
Burglary in another building	18,317	6,414	7,946	9,742	8,560	5,681	12,422	13,998	4,691	6,436

	Essex	Gloucestershire	Greater Manchester	Hampshire	Hertfordshire	Humberside	Kent	Lancashire	Leicestershire	Lincolnshire
Total	101,687	57,455	327,504	135,683	56,063	128,628	153,800	123,192	95,917	46,458
Violence against the person	4,316	1,938	8,338	5,559	1,948	5,306	6,960	3,095	5,168	2,300
Sexual offences	559	379	1,142	1,028	274	688	1,008	533	589	370
Robbery	400	291	5,005	524	286	538	704	637	1,346	112
Burglary	21,418	14,308	87,071	26,130	11,618	40,644	29,760	27,776	25,852	11,792
Theft and handling stolen goods	53,627	30,906	150,247	72,861	29,916	58,868	81,150	60,467	45,483	21,724
Fraud and forgery	2,555	2,231	6,961	3,889	1,277	3,015	3,915	3,438	3,068	1,157
Criminal damage	17,926	6,709	66,090	24,135	10,328	18,894	28,695	25,985	13,752	8,329
Other	886	693	2,650	1,557	416	675	1,608	1,261	659	674
Theft of vehicle	8,290	3,945	45,883	9,146	5,342	12,176	16,618	9,711	10,169	3,449
Theft from vehicle	16,808	13,105	51,789	25,379	13,370	17,989	24,548	21,548	15,571	5,587
Burglary in a dwelling	8,643	6,920	52,044	11,105	4,237	18,369	15,315	17,514	14,722	5,883
Burglary in another building	12,775	7,388	35,027	15,025	7,381	22,275	14,445	10,262	11,130	5,909

	City of London	Merseyside	Metropolitan Police	Norfolk	Northamptonshire	Northumbria	North Yorkshire	Nottinghamshire	South Yorkshire	Staffordshire
Total	5,656	143,228	823,693	53,227	56,264	196,020	64,090	148,464	152,818	90,452
Violence against the person	125	7,771	41,264	2,045	2,513	5,890	2,000	7,630	4,976	6,097
Sexual offences	20	925	6,352	347	360	675	231	997	614	515
Robbery	29	2,216	27,712	209	281	1,307	171	1,324	1,071	464
Burglary	725	33,243	172,734	13,253	13,566	53,890	16,767	34,743	46,595	25,123
Theft and handling stolen goods	3,880	70,409	379,052	27,494	26,687	79,922	31,938	67,615	69,740	40,845
Fraud and forgery	436	2,984	32,516	1,427	1,390	2,960	1,004	3,587	2,812	2,059
Criminal damage	335	23,852	154,723	7,854	10,955	50,372	11,531	31,867	25,705	14,867
Other	106	1,828	9,340	598	512	1,004	448	701	1,305	482
Theft of vehicle	77	16,942	46,110	3,278	6,417	22,594	5,329	16,263	20,537	8,520
Theft from vehicle	630	17,425	[illegible]	8,956	8,869	22,565	11,203	18,612	23,804	15,847
Burglary in a dwelling	45	20,580	[illegible]	5,004	6,467	26,568	7,175	20,074	22,369	11,915
Burglary in another building	680	12,663	[illegible]	8,249	7,099	27,322	9,592	14,669	24,226	13,208

	Suffolk	Surrey	Sussex	Thames Valley	Warwickshire	West Mercia	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Wiltshire	Dyfed-Powys
Total	38,061	45,055	108,349	182,351	39,809	81,949	307,291	280,196	37,249	20,220
Violence against the person	1,969	2,488	3,558	5,887	1,304	3,223	8,963	8,686	2,221	2,002
Sexual offences	339	458	710	808	230	478	1,219	1,367	348	265
Robbery	121	174	594	1,243	128	271	7,347	3,029	150	31
Burglary	7,235	9,607	23,872	38,121	9,857	16,298	86,582	86,586	8,247	3,482
Theft and handling stolen goods	18,919	23,218	56,973	102,118	20,636	44,161	141,664	128,295	18,525	8,683
Fraud and forgery	1,456	1,492	2,710	5,170	972	1,517	7,637	5,152	1,096	619
Criminal damage	7,350	6,937	18,649	27,374	6,353	15,302	52,087	44,287	6,124	4,607
Other	672	681	1,283	1,630	329	699	1,792	2,794	538	531
Theft of vehicle	1,996	3,228	6,599	19,215	4,501	7,284	41,280	32,499	2,401	1,031
Theft from vehicle	5,367	7,994	18,896	39,264	7,772	14,225	48,270	43,211	5,915	2,081
Burglary in a dwelling	2,925	4,333	13,111	20,806	4,161	7,762	44,969	54,112	4,012	1,367
Burglary in another building	4,310	5,274	10,761	17,315	5,696	8,536	41,613	32,474	4,235	2,115

	Gwent	North Wales	South Wales	England and Wales
Total	33,349	42,439	152,545	5,104,372
Violence against the person	2,453	2,405	6,192	208,716
Sexual offences	287	327	583	29,948
Robbery	97	78	464	62,742
Burglary	6,019	9,868	37,023	1,235,912
Theft and handling stolen goods	16,638	19,760	72,984	2,470,893
Fraud and forgery	1,050	1,153	3,438	137,103
Criminal damage	5,910	8,239	30,456	909,807
Other	895	609	1,405	49,251
Theft of vehicle	3,180	2,256	23,593	498,845
Theft from vehicle	4,697	6,837	24,782	819,346
Burglary in a dwelling	2,809	3,088	14,551	654,163
Burglary in another building	3,210	6,780	22,472	581,749

Immigration

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify the rules presently relating to permanent entry into the United Kingdom by British subjects resident in the various dependent territories, excluding Hong Kong; and what proposals he has to enable entry on the lines of that granted by France to French overseas department residents. [37283]

Mr. Kirkhope: With the exception of the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar, citizens of British dependent territories seeking permanent entry into the United Kingdom must meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules (HC395). I have no plans to enable entry similar to that operated by France in respect of residents of French overseas departments.

Asylum

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum were made by individuals facing deportation from the United Kingdom in each of the last three years; how many applications for asylum are waiting to be determined; how many of those refused asylum used the appeals procedure in each of the last three years; how many cases were determined in the last six months; and how many of those refused asylum are known to have left the United Kingdom in the current year. [37416]

Mr. Kirkhope: Information on asylum applications and appeals from 1992 to 1995 is given in the table. The number of outstanding applications for asylum as at 31 August 1995 was 62,900. The number of decisions on asylum applications in the last six months—April to September 1995—was 10,600. A total of 1,465 persons who had been refused asylum were removed during January to August 1995. This figure includes those who had departed voluntarily during this time.

Asylum applications and appeals during 1992–95 (January–August)

	1992	1993	1994	1995 (Jan–Aug)
Applications of which:	24,605	22,370	32,830	27,100
applied after deportation order served[1]	90	115	140	85
Appeals sent to the Home Office	—	765[2]	6,675	8,930

— Not available

[1] Includes those applying for asylum after either a notice of intent to deport had been served, a court had recommended deportation or a deport order had been signed against the applicant.

[2] The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act came into effect on 26 July 1993, and figures for 1993 are for August to December only.

WALES

New Homes

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the total number of new homes started by *(a)* local authorities and new towns and *(b)* housing associations in Wales in each year since 1974 and his estimate of the likely number of starts in 1995 and 1996. [37491]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the following table. Estimates for 1995 and for 1996 are not available.

New dwellings started, by tenure

Number

	Local authorities and new towns	Housing associations
1974	8,462	224
1975	8,999	279
1976	7,012	331
1977	3,894	1,285
1978	4,002	1,184
1979	3,179	657
1980	2,439	384
1981	1,171	460
1982	2,121	695
1983	2,008	640
1984	908	326
1985	891	579
1986	742	507
1987	909	1,014
1988	716	1,583
1989	501	1,612
1990	338	2,228
1991	174	2,496
1992	261	2,658
1993	75	3,212
1994	180	2,929

Training for Work

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of people in training for work in *(a)* Merthyr Tydfil, *(b)* Rhymney, *(c)* Mid Glamorgan and *(d)* Wales; and what were the equivalent figures prior to the new training for work programme. [37549]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is collected on a training and enterprise council basis by the

Department and is therefore shown only for Mid Glamorgan and Wales in the following table:

Number of people in training on training for work

	1994–95 (As at 11 September) 1994	*1994–96 (As at 10 September) 1995*
Mid Glamorgan	1,480	1,362
Wales	8,405	5,103

Source:
TEC Management Information.

Miners (Morriston Hospital)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many seriously injured miners from private mines have been admitted to Morriston hospital in the last year; and if he will make a statement. [37612]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not available centrally.

Welsh Language and Culture

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list projects promoting and safeguarding the Welsh language and culture that have received European funding in the last five years. [37681]

Mr. Richards: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the member of the European Commission responsible for the environment concerning the report of the Worldwide Fund for Nature in relation to the provision of alternative feeding grounds for wading birds displace by the Cardiff bay barrage. [37815]

Mr. Hague: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the Worldwide Fund for Nature report on the alternative feeding grounds required by the terms of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act 1993. [37812]

Mr. Hague: The alternative feeding grounds were not a requirement of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act but, during the passage of the Bill, an agreement was reached between the Government and conservation interests about bird reserve measures.

A copy of the WWF report was received by my Department on Wednesday 18 October which I have not seen. I understand that a response is being considered.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposal he has to acquire land for the provision of alternative feeding grounds for wading birds displaced by the Cardiff bay barrage by *(a)* compulsory purchase and *(b)* voluntary means; and if he will make a statement. [37818]

Mr. Hague: A site option studies report has been concluded by Cardiff Bay development corporation on the advice of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Land Authority for Wales. The final report was submitted to my Department on 16 October.

I will consider the report and make an announcement about land acquisition following detailed discussions between my officials and the European Commission.

The land acquisition procedures are matters for CBDC to pursue with the Land Authority for Wales.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to amend the grant in aid level to the Welsh Development Agency, following the discussions with the regional development directorate of the European Commission. [37813]

Mr. Hague: None, European funding is not a factor in determining the level of grant in aid to the Welsh Development Agency.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what instructions he has issued to the non-departmental public bodies in Wales with respect to the supply of cars, either under executive car leasing schemes or by direct provision for chairmen, deputy chairmen and chief executives; if he will list for each quango which of the *(a)* chairmen, *(b)* deputy chairmen and *(c)* chief executives have an officially provided car; and under what type of scheme. [37817]

Mr. Hague: Non-departmental public bodies in Wales were reminded in spring 1994 of the conditions for the provision of cars. The fundamental principle is that a car should be made available to a member of staff or of the board only where this is the most cost-effective means of transport for official journeys. NDPBs' attention has also been drawn to guidance on various aspects of car provision produced by Her Majesty's Treasury's central unit on purchasing. Information on the provision to individuals within NDPBs' approved car schemes is not held centrally.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *1186*, if he will list the date, location, type and nationality of aircraft involved, and circumstances of each of the breaches of low flying regulations over Wales in 1992, 1993 and 1994; and if he will provide similar details for the period since his previous reply. [37609]

Mr. Soames: Details of breaches of military low flying regulations over Wales confirmed by RAF police investigations are as follows:

Date	Location	Numbers and type of A/C	Nationality	Nature of breach
1992				
22 January	Welshpool, Powys	2x Sea Harrier	RN	Welshpool Airport avoidance area
3 February	Talgarth, Powys	1x Hawk	RAF	Black Mountain Gliding Club avoidance
4 February	Welshpool, Powys	2x Jaguar	RAF	Welshpool Airport avoidance area
10 February	Welshpool, Powys	1x Jaguar	RAF	Welshpool Airport avoidance area
21 April	Bodelwyddon, Clwyd	1x Fi111	USAF	Glan-Clwyd hospital avoidance
21 May	Welshpool, Powys	1x A10	USAF	Welshpool Airport avoidance area
23 June	Welshpool, Powys	1x Tornado	RAF avoidance area	Welshpool Airport
1993				
22 March	Ruabon, Clwyd	1x F15	USAF	Monsanto Chemcial Works avoidance
16 July	Welshpool, Powys	1x Tornado	RAF	Welshpool Airport avoidance area
19 July	Builth Wells, Powys	1x Harrier	RAF	Royal Welsh Agricultural Show temporary avoidance
21 July	Builth Wells, Powys	1x Harrier	RAF	Royal Welsh Agricultural Show temporary avoidance
1994				
17 January	Ruabon, Clwyd	1x Hercules	RAF	Monsanto Chemical Works avoidance
17 May	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	1x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
1 June	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	2x F15	USAF	Hay Bluff Hang Glidng site avoidance area
1 June	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	2x F15	USAF	Flying in UK Low Flying System outside of allocated times
23 June	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	1x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
20 July	Ruabon, Clwyd	1x Tornado	RAF	Monsanto Chemical Works avoidance
28 July	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	1x F15	USAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
28 July	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	1x Hercules	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
4 August	Glyn-Neath, Dyfed	2x F15	USAF	Royal National Eisteddfod temporary avoidance area
9 August	Near Hay-on-Wye, Powys	2x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
13 September	Bridgenorth	2x F15	USAF	Unauthorised flight within night UKLFS

Information for 1995 is not yet available.

The total of seven breaches in 1992 is one lower than identified in the answer to the hon. Member on 20 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *1186*. The latter answer incorrectly included one incident involving flight through an area notified as a warning to aircrew rather than as a mandatory avoidance.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *1186*, if he will make a statement on *(a)* the disciplinary actions taken against aircrew involved in each of the breaches of low flying regulations over Wales during 1994 and *(b)* the lessons learned from each incident. [37610]

Mr. Soames: None of the confirmed breaches by United Kingdom aircrew resulted in court martial or summary proceedings under the service discipline Acts. Such action is rare and is generally appropriate only if a breach of regulations resulted from negligence, indiscipline or a disregard for the rules. However, where formal disciplinary action is not appropriate, aircrew who have breached regulations may be interviewed by their station commander or other appropriate senior officer. Such action could be recorded on individual's career records and affect flying status and promotion prospects. It is not our policy to release details of such action. It is also the responsibility of senior officers to ascertain what lessons there are to be learnt from such incidents; central records are not maintained.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates of periods of covert monitoring of low-flying operations conducted by Royal Air Force police since 30 April 1993. [37535]

Mr. Soames: Since 30 April 1993 the RAF police have carried out covert surveys of military low flying at the following locations:

Date	Location
1993	
8–10 June	Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire
22–24 June	Llandrindod Wells, Powys
21–25 June	Norwich, Norfolk (Skyguard deployment)
6–8 July	Ffrwdgrech, Brecon Powys
12–15 July	Lake Bala, Gwynedd (Skyguard deployment)
24–26 August	Wye, Kent
20–24 September	Thurso, Caithness and Sutherland (Skyguard deployment)
27 September–1 October	Alnmouth, Northumberland (Skyguard deployment)
26–29 October	Chirnside, Berwickshire (Skyguard deployment)
23–26 November	Hornby, Lancashire (Skyguard deployment)
7–10 December	Daventry, Northamptonshire (Skyguard deployment)
1994	
25–27 January	Colchester, Essex
5–18 February	Barnard Castle, County Durham (Skyguard deployment)
22–25 March	Lockerbie, Annandale and Eskdale (Skyguard deployment)
26–29 April	Broadway, Hereford and Worcester (Skyguard deployment)
24–27 May	Heckington, Lincolnshire (Skyguard deployment)
28–30 June	Haddington, Lothian
12–15 July	Sandback, Cheshire (Skyguard deployment)
23–26 August	Crediton, Devon (Skyguard deployment)

Date	Location
20–23 September	Ambleside and Carlisle, Cumbria (Skyguard deployment)
18–20 October	Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire
1–4 November	Lampeter, Dyfed (Skyguard deployment)
29 November–1 December	Galashiels, Selkirkshire (Skyguard deployment)
1995	
1–3 February	Banbury, Oxon (Skyguard deployment)
20–23 February	Boston, Lincolnshire
7–9 March	Diss, Norfolk (Skyguard deployment)
27–30 March	Amisfield, Dumfries
4–6 April	Eden Valley, Cumbria
25–27 April	Galashiels, Selkirkshire (Skyguard deployment)
4–5, 9–10 May	Bude, Cornwall
9–12 May	Beaworthy/Okehampton, Devon
15–18 May	Machynlleth, Dyfed-Powys (Skyguard deployment)
13–16 June	Kettering, Northamptonshire (Skyguard deployment)
20–23 June	Ripon, North Yorkshire (Skyguard deployment)
5–8 September	Maybole, Strathclyde (Skyguard deployment)
18–22 September	Evesham, Hereford and Worcester (Skyguard deployment)
17–20 October	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire (Skyguard deployment)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the NATO authorities concerning the potential use of the airspace of Partnership for Peace countries for low-flying training by the Royal Air Force. [37538]

Mr. Soames: There have been no such discussions.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received about disturbance from military aircraft at the national eisteddfod in summer 1995. [37542]

Mr. Soames: My Department received one complaint about disturbance from military aircraft at the royal national eisteddfod between 5 and 12 August 1995.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many operational low-flying movements were authorised into each of the three tactical training areas in each month from September 1993 to the latest available date. [37546]

Mr. Soames: The number of operational low-flying movements authorised into each of the three tactical training areas in each month from September 1993 to August 1995, inclusive, is set out in the table:

	Northern Scotland	Central Wales	Borders
1993			
September	4	1	44
October	6	1	154
November	27	2	78
December	35	30	79
1994			
January	76	16	127
February	195	1	57
March	0	2	9
April	48	10	266
May	17	1	225
June	6	1	50
July	97	0	14
August	123	4	64
September	66	5	126
October	36	39	102
November	40	6	45
December	0	4	42
1995			
January	39	3	78
February	52	6	120
March	27	6	267
April	0	13	76
May	17	17	143
June	69	16	152
July	54	34	189
August	3	4	92

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to ensure that information on equestrian events, with particular reference to horse race meetings, is obtained by his Department for onward transmission to aircrew planning low-flying sorties. [37536]

Mr. Soames: My Department does not seek to obtain information on such events. The organisers may, however, apply for a temporary avoidance area and, given reasonable notice, we make every effort to accommodate such requests.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum permitted altitude for Royal Air Force aircraft flying in Danish airspace *(a)* on routine training sorties from bases outside Denmark, *(b)* on routine training sorties conducted during deployments to Danish air bases and *(c)* during NATO exercises. [37540]

Mr. Soames: Royal Air Force aircraft may, with the prior approval of the Danish authorities, fly in Danish airspace down to an altitude of 2,000 ft over populated areas and down to 1,000 ft over non-populated areas; flying down to 500 ft may also be authorised within designated exercise areas.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received by his Department from addresses in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland in each month since January 1994. [37543]

Mr. Soames: The numbers of inquiries and complaints relating to military low flying received by my Department since January 1994 from addresses in England, Scotland and Wales were as follows:

Month	England	Wales	Scotland
1994			
January	237	27	31
February	129	19	55
March	218	28	66
April	264	50	93
May	372	37	90
June	502	61	104
July	552	91	89
August	574	88	154
September	334	60	120

Month	England	Wales	Scotland
October	351	77	101
November	365	54	94
December	174	25	92
1995			
January	266	10	101
February	246	11	97
March	266	21	91
April	391	63	80
May	476	131	156
June	523	78	188
July	670	91	190
August	482	75	165
September	359	105	104

In addition, my Department has received a number of inquiries and complaints about other matters, details of which are not held centrally.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current policy on the retention in departmental records of the minutes of meetings of the military low flying management group; and what changes in that policy have taken place since 1979. [37537]

Mr. Soames: The minutes of the military low flying management group are placed on registered departmental files which are then reviewed in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967 and selected for retention or destroyed. Given that the group deals with short-term management issues, the minutes of its meetings do not record the discussion of issues which would justify their permanent retention. There has been no change in this policy since 1979.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the crew of the Tornado involved in the infringement of the Welshpool airport avoidance area on 16 July 1993 were found *(a)* to have been using a low flying chart marked with the January 1993 western extension to low flying area 9 and *(b)* to have obtained an authorisation to fly in low flying area 9. [37545]

Mr. Soames: The low flying chart current on 16 July 1993 reflected the westward extension to low flying area 9. The RAF police investigation did not establish whether the aircrew involved in the infringement of Welshpool airport were using a current chart. The aircrew had not planned to fly in low flying area 9 and had not obtained authorisation to do so.

Anti-tank Missile, Hayes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of investigations into the discovery of an anti-tank missile at Hayes, west London, on 25 September 1994. [37530]

Mr. Soames: An investigation by the Army's special investigation branch concluded that the missile had probably been fired in the course of an exercise on Salisbury plain, picked up in its inert state by a member of the public and subsequently disposed of in the field at Hayes where it was later discovered. It was a practice version of the tube-launched optically steered wire guided—TOW—anti-tank missile, which does not have an explosive warhead. Having been fired, it contained no propellant or any other explosive or combustible substance.

Training Exercises

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the squadrons whose crews have participated in Flag, Air Warrior, Cope Thunder and similar exercises in north America since February 1992, giving in each case *(a)* the date and name of the exercise, *(b)* the number and types of aircraft involved and *(c)* the location of the squadron's work-up training prior to the exercise. [37544]

Mr. Soames: The information requested is provided in the table.

Ex name	Date	Number/Type of Aircraft	Squadrons	Work-up location
1992				
Red Flag 92–2	January/February	8 Tornado GR1	14/17/27	UK/Goose Bay
Cope Thunder/Distant Frontier	April	8 Tornado	2/20	UK/Goose Bay
		1 VC10	101	
		1 C–130	47	
Red Flag 93–1	October	8 Tornado GR1	2/9/617	UK/Goose Bay
		6 Tornado F3	5/29	
		2 VC10	10/101	
		1 C–130	47	
1993				
Cope Thunder/Distant Frontier	April	8 Tornado GR1	13/27/31	UK/Goose Bay
		6 Tornado F3	5/29/43	
		1 VC10	10	
		2 C–130	47	
Maple Flag	May	10 Jaguar	6/54	UK
Red Flag 94–1	October	8 Tornado GR1	14/17	UK/Goose Bay
		1 C–130	47	
1994				
Red Flag 94–2	January	8 Tornado GR1	13/14/31	UK/Goose Bay
Maple Flag	May	10 Jaguar	6/41/54	UK
Cope Thunder/Distant Frontier	June	8 Tornado GR1	2/9	UK/Goose Bay
		6 Tornado F3	5/11	
		1 VC10	101	
Air Warrior	August	10 Harrier	3/4	UK

Ex name	Date	Number/Type of Aircraft	Squadrons	Work-up location
Red Flag 94–1	October	8 Tornado GR1	12/17/617	UK/Goose Bay
		6 Tornado F3	25/29/111	
		2 VC10	101	
		2 C–130	47	
1995				
Maple Flag	May	6 Tornado F3	11/29	UK/Goose Bay
		2 VC10	101	
		1 E–3D	8	
Cope Thunder	June	1 C–130	47	UK
Air Warrior	August/September	10 Jaguar	41/54	UK

Service Deaths

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed services were injured or killed on duty between 1 January 1992 and 1 January 1995. [37496]

Mr. Soames: The numbers of armed forces personnel injured or killed on duty between 1 January 1992 and 1 January 1995 are as follows:

Deaths	Army	Navy	Royal Air Force	Total
1992	43	7	16	66
1993	29	15	12	56
1994	44	11	10	65
	116	33	38	187

Injuries	Army	Navy	Royal Air Force	Total
1992	3,066	671	866	4,603
1993	2,387	519	762	3,668
1994	2,464	337	657	3,458
Total	7,917	1,527	2,285	11,729

The figures include all major and minor injuries requiring medical treatment. The injuries cover all aspects of duty including exercises, training and sport.

RAF Squadrons

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete the increase in the unit establishment of Nos. 3 and 4 Squadrons Royal Air Force from 12 to 18 aircraft; and if the numbers of pilots assigned to these units will be increased proportionately to the numbers of aircraft. [37539]

Mr. Soames: On 14 July 1994 the then Secretary of State for Defence announced our intention to increase RAF operational force levels by moving 12 Harrier GR7 aircraft from the reserve fleet to the front line. The aircraft establishment of Nos. 1, 3 and 4 Squadrons RAF will increase from 12 to 15 aircraft, and each of these squadrons will receive a further additional aircraft to provide an in-use reserve. This will be completed by 1 April 1996. Aircrew numbers in these squadrons will increase in line with these enhancements.

Tactical Training Areas

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if more than one squadron is permitted to book into a tactical training area at one time. [37547]

Mr. Soames: Aircraft from different squadrons are permitted to book into a tactical training area concurrently when taking part in joint exercises. Approval for such bookings is conditional upon all participating aircrews being briefed together to ensure that their movements are safely deconflicted.

TIALD Equipment

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Tornado squadrons are currently operational with the TIALD equipment; and what is the total planned number of such squadrons. [37534]

Mr. Soames: The thermal imaging airborne laser designation capability is a specialist role, which requires some aircraft modifications. One Tornado squadron is currently TIALD capable; it is planned that a further Tornado squadron will be proficient in the TIALD role in 1996. A further two squadrons will start TIALD training in 1997. Further opportunities to extend the RAF's TIALD capability will be possible when Tornado GR4 comes into service in 1988, since all these modified aircraft will be TIALD capable.

Eurofighter

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Spanish authorities concerning the establishment of a multinational training facility for Eurofighter crews in Spain. [37541]

Mr. Soames: Discussions between the Eurofighter 2000 partner nations about the provision of training facilities are at an early stage. The possibility of a multinational aircrew training facility located in one of the partner countries is one of a number of questions which are being considered.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning the Eurofighter 2000; and if he will make a statement. [37784]

Mr. Arburthnot: My Department remains fully committed to the development of the Eurofighter 2000 which it expects to provide the cornerstone of the RAF's future front-line capability.

Stealth Technology

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's policy regarding the sharing of stealth aeroplane technology with other countries; [37798]

(2) what discussions he has had with his French counterpart concerning the development of stealth technologies. [37724]

Mr. Arbuthnot: My Department recognises that collaboration with other countries on defence equipment projects can help to achieve better value for money and provide opportunities for British industry. We are therefore willing to share military technologies with other countries where it appears to be in the United Kingdom's defence interests to do so, subject to national and international security constraints and obligations. The position with aircraft stealth technology is kept under close review. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has held no discussions with his French counterpart concerning the development of such technologies.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of stealth technology for use in future RAF aircraft. [37725]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The need for stealth technology for any future RAF aircraft will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of the requirement formulation process.

WE177 Free-fall Bombs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures his Department will adopt to destroy WE177 nuclear free-fall bombs when they have been taken out of service. [37896]

Mr. Arbuthnot: A programme for the disposal of WE177 weapons is already in hand, relying upon well-established and controlled procedures.

Nuclear Submarine Bases

Dr. David Clark: to ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a breakdown of the total annual security costs at *(a)* Faslane and *(b)* Coulport. [37895]

Mr. Soames: The total annual security costs for 1994–95 for Faslane were £15,400,000 for personnel and £500,000 for maintenance of security equipment and infrastructure. For Coulport they were £12,900,000 and £1,200,000 respectively. Additionally, there was a total cost of £2,100,000 for Royal Marines covering both sites; this figure cannot be readily allocated to individual bases.

NATO Joint Exercises

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the financial cost resulting from the lack of interoperability of the equipment used by NATO members on joint exercises during the last year. [37795]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We do not believe that the costs resulting from a lack of interoperability can be quantified in financial terms.

Anti-personnel Land Mines

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to purchase anti-personnel land mines. [37893]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We are currently considering our future requirements for anti-personnel land mines, but have reached no decisions. Any new mines introduced into service would have a self-destruct capability and would fully meet the requirements of the international laws of armed conflict.

Computer Software Packages

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the British companies involved in the supply of software packages for the operation of his Department's equipment in each of the last 10 years; [37791]

(2) what is the financial value of contracts placed for the supply of software packages for the operation of his Department's equipment in each of the last 10 years. [37808]

Mr. Arbuthnot: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Commitments-Resources Balance

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policies his Department is preparing to implement to improve the balance between the commitments and the resources and personnel of the armed services. [37807]

Mr. Soames: We remain committed to ensuring that our armed forces are properly resourced and manned to undertake the tasks which are placed upon them. The balance between commitments, capabilities, manpower and resources is continually monitored.

Fraud

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what actions he has undertaken to reduce fraud in his Department. [37889]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the answer he was given by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 28 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *516*. Since then the Ministry's code of procurement ethics has been widely disseminated.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the private sector concerning methods to reduce fraud within his Department. [37890]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Ministry of Defence fraud unit has had a range of contacts on fraud prevention with outside bodies including the unit for the study of white collar crime at Liverpool John Moore's university. On 20 January 1994 a contract was let to Control Risks Group to carry out a fraud risk assessment of the royal naval hospital, Haslar and to provide a methodology for use elsewhere. Its report was delivered on 18 March 1994.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to further proposals which will eliminate fraud within his Department. [37898]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Measures already taken can be expected to have a developing impact. They will be reinforced as and when feasible and cost-effective.

Nuclear Test Ban

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the benefits to international security of a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement. [37897]

Mr. Arbuthnot: An effectively verified, global comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty would make a valuable contribution to the international non-proliferation regime.

Guatemala (Military Exercises)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what joint activities, conferences or manoeuvres have been undertaken with any of the Guatemalan military in each of the past five years. [37984]

Mr. Soames: A very small number of Guatemalan students have attended UK military training courses in the UK in 1995 and last year a UK training team based in Puerto Rico trained a Guatemalan contingent preparing to take part in the multinational force in Haiti.

Fire Engines (Merseyside)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of providing his Department's fire engines for civilian duties on Merseyside on 17 August. [37779]

Mr. Soames: The fire engines provided on Merseyside belong to the Home Office. Military manpower and equipment is being provided, for which additional costs—which include such items as subsistence and accommodation, transport, fuel and other consumables—will be recovered. The costs identified to date for the deployment on 17 August are in the order of £5,000.

Royal Navy (Personnel and Pensions)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of comments received from interested parties as part of the prior options study concerning his Department's proposals for defence agency status for the Royal Navy's manning and pay and pensions organisations. [37783]

Mr. Soames: Careful account has been taken of the one expression of interest received as part of the prior options study into defence agency status for the Royal Navy's manning, pay and pensions activities.

Injunctions (Published Material)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many injunctions against the publication of material related to his Department were sought in the last year; and what was the total cost of this action. [37793]

Mr. Soames: One injunction against publication has been sought by my Department in the last year. The total cost of this action has yet to be determined.

Compensation Payments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning his Department's criteria for compensation payment. [37775]

Mr. Soames: The Ministry of Defence pays compensation in accordance with its obligations.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has planned financial provision for the payment of compensation claims for (i) financial year 1995–96 and (ii) financial year 1996–97. [37778]

Mr. Soames: Yes.

Canada (Training Facilities)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his Canadian counterpart regarding the potential usage by his Department of Canadian air force and army training facilities. [37716]

Mr. Soames: The UK armed forces make extensive use of the low flying training facilities at Goose Bay and the army training facilities at Wainwright and Suffield. My meeting with the Canadian Minister of National Defence on 21 September included discussions on the future continued use by the UK of these facilities.

Surface Ship Torpedo System

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the financial value for British companies of the joint US-UK surface ship torpedo defence system; and if he will make a statement. [37718]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Up to £60 million of the total project cost of £80 million is expected to be placed with UK industry. A contract for the current phase of demonstration and validation has been awarded to a consortium led by Westinghouse and a number of British firms, including Ultra, BAeSEMA, Ferranti Thomson Sonar Systems and GEC Ferranti Systems, will benefit.

Privatisation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proposals he is currently considering regarding the future privatisation of activities and services currently conducted by his Department's personnel; and if he will make a statement; [37720]

(2) which services and activities conducted by his Department are currently the focus of prior options studies. [37782]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Ministry of Defence continues to play a full part in the Government's competing for quality initiative, which provides a framework of technique and processes for delivering cost-effective and high-quality defence support through the increased use of competition and private sector involvement. Under the Department's CFQ programme all defence support activities are subject to continuous review by senior managers and budget holders under the prior options process. This process considers privatisation, strategic contracting-out or market testing, the objective in each case being to gain maximum efficiency through exposure to competitive pressures. The

projects and activities which are considered for review under the CFQ programme are published in "Government Opportunities", available from the Library of the House.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he is considering for the privatisation of weapons and ammunitions transportation; and if he will make a statement. [37728]

Mr. Soames: The Ministry of Defence is considering the market testing of its freight distribution service as part of the Government's "Front Line First" initiative. Contractors are being invited to bid in competition with existing military organisations. The transportation of weapons and ammunition is a small part of this overall task. Private companies and manufacturers themselves already move ammunition and explosives on a regular basis. Safety and security will be paramount considerations in the proposed market test. The transportation of freight in the forward operational areas will, however, remain in-house.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the development prospects and potential of unmanned air vehicles. [37789]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Army has a requirement for an unmanned surveillance system which, subject to the satisfactory completion of an additional programme of work to resolve remaining technical difficulties, is to be met by Phoenix. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor on 5 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *1142*, and on 21 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *308*.

My Department monitors developments in unmanned air vehicles in order to aid assessment of their suitability to meet other future requirements.

Memorandum of Understanding

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the terms of the memorandum of understanding signed with the United States in December 1994 concerning the development and procurement of defence equipment; and if he will place a copy of the memorandum in the Library. [37809]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor on 16 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *822*. It is not our policy to place copies of MOU in the Library of the House.

Early Retirement and Redundancy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of early retirement and redundancy packages for armed forces personnel for each of the last 10 years. [37781]

Mr. Soames: During the period from the financial year 1984–85 to 1991–92 there were only a small number of armed forces personnel who left the service on redundancy. The costs incurred would have been relatively minor and are not separately identifiable from the overall pension totals.

The "Options for Change" redundancy programme began in financial year 1992–93. In that year, redundancy payments of £232 million were made. In 1993–94 and 1994–95 the payments totalled £509 million and £453 million respectively.

These payments include special capital payments, and early payment of terminal grants, commuted pension payments and the first year's payment of immediate pensions.

Defence Agencies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which services and activities conducted by his Department are currently being considered for defence agency status. [37785]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested is contained in the "Next Steps Review 1994", Cm 2750, pages xiv and xv, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Since that document was published, the Army Base Storage and Distribution Agency, the Defence Transport and Movements Executive, the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency and the Army Technical Support Agency have been launched.

Equipment Interoperability

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy regarding equipment and force interoperability between *(a)* NATO countries and *(b)* "Partnership for Peace" countries. [37796]

Mr. Soames: Our policy is to maximise interoperability with the armed forces of our allies through participation in NATO's training and exercise programmes and by aiming to ensure that equipment purchased for the British armed forces meets agreed NATO interoperability standards, where they are consistent with our operational requirements.

One of PFP's declared objectives is the development, over the longer term, of forces that are better able to operate with NATO allies. Within the PFP planning and review process, partners have agreed specific goals for improving interoperability with alliance forces of units identified for PFP missions and activities.

US-UK Defence Trade

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals for securing a more level playing field in defence trade with the US his Department is currently considering; [37804]

(2) what assessment he has made of the balance of defence trade with the United States of America. [37786]

Mr. Arbuthnot: We make every effort to promote a two-way street in defence trade with the US where we assess the average ratio over the past five years has been 2:1 in favour of the United States. A level playing field is crucial to this aim and a memorandum of understanding on co-operation in R and D, production, procurement and logistics support of defence equipment is in place to help achieve this.

Military Exercises

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what international military exercises the British armed forces have carried out with *(a)* NATO members and *(b)* former members of the Warsaw pact in each of the last three years. [37894]

Mr. Soames: The following details cover exercises at company level, or equivalent, or above:

1 April 93 to 31 March 94

(a) Number of exercises carried out with NATO members: 227

(b) Number of exercises carried out with former Warsaw Pact: Nil

1 April 94 to 31 March 95

(a) Number of exercises carried out with NATO members: 203

(b) Number of exercises carried out with former Warsaw Pact: 8

1 April 95 to 31 March 96

(a) Number of exercises carried out with NATO members: 173

(b) Number of exercises carried out with former Warsaw Pact: 10

Computing Devices of Canada

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the financial value of the contract placed with Computing Devices of Canada to supply a software package for the multiple launch rocket system fire control system. [37792]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Computing Devices of Canada is one of Royal Ordnance's main subcontractors for the development and production of a reduced range practice rocket for use with the Army's multiple launch rocket system. Details of Royal Ordnance's contract with CDC are a matter for the companies.

Future Offensive Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has defined a requirement for the future offensive aircraft to replace the Tornado GR1/4; and if he will make a statement. [37800]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Work to define the requirement for a future offensive aircraft is under way and preliminary studies into relevant technologies are in progress.

Joint Rapid Deployment Force

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current operational capability of the joint rapid deployment force; when it will take part in a full-scale exercise; and what elements will deploy as part of this exercise. [37774]

Mr. Soames: Our intention is that the joint rapid deployment force should be operational by 1 August 1996. It will bring together the existing operational capabilities of the units assigned to it to best, joint effect in responding to future short-notice contingencies. It is too early to say when it will take part in a full-scale exercise or which units will be involved.

Office Furniture, Keynsham

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is the supplier of the office furniture for the new Ministry of Defence Procurement Executive headquarters in Keynsham; what is the value of the contract; when it was advertised in the contracts supplement of the *Official Journal* of the European Union; and which is the country of origin of the furniture concerned. [37816]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Contracts for the supply of office furniture for the new Ministry of Defence Procurement Executive headquarters at Abbey Wood, north Bristol, were recently awarded to Haworth UK Ltd., a central London-based company, and Herman Miller, a Bath-based company. Haworth is contracted to supply office and ancillary chairs at a value of £1.8 million, ex VAT; Herman Miller will be supplying office workstations, containers and ancillary furniture at a value of just under £6.4 million ex VAT. Requests for expressions of interest for the Abbey Wood furniture package were sought following an advertisement placed in the contracts supplement of the *Official Journal* of the European Union during November 1993. Seventy-five per cent. of the furniture being supplied by Herman Miller is being manufactured and produced in the UK. The majority of the remaining furniture is being sourced from various locations within the EU.

Redundant Military Sites

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of decontaminating his Department's land in each of the last 10 years. [37780]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 18 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *126*.

ASTOR Surveillance System

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his Department's procurement plans for the ASTOR surveillance system; and if he will state the proposed in-service date. [37788]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Two consortia are currently undertaking parallel project definition studies to identify the most cost-effective procurement option for the ASTOR surveillance system. These studies are expected to be completed by mid-1996. Once these studies have been evaluated, and subject to the necessary approvals, it is the intention to select a prime contractor, through competition, to carry out full development, production and initial in-service support. It is expected that the contract would be let in 1998. The in-service date for the full system is 2003.

Defence Diversification

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his Department's policy regarding defence diversification. [37794]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Defence diversification is a matter for individual companies. It is for them and not for Government to decide what industry should produce, and how to respond to changing markets. My Department's role is to keep companies as well informed as possible about our future requirements to enable them to make soundly based commercial decision about their future strategy.

Upholder Submarines

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the financial cost of maintaining the four Upholder class submarines in their current status. [37715]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The residual costs of the Upholder programme, pending sale, are of the order of £6 million for 1995–96.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his *(a)* Canadian, *(b)* Chilean and *(c)* Portuguese counterparts concerning the transfer or sale of four Upholder class submarines; and if he will make a statement. [37717]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Since our decision in 1993, announced in Command Paper 2270, to withdraw the four Upholder class submarines from RN service, the Defence Export Services Organisation has offered the submarines for sale or lease to friendly countries.

It is not MOD policy to release information on discussions with any prospective customer without its express agreement. However, I can confirm that a fully costed proposal is being considered by the Canadian Cabinet on whether to acquire the submarines, and a decision is expected before the end of the year.

Commercial Espionage

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the incidence of commercial espionage conducted by other countries against his Department with regard to contract bid information. [37719]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Threats to my Department are kept under constant review, including the one outlined by the hon. Member.

Road Accidents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents on public roads involving vehicles owned by his Department have been recorded in each of the past five years; and if he will state in each instance the *(a)* date and time, *(b)* location and *(c)* cause of accident. [37721]

Mr. Soames: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tornado

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of the results of his Department's study into the replacement of the Tornado F3 aircraft by the US F16 aircraft. [37723]

Mr. Arbuthnot: No such study has been undertaken. We are considering a proposal to upgrade the Tornado F3's weapon systems and, as a routine part of our evaluation process, the comparative costs of other options are being looked at.

Hercules Transport Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Hercules C-130J transport aircraft will enter service. [37727]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The formal roll-out of the first C-130J took place at Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Company Marietta, Atlanta, on 18 October. On current plans the Hercules C-103J transport aircraft will enter service in July 1998.

Extended Range Ordnance

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the projected in-service dates of the 155 mm/52 calibre extended range ordnance and the modular charge system for the AS90. [37790]

Mr. Arbuthnot: On present plans we expect the first AS90 howitzers to be converted to extended range ordnance with modular charge system by the turn of the century, which would be consistent with the current in-service dates.

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he appointed Mr. David Hart as his independent advisor. [37888]

Mr. Portillo: I invited Mr. Hart to continue as an unpaid independent adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence when I took up my appointment.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what current procurement contracts Mr. David Hart provides advice. [37887]

Mr. Portillo: Mr. David Hart is currently providing advice to me on the following equipment projects

EF 2000
ASTOR
Phoneix
Tornado F3 upgrade
Long Range Conventionally Armed Stand Off Missile

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Mr. David Hart provides advice on procurement decisions. [37803]

Mr. Portillo: I have invited Mr. Hart to provide advice on a small number of procurement issues.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Mr. David Hart was given security clearance for work in his Department; if he holds a Ministry of Defence pass; and what access he has to classified MOD papers. [37801]

Mr. Portillo: Following his appointment as an unpaid independent adviser by the former Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Hart was subject to the checks necessary to permit him to have, from time to time, access to classified information. He holds a Ministry of Defence pass.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Mr. David Hart has *(a)* an office and *(b)* a secretary within his Department's main building. [37891]

Mr. Portillo: No. The limited administrative support so far required to enable him to fulfil his role has been provided on a "de minimis" basis.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assurances have been requested from Mr. David Hart concerning his access to confidential information relating to the British defence industry. [37886]

Mr. Portillo: Mr. Hart fully accepts his duty to the Crown to safeguard all information, documents, or other articles given to him by the MOD; and knows that, like any other individual, he is subject to provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1989. In addition, he owes me a personal duty of confidence.

Mr. Hart also knows that he must declare any conflict between his private interests and his role as my independent adviser, so that I could then decide how to proceed.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what capacity Mr. David Hart attends departmental meetings. [37802]

Mr. Portillo: As my unpaid independent adviser.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Mr. David Hart concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia. [37892]

Mr. Portillo: I have discussed various aspects of the situation in the former Yugoslavia with Mr. Hart.

HEALTH

Hypothermia

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many death certificates mentioned hypothermia as *(a)* main cause of death or *(b)* contributory cause of death in each year and in each month for the past five years; [37312]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *1125*, how many people died of hypothermia in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994, by regional health authority and in Wales. [37352]

Mr. Sackville: The coding of causes of death in England and Wales was changed in 1993. Though the results from this are generally satisfactory, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has identified significant problems in the coding of external causes of death. Certifications of deaths in 1993 and 1994 which could have been due to external causes are all being examined and re-coded as necessary. More reliable data, comparable to that for previous years, will be available in 1996. These problems may have affected the results for hypothermia in 1993 and 1994.

The figures for 1990, 1991 and 1992 are shown in the table.

	1990 *Mentions*		*1991* *Mentions*		*1992* *Mentions*	
	Main	*Contributory*	*Main*	*Contributory*	*Main*	*Contributory*
January	27	29	37	52	21	28
February	21	29	62	61	26	35
March	23	19	35	19	21	10
April	7	19	21	20	15	15
May	16	10	17	15	10	11
June	7	7	12	10	6	6
July	3	4	12	8	2	9
August	1	5	2	3	4	3
September	4	3	5	3	5	8
October	5	9	6	16	3	14
November	13	15	15	18	12	20
December	18	40	18	28	20	33

Deprivation Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what budgets have been available for deprivation payments to GPs in each year since the scheme was introduced; and what relationship exists between nationally assessed patterns of deprivations and changes in his Department's budget for such payments. [37420]

Mr. Malone: General practitioners' deprivation payments are not made from a cash-limited budget, but depend on the number of patients living in under-privileged areas as classified by the Jarman index. These payments are adjusted each year for population movements. Areas were reclassified this year to allow for the use of 1991 census data in the index. The table gives the annual payments in England since the scheme was introduced.

GMS expenditure deprivation payments England

England	*£000s*
1990–91	28,759.606
1991–92	30,906.801
1992–93	33,063.471
1993–94	34,129.284

Prescribing

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, in what circumstances general practitioners are required to contribute towards the full cost of treatment prescribed for patients. [37583]

Mr. Malone: General practitioner fundholders are expected to meet their prescribing costs from allocated budgets. However, health authorities hold contingency reserves for exceptional, uncontrollable or unforeseeable changes in prescribing expenditure.

Trade Union Meetings

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings there have been since 1 September

1993 between the Secretary of State for Health or another Minister and a representative of a trade union; and if he will indicate the subject matter of each meeting. [37379]

Mr. Malone: Ministers regularly meet health service and other trade unions about a wide range of issues. The full information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

GP Lists

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Heath, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column *259*, how many patients have been deregistered by their general practitioners or by family health services authorities at the request of the doctor in each three-month period for which figures are available. [37374]

Mr. Malone: Data on patient movements, including those removed from a general practitioner's list at the request of the doctor, are collected on an annualised basis. The information requested is not available centrally.

Management Costs

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the difference between the findings of the Audit Commission report on expenditure on management trusts and information provided through parliamentary questions on expenditure on general and senior managers. [37427]

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Health confirmed on 7 June 1995 that national health service trusts would publish information about their management costs, based on the Audit Commission's M1 definition, in their annual reports and accounts. These management costs in trusts relate to the salaries of all those managers, excluding clinicians, earning over £20,000 per annum, those in a few specified posts regardless of salary, and the cost of management consultancy. In its report "A Price on their Heads: Measuring Management Costs in NHS Trusts", published on 7 June, the Audit Commission gave the average figure for senior management costs in trusts in England and Wales for 1993–94 as 4 per cent. of their net revenue expenditure. We shall be publishing later this year figures for all trusts for 1994–95.

Comparable figures have not been provided before in answers to parliamentary questions. Information on NHS management costs has previously been provided in terms of the salaries and wages of all staff paid on general and senior manager terms—regardless of what function they discharge—in regional, district, special health authorities and trusts. Total salary costs for such staff in England in the financial year 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available, were 4.4 per cent. of the total pay bill.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 11 October that he was seeking a 5 per cent. cash reduction—8 per cent. in real terms—in the costs of running health authorities and in NHS trust management costs is 1996–97 compared with planned spending in 1995–96. The savings from reducing these costs, which amount to some £140 million in real terms, will be available for patient care.

In the case of health authorities, we shall require nationally the costs of new authorities to be contained within a ceiling of £450 million. NHS executive regional offices will be responsible for agreeing cost figures for individual authorities.

For NHS trusts, the target will relate to the Audit Commission's M2 definition of management and administration costs which extends to include the salary costs of all staff in corporate functions. We shall be looking to each trust to set out in its business plan its cost limits on this basis and to publish these costs in its annual report in future.

General and Senior Managers

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *1289*, what is his Department's estimate of the increase in general and senior managers between 1991 and 1992 and between 1992 and 1993. [37409]

Mr. Malone: For the number of general and senior managers in the national health service in England in 1991, 1992 and 1993, I refer the right hon. Member to the statistical bulletin for NHS hospital and community health services non-medical staff in England for 1982 to 1992 and 1983 to 1993, copies of which are in the Library.

Private Sector Health Care

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 260, what has been the average expenditure per district health authority and per family health services authority on purchasing care from the private sector in each year since 1990–91; and what proportion of such expenditure is estimated to be purchases from the voluntary or non-profit sector. [37426]

Mr. Sackville: The information is not collected centrally.

Ambulance Services

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance services have motor cycle paramedics; how many are currently being trained; what information has been gathered about their performance; what plans are in train for London; and if he will make a statement on their contribution to the ambulance service as a whole. [37234]

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. It is for ambulance services to decide on the value of motor cycle paramedics in their area. The London ambulance service, along with other services, considers motor cycle paramedics to be a valuable first response service for the seriously ill and injured.

Bed Occupancy

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information about occupancy rates within different types of bed, defined as acute, geriatric and mentally ill, the Department collects; and what has been the change in occupancy rate over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on occupancy rates of over 100 per cent. [37235]

Mr. Sackville: Information on bed occupancy rates is not collected centrally. Information on bed days—completed episodes by clinical speciality in national health service hospitals in England is published each year in "Hospital Episode Statistics, Volume 1". Information for the years 1988–89 to 1993–94 are available in the Library.

Winter Deaths

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the excess winter death rates were in England in 1993–94 and 1994–95; and if he will make a statement on factors influencing the rate and what initiatives the Government have undertaken in the last five years to affect the rate. [37376]

Mr. Sackville: The excess winter death index for 1993–94 in England and Wales is 14.2. The figure for 1994–95 is not yet available. The index expresses the number of excess winter deaths as a percentage of the average of the number of deaths in the preceding autumn and following summer periods. Excess winter mortality is a complex phenomenon which cannot be directly correlated to cold weather.

The Government have continued to fund the highly successful "Keep Warm, Keep Well" campaign, which provides a freephone advice line throughout the winter months. The accompanying brochure, which is available in 11 languages, provides information on financial help, home insulation, heating, and other measures to combat the effects of cold weather, including vaccination against flu.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *40*, how many *(a)* locality or joint commissioning projects and *(b)* fundholding practices he or his Ministers have visited in the past 12 months. [37377]

Mr. Malone: Ministers visited around 50 general practitioner premises in the past 12 months. Visits to fundholding and non-fundholding practices are not recorded separately. Ministers also met general practitioners in a wide range of meetings organised by health authorities and national organisations of various kinds, as well as at conferences, some organised by specialist GP organisations. There is no standard definition of locality or joint commissioning projects.

Ministerial Meetings

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column 322, how many meetings there have been since 31 March between the Secretary of State or another Minister and representatives of private health insurance companies; and if he will make a statement on the discussions. [37378]

Mr. Sackville: One such meeting has taken place. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health met representatives of Private Patients Plan—PPP—on 13 July 1995.

Beta-interferon

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail the guidelines and financial arrangements he is making to ensure that the drug beta-interferon can be prescribed to patients suffering from multiple sclerosis who are assessed as likely to benefit from it. [37578]

Mr. Malone: No beta-interferon drug has been licensed for use in the United Kingdom. A licence application for one such drug is currently being considered within the European centralised licensing procedure. The Department of Health is developing guidance to help the national health service plan for the introduction of the drug, subject to the outcome of the licence application.

Specialist Medical Training

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made with the implementation of the specialist medical training reforms recommended by the chief medical officer's working party on specialist medical training. [38730]

Mr. Dorrell: In November 1993, my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health announced that the Government accepted in principle the recommendations made by the working party on specialist medical training chaired by the chief medical officer. In accordance with the time scale set out in the report, the new specialist registrar grade will be launched on 1 December 1995 in the two vanguard specialties of general surgery and diagnostic radiology. The main specialty commissioning date will be 1 April 1996 and I envisage that all specialties will have begun the transition process to the new grade by 1 April 1997. Detailed guidance will be issued to the national health service shortly to enable the regional deans of postgraduate medicine to spearhead the changes in training programmes needed to deliver the specialist training curricula recently formulated by the medical royal colleges.

Training standards will be overseen by the new specialist training authority of the medical royal colleges, shortly to be established. As well as maintaining standards, the specialist training authority will be responsible for awarding the new certificates of completion of specialist training. These will for the first time provide the defined end point for specialist training required to ensure that all those competing for NHS consultant posts have completed their training properly. Obtaining the CCST will entitle the fully trained doctor to be admitted to the specialist register, which will be kept by the General Medical Council. There will be other routes to the specialist register, for existing NHS consultants as part of the transitional process and for doctors who have followed an unconventional but acceptable training pathway, possibly via research or academic medicine involving a high degree of specialisation at an early stage of training. The GMC will continue to have the statutory duty of co-ordinating all stages of medical education.

I have considered the resource implications of these changes carefully; while there is no need for any overall increase in NHS funds to pay for them, I am considering the need for some short-term investment in additional

training programmes to enable trusts to be able to recruit extra consultants. Decisions will be announced later at the appropriate point in the general NHS allocation process.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to review the functions of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. [38731]

Mr. Sackville: It is Government policy that all non-departmental public bodies should be reviewed after five years in existence. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority held its first meeting on 4 October 1990 and became fully operational on 1 August 1991. A full review of the authority by the Department of Health has started. A copy of the terms of reference has been placed in the Library.

NHS Early Retirement

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *13–14*, if he will make a further statement about the numbers of NHS staff who took early retirement. [38732]

Mr. Sackville: I regret that there were errors in the previous reply. The correct information is as follows:

The number of people taking early retirement age 50 and over, except those retiring because of ill-health in each of the last three years is:

1991–92: 2,818
1992–93: 3,313
1993–94: 5,837

National health service employers meet the full cost of paying these benefits early, including any compensation amounts. The total costs in each of the last three years are:

1991–92: £19,222,371
1992–93: £27,065,579
1993–94: £42,522,384

The cost of ill-health retirement is not charged to NHS employers. The number of people taking ill-health retirement in each of the last three years is:

1991–92: 7,323
1992–93: 8,327
1993–94: 9,520

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Schools (Fire Safety)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what assessment she has made of the continuing adequacy of the current regulations made under the Education Act 1944 for ensuring the safety of schools and their occupants in case of fire. [37761]

Mrs. Gillan: A number of requirements relating to fire safety in school buildings are set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, which are made under section 10 of the Education Act 1944. These requirements have been retained and repeated in the revised version of those regulations, which subject to the approval of Parliament, will enter into force from next January. Buildings which comply with the requirements will provide an adequate level of protection against fire.

Detailed guidance about fire and the design of educational buildings appears in the Department's "Building Bulletin 7."

Teacher Absences

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will set out the average days lost per year per teacher for each of the last 10 years; and if she will make a statement. [37643]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total number of pupils permanently excluded from *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* LEA-maintained schools in each of the last five years. [36644]

Mr. Robin Squire: Returns made under the National exclusions reporting system showed that 2,910 pupils were permanently excluded from maintained schools between April 1990 and April 1991 and 3,833 between April 1991 and April 1992. A survey published by the Department in July showed that, in the academic year 1993–94, 8,960 pupils were permanently excluded from secondary schools, 1,230 from primary schools and 434 from special schools within the 101 LEAs that responded. Separate data for grant-maintained and LEA-maintained schools are not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary school children who have been permanently excluded have received tuition (i) at home and (ii) in a pupil referral unit in each of the last five years. [35838]

Mr. Squire: Information for each of the last five years is not available centrally.

A survey published by the Department in July showed that, during the autumn term 1994, 3,032 permanently excluded secondary and 212 primary pupils were attending pupil referral units, and 2,122 secondary and 338 primary pupils were receiving home tuition. These figures represent responses from 101 of the 109 LEAs.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary school children have been permanently excluded in each local education authority in each of the last five years; and if she will give the figures as a proportion of the total school roll. [35837]

Mr. Squire: This information is not available centrally.

Expenditure (Calderdale)

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will set out the increases in real terms for education spending for each education sector in Calderdale since 1980. [36786]

Mr. Robin Squire: The increase or decrease in expenditure by Calderdale local education authority on pre-primary and primary education and secondary education, between 1979–80 and 1993–94, the latest year for which outturn figures are available, is shown in the table:

Calderdale LEA: Net recurrent expenditure, real terms

Year	*Pre-primary and primary education £000*	*Secondary education £000*
1979–80	21,880	24,630
1993–94	33,366	22,833
Increase or decrease	11,486 (34.4 per cent.)	–1,797 (–7.9 per cent.)

Note:
These figures exclude spending by GM schools.

Free School Meals

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what proportion of *(a)* primary school children and *(b)* secondary school children have been eligible for free school meals in the last three financial years in each English and Welsh county. [36772]

Mrs. Gillan: Information on pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in each local education authority area in England in 1993, 1994 and 1995 (provisional) is shown in the table.

Information on pupils in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals [(1)] in maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority area in England

	1993		*1994*		*1995 (provisional)*	
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*
Corporation of London	53	n/a	51	n/a	54	n/a
Camden	42	30	44	27	43	27
Greenwich	37	34	39	36	39	37
Hackney	51	56	53	59	54	66
Hammersmith	43	33	46	36	48	38
Islington	51	50	48	52	49	55
Kensington and Chelsea	39	36	41	41	44	41
Lambeth	44	48	47	51	47	53
Lewisham	37	38	39	40	38	40
Southwark	45	52	45	56	48	57
Tower Hamlets	59	65	58	64	60	66
Wandsworth	34	33	35	35	36	35
Westminster	42	36	45	44	47	44
Barking	22	16	25	19	26	22
Barnet	19	13	17	15	18	15
Bexley	16	9	16	11	16	12
Brent	27	25	29	27	30	28
Bromley	16	11	18	13	18	14
Croydon	23	15	25	19	26	21
Ealing	25	25	26	30	27	32
Enfield	19	16	21	19	22	21
Haringey	35	39	38	40	39	42
Harrow	10	12	11	14	11	14
Havering	13	9	14	10	15	11
Hillingdon	10	12	12	13	12	14
Hounslow	21	18	25	21	26	22
Kingston upon Thames	8	8	9	9	9	10
Merton	19	16	21	19	22	20
Newham	32	36	36	39	37	43
Redbridge	17	13	21	17	19	17
Richmond upon Thames	12	14	17	16	13	17
Sutton	12	7	14	9	14	8
Waltham Forest	32	32	34	34	33	36
Birmingham	36	31	36	32	37	35
Coventry	28	22	28	24	26	24
Dudley	18	15	19	17	18	17
Sandwell	28	24	29	25	29	26
Solihull	17	10	17	12	17	12
Walsall	29	24	27	25	27	24
Wolverhampton	29	25	28	25	27	25
Knowsley	47	51	46	52	48	53
Liverpool	39	38	40	39	42	41
St. Helens	24	16	24	17	24	18
Sefton	23	20	23	21	24	22
Wirral	28	25	29	26	31	27
Bolton	25	16	22	16	22	17
Bury	18	13	18	14	18	14
Manchester	47	42	49	43	48	45
Oldham	28	22	28	54	28	24
Rochdale	28	27	30	29	31	29
Salford	35	24	36	26	35	27

Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals [1] in maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority area in England

	1993		1994		1995 (provisional)	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Stockport	18	14	17	14	18	16
Tameside	24	19	24	20	25	20
Trafford	19	19	20	20	19	21
Wigan	21	17	21	18	21	18
Barnsley	26	22	27	23	27	23
Doncaster	27	21	28	23	28	24
Rotherham	24	17	25	19	25	19
Sheffield	32	24	28	24	28	25
Bradford	27	30	27	31	27	31
Calderdale	21	16	22	18	23	19
Kirklees	22	17	23	18	23	19
Leeds	20	18	21	19	22	19
Wakefield	20	16	21	17	20	18
Gateshead	29	24	30	25	29	26
Newcastle upon Tyne	40	27	41	27	40	28
North Tyneside	23	17	24	18	25	19
South Tyneside	35	24	36	26	37	27
Sunderland	30	24	29	26	30	28
Isles of Scilly	5	3	6	36	11	40
Avon	22	15	21	16	20	14
Bedfordshire	20	15	21	17	21	17
Berkshire	13	7	14	9	14	9
Buckinghamshire	8	7	9	9	9	9
Cambridgeshire	16	12	17	13	17	13
Cheshire	16	11	17	12	17	12
Cleveland	29	25	30	38	31	28
Cornwall	19	15	19	16	19	16
Cumbria	15	10	16	12	17	12
Derbyshire	18	13	24	14	18	14
Devon	20	12	21	13	20	13
Dorset	9	9	10	10	9	10
Durham	25	16	25	17	25	20
East Sussex	21	16	22	18	21	17
Essex	17	11	19	12	18	13
Gloucestershire	16	10	17	11	15	10
Hampshire	17	10	17	11	16	11
Hereford and Worcester	10	8	11	10	11	10
Hertfordshire	13	9	14	10	14	10
Humberside	22	17	24	17	22	18
Isle of Wight	25	18	27	21	24	19
Kent	17	12	19	13	19	14
Lancashire	26	18	25	20	24	20
Leicestershire	24	12	18	13	18	13
Lincolnshire	8	9	8	10	8	10
Norfolk	20	10	17	11	17	11
North Yorkshire	29	7	12	7	12	8
Northamptonshire	11	10	12	13	13	13
Northumberland	20	12	19	13	19	13
Nottinghamshire	23	18	25	20	25	21
Oxfordshire	13	9	13	10	12	9
Shropshire	18	12	18	14	18	14
Somerset	12	10	13	11	13	11
Staffordshire	19	13	20	13	20	14
Suffolk	15	11	16	12	16	12
Surrey	11	6	12	7	11	8
Warwickshire	14	8	15	9	14	9
West Sussex	15	8	15	9	15	9
Wiltshire	16	9	15	10	15	10
England	22	16	22	18	22	18

[1] Day pupils known to be eligible for a free school mean as a percentage of day pupils on roll

Student Loans

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage of students applied for student loans in each academic year since the inception of the student loan scheme; how many former students have started to repay their loans; and how many former students have refused to repay any of their loan although able to do so. [37154]

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what is the total amount of loans outstanding under the student loan scheme; and how much has been repaid to date; [37252]

(2) how many students have now received loans under the students loan scheme. [37251]

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for the Student Loans Company. I have asked the acting chief executive to write to the hon. Members.

Modern Manufacturing Apprenticeship Scheme

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the total Government expenditure to date upon the modern manufacturing apprenticeship scheme. [37247]

Mr. Paice: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what changes she proposes to the rules regarding sale of assets by grant-maintained schools. [37063]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 12 September 1995 that, as from next April, grant-maintained schools will be able to retain the full proceeds from the disposal of surplus assets. We are consulting widely on the proposed change and it is, therefore, too early to say how the new arrangements will work.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total number of pupils in grant-maintained schools eligible to bid for capital grant for named projects in each financial year from 1990–91 to 1995–96; and what was the total number of pupils in local education association maintained schools at the same time. [55807]

Mr. Squire: Schools which have become grant-maintained by January of a given calendar year are eligible to bid for grant for the financial year commencing the following April. The figures in this table give the total number of pupils in grant-maintained and local authority maintained schools each January from 1990 to 1995.

Year	*Total pupils (GM)*	*Total pupils (LA)*
1990–91	13,731	6,926,487
1991–92	36,445	6,955,710
1992–93	108,995	6,978,421
1993–94	243,023	6,979,743
1994–95	556,699	6,712,078
1995–96[1]	663,100	6,734,000

[1] Provisional data.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total amount paid to grant-maintained schools in special purpose grant (restructuring); and in each case, *(a)* how many schools received grant, *(b)* how many head teacher posts were affected, *(c)* how many teaching posts were affected and *(d)* how many other posts were affected for each of the financial years 1989–90 to 1994–95. [36150]

Mr. Squire: The Funding Agency for Schools assumed responsibility on 1 April 1994 for the calculation and payment of special purpose grants to grant-maintained schools. It also holds data for previous years. I have asked the chairman of the Funding Agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how may copies have been produced and, in each case, at what total cost of *(a)* "Going GM: A Brief Guide" and *(b)* the updated edition of "How to become a Grant-Maintained School". [36185]

Mrs. Gillan: A total of 40,000 copies of "Going Grant Maintained: A Brief Guide" have been produced at a cost of some £15,800—39p per copy. A total of 15,000 copies of "How to Become a Grant-Maintained School", 1995 edition, have been produced at a cost of some £27,200, or £1.81 per copy.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her answer of 4 May, *Official Report*, column *286*, if she will list, in chronological order, the "Going GM" conferences held by her Department on grant-maintained status since 14 March giving in each case *(a)* the date, *(b)* the location, *(c)* the number of schools invited, *(d)* the number of schools represented, *(e)* the number of representatives attending and *(f)* the cost. [35776]

Mr. Squire: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Date	*Location*	*Number of Schools Invited*[2]	*Number of Schools Represented*	*Number of Delegates*	*Cost*[3] *£*
13.05.95	Cambridge	405	9	26	3,660
19.05.95	Bournemouth[1]	1,440	63	135	6,072
05.06.95	Bristol	1,089	59	135	7,951
09.06.95	Newcastle	1,710	28	49	4,046
22.06.95	Scarborough	1,446	34	72	4,011
11.07.95	Milton Keynes	1,437	69	131	6,365
Total					32,105

[1] An earlier conference in Bournemouth on 14 March 1995 was heavily over-subscribed. This second conference was largely for delegates who were unable to gain a place at the first.

[2] A number of schools were invited to more than one conference in order to give headteachers and governors more choice over date and location.

[3] Costs listed are those attributable to specific conferences. In addition there is an on-going contract for support services which for the above six conferences has totalled £41,642.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, what plans her Department has to hold further "Going GM" conferences; and what financial provision has been made for further conferences.

Mr. Squire: Departmental officials are planning to hold another eight "Going GM" conferences before the end of December, at an estimated total cost to the Department of about £100,000. Plans for conferences after that date have not yet been decided.

South Thames TEC

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what decision has been reached on whether to forward to an independent body the bill submitted by the Department of Employment to the administrative receivers for South Thames TEC. [37339]

Mr. Paice: The receiver for South Thames TEC has not requested that the Department submits its bill for independent scrutiny.

Calculators

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will introduce measures to defer the use of calculators within the national curriculum until pupils have become fully adept in basic arithmetic processes. [37064]

Mr. Forth: The revised mathematics national curriculum, introduced in schools from September, has increased the emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills in the primary years, in both mental and written arithmetic. Once the basics have been mastered, calculators enable more ambitious exploration of numbers, and therefore offer an opportunity to increase standards of attainment. Under the moratorium announced by the Secretary of State, there are to be no substantial changes to the curriculum for the next five years.

Head Teachers

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what responsibilities the Teacher Training Agency will have for the training of head teachers. [36273]

Mr. Robin Squire: The Teacher Training Agency is responsible for the head teacher's leadership and management programme which supports the training and development of newly appointed head teachers. In addition, my right hon. Friend announced on 11 October 1995 that she has asked the TTA to establish a new national professional qualification for head teachers.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what qualification those who have undertaken head teacher training will receive; and which institutions will validate this qualification. [36272]

Mr. Squire: I will ask the chairman of the Teacher Training Agency to write to the hon. Member about the qualifications received by those undertaking HEADLAMP training. Information about other courses which may be taken by head teachers is not centrally collected.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) which local education authorities conduct in-service training specifically for the needs of head teachers; and if these courses are continuing; [36278]

(2) what institutions provided courses for head teacher training prior to Headlamp; and which of those will continue to provide training under Headlamp. [36277]

Mr. Squire: This information was not collected centrally. A number of LEAs and other institutions are registered to provide courses under the Headlamp scheme. The register will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what surveys her Department has carried out into the training background of head teachers in the last five years; [36286]

(2) what surveys her Department has commissioned into the training background of head teachers in the last five years; [36286]

(3) which bodies commissioned and carried out the survey of secondary schools needs, "Developing Senior Managers"; and what use of this study has been made by her Department; [36269]

(4) what studies commissioned or carried out by local education authorities into the training background of head teachers her Department has evaluated in the last five years. [36288]

Mr. Squire: "Developing Senior Managers" was commissioned by the Understanding British Industry's national education programmes unit, with support from Unilever, Ofsted and the Department for Education.

The research was undertaken by a private consultant. The findings of the survey have helped inform the Teacher Training Agency's development and implementation of the Headlamp scheme.

Other DFE-funded research projects, notably those reported in the school management task force publication "Effective Management in Schools", and the evaluation report of the head teacher mentoring programme, have provided information on head teachers' training and development needs. The Department funded through the task force a number of small projects undertaken by regional consortia of local education authorities which are outlined in "Project Reports 1989–1992: An Annotated Bibliography". Copies of these publications will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what advice she took in deciding to fund head teacher training on a voucher basis; [36276]

(2) with which organisations her Department consulted before initiating the Headlamp scheme for the training of head teachers. [36285]

Mr. Squire: The Headlamp scheme was announced following discussions with the Secondary Heads Association and the National Association of Head Teachers, and with advice from Ofsted. The then Secretary of State decided that, in order to secure the availability of adequate funding to newly promoted head teachers, a ring-fenced sum of £2,500 should be available to governing bodies with eligible head teachers. This funding can be claimed only against evidence of actual expenditure on eligible training and development activities.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517-19, if there will be any requirement on new providers to be able to cater for children with special educational needs. [36154]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend will make clear the responsibilities of institutions which redeem vouchers for pre-school education on completion of the consultation which she initiated with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 4 September.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many school playing fields have been sold since 1979. [36221]

Mrs. Gillan: There is no reliable historical information on the level of school playing field disposals. The Sports Council's register of recreational land, which is not yet complete, is designed to ensure that better information is available in future.

School Building Projects

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what changes are planned to the approval system for new maintained and grant-maintained building projects. [36189]

Mrs. Gillan: None.

Grants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the current level of expenditure per pupil through *(a)* the special purpose grant (development) scheme in the grant-maintained school sector and *(b)* the grant for education support and training scheme in the local education association maintained school sector. [35809]

Mr. Robin Squire: For the current financial year 1995–96, each GM school can apply for up to £42.50 per pupil, or the part-year equivalent, for special purpose grant (development). LEA-supported expenditure under the grants for education support and training programme averages £37.27 per pupil in LEA-maintained primary, secondary and special schools. The two figures are not wholly comparable because of additional administrative costs and liability for VAT in the GM sector.

School Sport

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what information she has about the proportion of total school hours in secondary schools devoted to sport in Britain, Germany and France. [36224]

Mr. Forth: The Department's 1992 secondary school staffing survey showed the proportion of pupil periods devoted to PE in secondary schools in England as:

	Year group				
	7	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*
Percentage	8.9	8.7	8.2	7.6	7.2

The Department has no reliable information for Germany or France.

Under-five Provision

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, pursuant to her oral statement of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns 517–19, if local education authority under-fives funding will be reduced as a result of local parents opting for voluntary or private sector provision. [36170]

Mr. Robin Squire: The proposed funding mechanism will remove only a part of what local education authorities spend on under-fives. The amount removed will be the product of the number of four-year-olds presently in maintained schools and the voucher value. To the extent that fewer parents choose to send their four-year-olds to LEA-maintained schools, the funding will decrease by the voucher value for each child. In contrast, if more parents so choose, the funding will increase correspondingly.

Sanctuary Buildings

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what was the total cost of fitting out Sanctuary buildings, Great Smith street for use by her Department; [35812]

(2) what was the total cost of the transfer of her Department to Sanctuary buildings, Great Smith street. [35778]

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not possible to identify separately removal and fitting-out costs. The Department kept within a total project costs of £13.7 million.

School Accommodation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what assessment has been made of the space required in individual schools to teach the national curriculum. [36186]

Mrs. Gillan: The accommodation needed in a school to teach the national curriculum effectively depends on the way the curriculum is delivered, the size, shape and organisation of classrooms and on the teaching styles of individual teachers as much as on overall floor area.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what assessment she has made of the effect on the delivery of the national curriculum of the proposal to abolish minimum space standards in the revised Education (School Premises) Regulations 1995. [37729]

Mrs. Gillan: Our aim is that decisions about the use of space in schools should be made at local level by local authorities and school governors. The Government are confident that they will take full account of the requirements of the national curriculum in making those decisions.

Disabled People

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many physically disabled people have applied to their local education authority for support for their education; and how many have been refused in the last three years for which figures are available. [36142]

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Schools (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total sum available for capital expenditure in local education authority maintained schools through credit approvals and grants; and what additional capital provision was made available from local education authorities' own resources in each of the financial years 1990–91 to 1995–96. [35806]

Mr. Robin Squire: The total sum made available for capital expenditure in schools through credit approvals was:

£ million

1990–91: 361
1991–92: 426
1992–93: 493
1993–94: 383
1994–95: 379
1995–96: 397

and for voluntary aided schools for capital and repair grant was:

£ million

1990–91: 106
1991–92: 132
1992–93: 147
1993–94: 130
1994–95: 114
1995–96: 96 planned.

Additional capital provision from LEAs' own resources is estimated at:

£million

1990–91: 274
1991–92: 232
1992–93: 172
1993–94: 312
1994–95: not available

These figures include credit approvals and capital grant available to technology and language colleges.

Small amounts of capital expenditure are also supported through grants such as the grants for education support and training.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what progress WESTEC, Dudley TEC and West London TEC are making in meeting the criteria for the award of a three-year licence. [38733]

Mr. Paice: I am pleased to announce the award of three-year licences to WESTEC, Dudley TEC and West London TEC, which have now completed the process of meeting the rigorous standards we set.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council held on 5 October. [38734]

Mr. Forth: I attended the Council on 5 October in Luxembourg with the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan).

There was a broadcast discussion on follow-up to the fourth UN world conference on women. My hon. Friend noted that much progress had been made in the UK and indicated the Government's intention to take forward the results of the conference. The presidency announced a conference to be held at the end of November in Madrid to take stock of progress since Peking and suggest strategies for the future.

There was an orientation debate but no attempt to reach a decision on the fourth equal opportunities action programme. Several delegations, including the UK, called for greater clarity about the structure, content and management of the programme. My hon. Friend also made clear the UK view that there was no justification for further legislation in this field.

The draft Council decision on the fourth programme to combat social exclusion was, once again, discussed without agreement, and the Commission reported progress on the consultation of the social partners under the other member states agreement on social policy on the reconciliation of professional and family life.

Resolutions on the image of men and women in the media, the fight against racism and xenophobia, and on co-operation with third countries in the field of youth were all agreed without discussion.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total education spending in *(a)* 1992–93 and *(b)* 1993—4; and what is the forecast for 1994–95. [32948]

Mr. Robin Squire: Total education spending for 1992–93 was £25.4 billion. For 1993–94 the provisional outturn is £27 billion. For 1994–95 the estimated outturn is £28.4 billion.

School Premises Regulations

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what plans she has to make public the conclusions of the consultation session on the revised Education (School Premises) Regulations 1995; and if she will make a statement. [37730]

Mrs. Gillan: Once the responses to the consultation have been analysed, a summary of their contents will be made available in the usual way.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment which bodies she intends to consult concerning her proposals to amend the regulations for school buildings, and what evidence has been presented to her and from whom claiming that those extant are too stringent or too permissive. [37335]

Mrs. Gillan *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* We have consulted all organisations which are under a statutory duty to implement the school premises regulations, including local education authorities and the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools. We have also consulted a wide range of representative organisations with an interest in school buildings matters, including the local authority associations, governors' organisations and teachers' associations.

The revised school premises regulations were produced following a review conducted by the Department and the Welsh Office. We have taken the view, in the light of that review, that some of the provisions of the regulations should be removed. We shall, of course, take careful note of responses received from consultees which bear on that and other points.

Lecturers (Recruitment)

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what assessment she has made as to whether the recruitment and selection of lecturers through the new employment agency, ELS, is in conformity with the Sex Discrimination Acts; and if she will make a statement; [37806]

(2) what assessment she has made of the checks which the employment agency ELS is making on lecturers it supplies to further education colleges; [37805]

(3) what assessment she has made of whether the lecturers supplied by the employment agency ELS will meet the quality requirements of the FEFC; and if she will make a statement. [37811]

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend is not responsible for these matters. It is for ELS itself to ensure that it acts in accordance with the law, and for colleges to ensure that staff working in them are suitable in all respects for the job.

Mr. Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what plans she has to ensure the inclusion of the number of agency lecturing staff employed as a ratio to lecturers employed directly by the corporation, as part of the charter on service standards published by each further education college; and if she will make a statement. [37787]

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend has no plans to require the publication of such information in college charters.

Mr. Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many part-time lecturers are employed directly by further education corporations and how many are provided by the employment agency ELS; and how many of the latter are self-employed. [37810]

Mr. Paice: The most recent date for which information is available is January 1993. In full-time equivalents, there were 14,206 part-time teachers paid at hourly rates, employed in further education institutions which were transferring to the Further Education Funding Council on 1 April 1993. The FEFC has since collected staffing information from EC colleges relating to November 1994, before ELS was set up. This information is not yet available in publishable form.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 October 1995

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent research his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated into a comparison of amounts awarded to authorities in the south-east through the area cost adjustment with the actual additional costs for those authorities; and what that comparison showed. [38172]

Sir Paul Beresford: The group of officials and officers of the local authority associations who discuss possible changes in standard spending assessments reported in September on this subject. Their report showed that there remains a wide divergence of views as to both the nature and the scale of the additional costs faced by authorities in London and the south-east, if they were to provide similar standards of service to those in other parts of the country.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration has therefore proposed to the local authority associations that an independent review of the area cost adjustment should be carried out. We anticipate that research will be commissioned to assist the review in its work. It will be for the review team to consider whether research of the kind to which my hon. Friend refers would be of assistance to it.

Mrs. Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list to one decimal place the percentage of total standard spending assessment received by area cost adjustment for the financial years 1990–91 to 1995–96.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	*Contribution of area cost adjustment factor £ million*	*Total standard spending assessment £ million*	*Area cost adjustment as percentage of total Percentage*
1990–91	837	29,805	2.8
1991–92	1,152	35,587	3.2
1992–93	1,315	37,993	3.5
1993–94	1,332	36,622	3.6
1994–95	1,536	37,848	4.1
1995–96	1,658	38,743	4.3
(1995–96 excluding Metropolitan police)	(1,556)	—	(4.0)

Notes:

1. The apparent increase in share in 1995–96 is because the SSA for the Receiver for the Metropolitan police was previously based on his budget, as approved by the Home Secretary. This included those extra costs which, from 1995–96, are reflected in the area cost adjustment. Excluding this effect, the share fell slightly in 1995–96 from 4.1 per cent. to 4.0 per cent.

2. The 1995–96 figures exclude a small element of area cost adjustment which is incorporated within the indicator "Pension Expenditure" in the police SSA.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts qualify for operations under the provisions of section 70 and schedule 13 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 in respect of the enterprise zone operated by the London Docklands development corporation, stating the nature of each contract and the date of commencement of any building completed or planned. [37577]

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* I am unable to supply the information requested because the types of contract referred to result from detailed discussions between the individual developers and the Inland Revenue. Neither the Department nor the London Docklands development corporation is privy to those discussions.

TREASURY

Investors Compensation Scheme

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current status of the Treasury's guarantee of the borrowings of the investors compensation scheme. [38905]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The Treasury has today withdrawn the guarantee of borrowing by the investors compensation scheme of up to a maximum of £17 million. The purpose of the guarantee, which was granted on 5 July, was to enable the ICS to continue to operate normally, pending the outcome of a judicial review made by Sun Life. Because of the uncertainty created by the review, neither the personal investment authority nor the ICS considered it prudent to levy PIA's members to fund the ICS. The judicial review is now resolved, and the Personal Investment Authority has levied its members. The need for the guarantee has consequently ceased and has accordingly been withdrawn.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the number of households and the percentage of the total number of households which is currently receiving *(a)* terrestrial television, *(b)* satellite television and *(c)* cable television. [37915]

Mr. Sproat: Of the 24 million households in the United Kingdom, from currently available data it is estimated that 23.47 million or 97.8 per cent. currently receive terrestrial television, 3.5 million or 14.6 per cent. receive satellite television and 1.05 million 4.4 per cent. receive broad band cable television.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Science, Engineering and Technology

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will respond to the final report of the ad hoc committee chaired by Sir Arnold Wolfendale set up to review the contribution of professional scientists, engineers and research students to improved public understanding of science, engineering and technology. [38961]

Mr. Lang: The Government are grateful for the work of Sir Arnold and the committee, and welcome the final report, which I am publishing today.

The report make a number of important recommendations aimed at improving the contribution made by professional scientists, engineers and research students to improving the public understanding of science, engineering and technology.

Recommendations 7.12 and 7.14 are addressed to the Office of Science and Technology and will be implemented as soon as possible. Other recommendations are longer term. I have drawn to the attention of colleagues in the Department for Education and Employment, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office the recommendations addressed to the universities and funding councils which fall within their areas of responsibility.

Small Business (Ministers)

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many additional Ministers will be necessitated by his recent proposals for small business Ministers. [37771]

Mr. Lang: Existing Ministers in the Departments identified will take on the additional responsibility in ensuring that small firms are considered in the formulation of policy and the Department's activities.

Business Links

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide an update on the progress of the establishment of business links. [37760]

Mr. Lang: Progress with establishing business links is encouraging. There are now 142 business link outlets open, offering services to 70 per cent. of VAT registered businesses in England. By the end of the year, more than 200 outlets will be open.

EU Funding

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Government will undertake an assessment of matching funds available and forecasted to ensure the effective draw-down of European Union funds. [38043]

Mr. Eggar: The European structural funds make grants of only part of the cost of any project. It is the responsibility of the applicant for grant to find the remainder of the cost.

I know of no evidence of a shortage of such "matching" money to ensure full take-up of the United Kingdom's allocations from the funds. These are being substantially over-subscribed.

Water Board Merger

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now refer the proposed merger between North West Water and Norweb to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement. [38181]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Director General of Fair Trading is currently investigating the proposed merger and will advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade in due course. A decision on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be taken once that advice is received.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Preparation of Probate Papers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he plans to implement section 55 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990; and if he will make a statement. [38177]

Mr. John M. Taylor: While I am not aware of any substantial public concern at the delay in implementation, it remains the Government's intention to bring the section into force when the appropriate resources are available.

PRIME MINISTER

Breast Cancer Campaign

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister how many postcards he has received from the National Postcard Campaign for Breast Cancer since 7 June. [37929]

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column 23.

DEFENCE

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what position Mr. Hart had in his Department; and if he will list the duties he undertakes, the hours and days in the weeks he is involved in such work and the salary paid to him. [38092]

Mr. Portillo: Mr. Hart continues to be my unpaid independent adviser.

RAF Stornoway

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the market testing feasibility study regarding RAF Stornoway to be completed. [38309]

Mr. Soames: An announcement on the findings of the feasibility study on the care and maintenance task at RAF Stornoway is expected to be made by the end of the year.

Metric and Imperial Measures

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of defence procurement in which specifications for manufacture are in *(a)* metric and *(b)* imperial measurements. [37611]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Defence procurement covers a wide range of product areas from clothing to guns, ships and battle tanks. In each of those areas there is a mix of metric and imperial specifications. Generally it has been MOD practice to use metric measurements since the early 1970s for all procurement. However, spares procurement to maintain some older in-service equipment may still use imperial measurements.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all incidents in the past five years in which vessels have declared emergencies in the vicinity of the United Kingdom to which British military search and rescue helicopters were unable to respond due to inadequate range; what was the date, location and vessel's name in each case; and if he will indicate those incidents in which United States air force H-53 helicopters came to the aid of the vessel. [37532]

Mr. Soames: It is for the Coastguard Agency to decide which SAR assets to deploy to incidents in the UK SAR region, and where refuelling facilities are available the Coastguard may request military SAR helicopter assistance at an incident outside the helicopter's normal base operating range. My Department does not keep detailed records of search and rescue incidents to which military helicopters did not respond. Our records show that a United States air force CH-53 helicopter assisted at a maritime incident in the UK SAR region on 21 August 1991 involving the recovery of a crewman from the weather ship Cumulus at 57°00N 020°00W.

Hazardous Waste (Dumping at Sea)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the total quantities of *(a)* toxic chemical wastes, *(b)* surplus explosives, *(c)* redundant biological and chemical weapons stores and *(d)* radioactive wastes disposed of into the North Atlantic, Irish sea and English channel. [37661]

Mr. Soames: Complete records of past sea dumping operations are not available. In particular, it is not possible to identify the total tonnages or precise natures of conventional munitions which were disposed of by this means. However, surviving records indicate that approximately 120,000 tonnes of UK-manufactured chemical warfare munitions and some 17,000 tonnes of captured German aerial bombs containing the nerve agent tabun were dumped in sealed hulks scuttled in deep water in the North Atlantic, and 14,000 tons of phosgene-charged munitions were disposed of in Beaufort dyke in the north channel. There are no records of biological agents having been disposed of at sea. Details of the UK's sea disposal programme for low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes, including wastes generated by MOD establishments, were contained in a report commissioned by the Department of the Environment titled "Report of the Independent Review of Disposal of Radioactive Waste in the Northeast Atlantic" published by HMSO in November 1984.

FOA and JAST Programmes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of possible conflict between the FOA and JAST programmes. [37799]

Mr. Arbuthnot *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* Work is in progress to define our requirement for a future offensive aircraft—FOA—for the Royal Air Force. JAST—joint advanced strike technology—is a US programme to develop a family of common-based aircraft for the US services. There is no conflict between the two programmes.

Tornado Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with United Kingdom defence industry representatives concerning the replacement of the Tornado GR1 aircraft. [37726]

Mr. Arbuthnot *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* My officials have had a number of preliminary discussions with representatives of the UK defence industry about possible procurement options and relevant technologies.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Upper Waiting Hall (Exhibitions)

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the Loughborough college of art and design. [38798]

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 11 December to Friday 15 December 1995.

WALES

Road Casualties

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in Wales in road accidents in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [37987]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Road casualty statistics are published annually by the Welsh Office. Casualties by severity can be found in table 9.1 of "Road Accidents: Wales No. 15 1994", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the North East Wales and TARGED training and enterprise

councils concerning merger proposals; and if he will make a statement. [38420]

Mr. Hague: None, although my officials are being kept informed by both of the prospective merger partners about the progress of their discussions. These discussions are still at an early stage and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to make any comment at this time.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the principles by which the present geographical areas of the training and enterprise councils may be varied by way of *(a)* merger, *(b)* break-up and *(c)* total redrawing of boundaries. [38419]

Mr. Hague: Under the terms of the operating agreement between the Welsh Office and each of the TECs in Wales, I recognise the TEC as the body able to perform the functions of a training and enterprise council for the operational area set out in the TEC's corporate plan. Any changes to the operational area brought about by boundary adjustment or merger can be recognised on annual renewal of the agreement.

Earlier this year, TECs were invited to review their operational areas, taking into account the boundaries of the new unitary authorities. As a consequence, it is expected that some adjustments to TEC operational areas will be proposed. I understand that discussions between the TECs—and with other local interests as appropriate—are proceeding.

If these discussions give rise to proposals to the adjustment of TEC operational areas, the Department is able to give effect to such adjustments via the recognition provision in the operating agreement.

Sewage Treatment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the European Commission concerning the derogation application to cover the period between the year 2000 and the completion of the secondary treatment facilities at the proposed new sewage treatment works serving the western valleys of Gwent, central and eastern Cardiff and the present Ystradyfedwg and Pontypridd trunk sewer catchment area; on what date the application was made for derogation; and on what date he estimates receiving a decision on approval. [38418]

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) on 20 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *313*.

Brecon Jazz Festival

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Wales tourist board concerning the withdrawal of the offer of grant to the Brecon jazz festival following receipt of an offer of assistance from the millennium fund; and if he will make a statement. [38417]

Mr. Hague: None. However, my officials have discussed this matter with the Wales tourist board.

Toddington's Ltd.

Mr. Stephen Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was paid under the various schemes of the common agricultural policy to Toddington's Ltd. of Pembrokeshire, south Wales in the latest year for which information is available. [38176]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke, (Mr. Ainger) on 19 July 1995.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Nursery Education Vouchers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many authorities have undertaken to pilot the nursery voucher scheme. [37986]

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir. T. Arnold) on 17 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *129*.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many times during the academic year nursery vouchers will be issued to parents. [37985]

Mr. Squire: Nursery vouchers will be issued termly to parents of eligible children.

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is her policy in respect of whether all schools will have to ballot parents on opting out. [37989]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to require all schools to hold a ballot of parents on the question of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what target she has set for the number of schools opting out by the end of the present academic year. [37935]

Mr. Squire: My right hon. Friend does not, and never has had, a target for the number of schools to be grant-maintained by the end of this academic year, or by any other date.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many extra assisted places she is planning to make available; what is the estimated cost of the extra places; and what will be the timetable for implementation. [37934]

Mrs. Gillan: Over time, we plan to double—to some 70,000—the number of assisted places available, starting next year. The rate of expansion will depend on parental demand and the supply of high quality places. Financial provision and other detailed arrangements will be announced later, in the context of the Government's public expenditure plans for 1996–97 onwards.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what plans she has to change the income threshold for the eligibility for the assisted places scheme; [38089]

(2) what plans she has to change the administrative arrangements for the assisted places scheme. [38090]

Mrs. Gillan: The income threshold and administrative arrangements for the assisted places scheme are governed mainly by the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1995, made under the Education Act 1980. These are reviewed and revised annually.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list, in respect of the teachers' superannuation scheme, for each of the four years 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1995 *(a)* the amount of net new money in the scheme, *(b)* the market value of the notional fund at 31 March in each year and *(c)* the book value of the notional fund on 31 March each year. [38088]

Mr. Robin Squire: The notional fund of the teachers' superannuation scheme is an accounting device which is used to determine the level of employers' contributions. There is no real fund, and in reality payments to and from the fund are payments to and from the Exchequer. It is not therefore meaningful to speak of there being new money in the scheme. However, the difference between the opening and closing balances on the notional teachers' superannuation account for each financial year is given in table 1. The value of the notional fund, as measured by the closing balance on the teachers' superannuation account at 31 March is given in table 2. This is the book value of the notional fund; there is no market value since the fund does not exist. The figures for 1993–94 have been produced only recently, and are subject to audit. Figures for 1994–95 are not yet available.

Year	*£000s*
Table 1	
1991–92	1,699,141
1992–93	1,729,126
1993–94	1,664,046
Table 2	
1992	23,270,506
1993	24,999,632
1994	26,663,678

Departmental Stationery and Livery Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the cost of changing *(a)* the stationery and *(b)* the livery of the former Departments of Education and of Employment when they were merged. [38091]

Mr. Robin Squire: In the initial period following the merger, the estimated cost of changing the stationery and livery of the two former Departments was approximately £32,000.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the total cost to date to consultants for advice relating to the provisions contained within the Jobseekers Act 1995; and what is the estimate of the final costs. [38178]

Mr. Forth: To date, the jobseeker's allowance implementation project has spent £979,000 on private sector consultancy support. It is anticipated that a further £1,168,000 will be spent on this item through existing contracts. The implementation project is currently considering tenders for management consultancy support after October 1995. At this state there is no firm figure for the costs of this additional support.

TRANSPORT

Licence Plates

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent the new car licence plates in the Federal Republic of Germany incorporating the Euro-emblem result from EU legislation; and under what legislation United Kingdom licence plates would incorporate this emblem. [38421]

Mr. Norris: The new German number plate format does not result from EU legislation. The relevant UK legislation is the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971. We have no plans to make a similar change.

Road Casualties

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road accidents in England for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [37988]

Mr. Norris: The information is as follows:

Year	*Killed*	*Injured*
1990	4,423	293,053
1991	3,854	266,988
1992	3,549	268,210
1993	3,228	266,059
1994	3,077	274,424

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of heavy goods vehicle drivers dying as a result of road traffic accidents in each of the last five years. [38165]

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Number of HGV drivers killed in road accidents in Great Britain

Year	
1990	55
1991	50
1992	62
1993	55
1994	39

Source:
Road Accidents Great Britain—The Casualty Report HMSO 1995.

King's Cross Underground Station (Escalators)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of the escalator works at King's Cross underground station. [37754]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for London Underground.

Harbour Revision Orders

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who may promote a harbour revision order other than the harbour commissioners responsible for the particular port. [37904]

Mr. Norris: Section 14 of the Harbours Act 1964 allows an application for a harbour revision order to be made to the Secretary of State by the harbour authority or

"by a person appearing to him to have a substantial interest or body representative of persons appearing to him to have such an interest".

Crossrail

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library at an appropriate time a copy of the Montague report on the route of the new crossrail project in London. [37713]

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) asked for a study on several aspects of the crossrail project, including its structure and ownership under the railway privatisation arrangements, the central London employment forecasts on which the case for it depends and the advantages and disadvantages of possible small-scale alternatives to it. I will consider how best to inform hon. Members of the results of the study when it has been completed and I have had an opportunity to consider it.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38273]

Mr. Norris: Three delegation plans were submitted to the Treasury: for the Central Transport Group—which included the Vehicle Certification Agency—for the Marine Safety Agency and for the Coastguard Agency. CTG and VCA will form a single bargaining unit; MSA and TCA will be separate bargaining units.

(a) The staff covered by the plans, which exclude those who will join the senior civil service on 1 April 1996, are as follows:

CTG: 2,130 and VCA 76,

MSA: 381,

TCA: 563.

(b) The existing patterns of trade union recognition—the Civil and Public Service Association, the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists, the National Union of Civil and Public Servants and the Association of First division Civil Servants—will continue for all three bargaining units except where the union has no members in that particular organisation. Negotiations on the bargaining machinery for each unit are currently taking place with the recognised unions.

Lower Thames Crossing

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a statement on the lower Thames crossing study. [37642]

Mr. Watts: The consultants completed the feasibility study for the lower Thames crossing late last year and its findings are being considered by Ministers. This was a wide-ranging study looking at the need for a crossing, possible locations east of the present Dartford crossing and the suitability of the project for attracting private sector finance. Also particular attention had to be given to the sensitive environmental features of the Thames estuary and the impact on it of such a project.

Since the completion of the study, the former Secretary of State has initiated the transport debate following the publication of the royal commission report on environmental pollution and the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report on traffic generation. All of these issues need to be taken into account on a project such as this before any decisions can be taken on whether or not to take the project forward.

An announcement on the study will be made when all of these issues have been considered.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EU–ACP Meetings

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost of the twice yearly meetings between Members of the European Parliament and colleagues from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries during each of the past five years. [37626]

Mr. David Davis: According to European Commission development directorate figures, the total cost to the European development fund of EU–ACP joint assemblies and preparatory meetings under the fourth Lomé convention is around £1,400,000, converted at the current exchange rate £1:1.984 ecu.

A more precise breakdown is as follows:

1991: 340,000 ecu

1992: 497,492 ecu

1993: 580,000 ecu

1994: 219,750 ecu

The European development fund covers the costs of the ACP participants only. Figures for other costs are not available.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka on the present conflict in Sri Lanka. [37648]

Mr. Hanley: I discussed the conflict in Sri Lanka with the British High Commissioner during my visit to Sri Lanka from 8 to 10 October.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the British high commissioner to Sri Lanka last visited Jaffna; and if he will make a statement on the report he made following his visit. [37649]

Mr. Hanley: Since a trip which he made to the Government-held areas of Palaly and Karaitivu in 1992, the British high commissioner has been unable to visit Jaffna. But a member of the high commission visited from 6 to 8 March, with a group of diplomats from aid donor countries, to evaluate the requirements for relief and rehabilitation in the event of a peace settlement.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government received a copy of the United Nations special commission on Iraq report, made public on 11 October, on the scope of Iraq's biological and germ warfare programme and missile delivery system programme; and whether the report identified the involvement of any British companies in these programmes. [37662]

Mr. David Davis: The UNSCOM and IAEA reports were received on Wednesday, 11 October 1995. No British companies are identified in either of the reports.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the referendum held in Iraq. [38093]

Mr. Hanley: The so-called referendum which the Iraqi Government held on 15 October was a farcical attempt by Saddam Hussein to claim democratic legitimacy. The system of brutal oppression in Iraq makes it impossible to express opposition to Saddam. We hope Iraqis will one day be able freely to decide their own future, although it is hard to imagine how this could be possible while Saddam is in power. We support the efforts of the Iraqi National Congress to form a united, representative opposition to Saddam's regime.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken further to publicise the amount of oil that the Iraqi regime is allowed to sell abroad under United Nations sanctions policy; and what estimate he has made of the revenue accruing to the Iraqi Government from the sale of oil. [38094]

Mr. Hanley: We take every opportunity to urge Iraq to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 986, which would allow Iraq to export substantial amounts of oil in return for much-needed humanitarian supplies. Saddam Hussein must shoulder the responsibility for the suffering of the Iraqi people caused by his failure to do so. If the scheme were implemented, we estimate that Iraq could purchase approximately $2.5 billion of humanitarian supplies per annum. This compares with $5 billion spent on all civilian goods in 1989.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given by Her Majesty's Government to invoking articles 142 and 192 of the Euratom treaty in regard to French nuclear tests and France's compliance with the treaty. [37679]

Mr. David Davis: None. The Euratom treaty does not apply to military applications of nuclear energy, including nuclear weapons tests.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 29 August to the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) concerning a constituent reference GV100/28008/SB. [38095]

Mr. Hanley: The migration and visa correspondence unit replied to the hon. Member's letter of 29 August on 18 October. The delay in replying is regretted.

High Commission Building, Kenya

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who were the consultants for the new British high commission in Nairobi; what was the estimated cost of the new building; and what are the total costs to date. [38180]

Mr. Hanley: The following consultants were commissioned:

Cullum and Nightingale—Design Architects
Hughes and Polkinghorne—Executive Architects
GTMS—Project Managers
Howard Humphreys—Structural and Mechanical and Electrical Engineers
D.G. Jones—Quantity Surveyors
Carnell Green—Interior Designers

The estimated cost of the new building, including two staff houses, staff amenities, fees and furnishings, was £6,974,000 in October 1992. Total costs to date are £6,300,000.

SCOTLAND

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many children have been born in Scotland with Down's syndrome in each of the past 15 years. [36338]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of babies recorded with Down's syndrome*[1,2]
1980	58
1981	48
1982	44
1983	55
1984	46
1985	51

Year	Number of babies recorded with Down's syndrome[1,2]
1986	39
1987	61
1988	62
1989	51
1990	58
1991	70
1992	43
1993[3]	42
1994[3]	52

[1] Live and still births.
[2] Recorded on the Scottish Morbidity Record (SMR)11.
[3] Provisional.

The coverage of the SMR11 statistical inquiry from which information on Down's syndrome babies is derived has increased over the period from 75 per cent. of all live births in 1980 to 98 per cent. of all live births currently and interpretation of the data should be made against that background.

Artificial Limbs and Appliances

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify his latest proposals for the supply and fitting of artificial limbs and appliances under the national health service; and if he will make a statement. [37516]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Artificial limb and appliance centres are funded centrally by the national services division of the Common Services Agency. Proposals to devolve responsibility for purchasing this service to health boards are currently being considered and a decision will be announced shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Care Costs

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families have taken up the offer of up to £40 a week in child care costs since October 1994; and what is the average per family and the total cost of the scheme to date. [37008]

Mr. Roger Evans: At 30 June 1995, 23,000 families had received higher family credit awards as a result of the help with child care charges with an average gain of £14.63 family credit per week. The benefit cost of the provision to that date was £6.6 million. No information is yet available as to families receiving help through housing and council tax benefits.

Source:

One in 20 sample of family credit awards made between 1 October 1994 and 30 June 1995. Figures do not include families who had their child care charges allowed but receive no extra benefit because they are already in receipt of their maximum family credit.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many asylum seekers who have appealed against a refusal of asylum are in receipt of income support. [37163]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the annual cost of social security and housing benefits paid to asylum seekers; and how many have been in receipt of those benefits in each of the last three years. [37417]

Mr. Evans: The latest estimate of the annual amount of income support and housing benefit paid to asylum seekers is £200 million. Numbers of asylum seekers receiving income support are shown in the table:

Income support	Number of cases
May 1993[1]	37,000
May 1994[1]	42,000

Note:
[1] Includes an estimated 1–2 thousand cases of former asylum seekers who are now entitled to Income Support under the normal rules.
Source
Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries May 1993 and May 1994.

Claims from asylum seekers were not identified separately before May 1993.

Information about other benefits paid to asylum seekers and the numbers receiving them is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated public savings in income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit arising from the number of British citizens excluded from income-related benefits as a result of the habitual residence test during the first year of its operation. [37735]

Mr. Roger Evans: The public savings are broadly estimated to be £15 million in the first 12 months of operation, from August 1994 to July 1995.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants for income support have been subjected to the habitual residence test in each of the months since its inception; and how many failed it. [37695]

Mr. Evans: The habitual residence test applies to all income support claimants. I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) on 18 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *43*, and on 10 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *449*, in respect of refusals and on 21 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *314*, in relation to the availability of these figures.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people who failed the habitual residence test, and who are neither British citizens nor other European Economic Area nationals, were awarded income support under regulation 70(3) of the Income Support (General) Regulations (Urgent Cases). [37696]

Mr. Evans: This information is not readily available and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social

Security how many decisions were made by adjudication officers in the year April 1993–94 within the Employment Service concerning the habitual residence of a person claiming unemployment benefit in the United Kingdom. [37697]

Mr. Evans: Decisions on contribution conditions, including the habitual residence of a person claiming unemployment benefit in the United Kingdom, are made by the Secretary of State. In the period January to April 1994 there were 201 decisions. Figures for the period April to December 1993 are no longer available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals against the disallowance of income support under the habitual residence test were decided at the Benefits Agency district offices in Euston, Ealing, Kensington, Tottenham, Westminster, Wandsworth, Neasden, Hounslow and Slough in each of the latest four quarters; and those decided, how many were successful. [37698]

Mr. Evans: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the relationship between the figures for estimated public expenditure savings arising from the habitual residence test given in the answers of 2 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *706*, and 12 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *621*. [37733]

Mr. Evans: The public expenditure savings arising from the habitual residence test given in the answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *706*, were based on an initial estimate that 5,000 EEA work-seekers would be adversely affected by the test. This estimate was based on the best information available prior to the actual implementation of the test. The public expenditure savings arising from the habitual residence test given in the answer of 12 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *621*, were based on revised estimates of the actual impact of the test after it had been in operation for eight months.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra resources have been given to the independent tribunal service to fund appeals against the habitual residence test. [37737]

Mr. Evans: The independent tribunal service is funded according to the projected work load for all types of appeal. Resources for hearing appeals against the habitual residence test are included in the current year's allocation, but are not identified separately from other types of social security appeals.

Income Support (Appeals)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimated cost of processing an income support appeal to *(a)* the Benefits Agency and *(b)* the independent tribunal service. [37736]

Mr. Roger Evans: The separate information is not available in the precise format requested. The latest estimated costs of processing an appeal to a social security appeal tribunal to *(a)* the Benefits Agency and *(b)* the independent tribunal service are £79 and £236 respectively.

Widow's Benefit

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend regulation 35 of schedule 9 to the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 to include widow's benefit as a specified benefit; and if he make a statement. [38173]

Mr. Heald: No. We have no plans to extend the scope of this regulation, which allows for direct payment of income support to third parties, to other benefits.

Direct payments take away people's responsibility to manage their own affairs and are expensive to administer. For both reasons, they ought to be kept to a minimum. There is, however, a provision which allows a person's benefit, or part of it, to be paid to another person—but not to a local authority or corporate body—in cases of budgeting difficulty.

HEALTH

Deprivation Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria have been employed by family health services authorities in determining reductions in deprivation payments to general practitioners; how often such payments are reviewed; and what transitional arrangements have been put in place to prevent hardship. [37419]

Mr. Malone: Family health services authorities do not have discretion in determining deprivation payments for general practitioners. Payments are made on the basis of the Jarman index and are reviewed annually in the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body round. We estimate that the use of the 1991 census data this year will deliver some £5 million extra to the profession as a whole. In addition some £3.7 million will be paid out in England to protect the income of individual GPs losing from the change.

Children in Care

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will undertake a study into the number of children taken into care as a direct result of their mothers receiving custodial sentences for fine defaulting. [37518]

Mr. Bowis: I have no plans to do so.

Consultancy Costs

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what moneys have been spent on the services of outside consultancy firms by each regional health authority in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [37622]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Buckland Hospital

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure the continuity of paediatric services at Buckland hospital, Dover. [37908]

Mr. Sackville: East Kent health authority is currently working on proposals to strengthen and improve paediatric services across the whole of the district, including the Buckland hospital. The aim is to provide excellent clinical services for patients while meeting the requirements for junior doctor training.

Drug Side Effects

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to include drug side effect and interaction information with all drugs dispensed by a pharmacist. [37236]

Mr. Sackville: There is a statutory requirement for manufacturers of medicines to fulfil United Kingdom regulations for labelling medicines and providing patient information leaflets. A leaflet provides information on all aspects of a medicine including side effects and interactions. All newly authorised medicines require leaflets; for those medicines already on the market, leaflets are being phased in over the next three years through the introduction of patient packs for medicines containing a quantity of medicine appropriate for a course of treatment.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that all general practitioners and hospitals have access to computer systems which give warnings of drug side effects and interactions. [37237]

Mr. Sackville: Requirements for accreditation of general practitioner computer systems have been developed and publicised to general practitioner computer suppliers. These set out standards for a drug database listing side effects and interactions.

Computerised prescribing systems are at an early stage of development within hospitals. However, information on drug side effects and interactions is widely available through free issue of the British national formulary, product data sheets, and other local prescribing publications to all hospital doctors and pharmacists. Hospital pharmacists provide a further check by reviewing prescriptions prior to dispensing medicines.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has for the issuing of a steroid warning card to patients on steroid treatment. [37238]

Mr. Sackville: Department of health guidance that steroid warning cards should be issued to patients on steroid treatments has been in issue for many years. In addition, the British National Formulary, published every six months jointly by the British Medical Association and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, contains advice on the need for and use of the card. Copies of the British National Formulary are issued free of charge to all national health service doctors and community pharmacists.

Mental Health Act

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider the need for district health authorities to ensure adequate cover in their areas of medical practices approved for the purposes of section 12 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in provision of timely attendance to patients requiring examination consequent to sections 2 and 3 of the Act. [37584]

Mr. Bowis: Regional directors of public health are currently responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient suitably trained and experienced doctors approved under the Act. We are satisfied that these requirements are being properly met. From April 1996 the responsibility will pass to health authorities. We will be issuing guidance on the new arrangements shortly.

Employment of Children

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish his Department's consultation document on the employment of children. [38174]

Mr. Bowis: Soon.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued to NHS consultants in respect of voicing matters of public concern to the media; and in what circumstances trusts are authorised to take disciplinary action. [38360]

Mr. Malone: The national health service executive's "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media EL(93)51" clearly indicates the manner by which staff concerns about health care issues should be raised.

Decisions about disciplinary matters are entirely for NHS employers. Copies of EL(93)51 are available in the Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Ian McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many days were lost in sickness in the last 12 months by employees in his Department *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a proportion of the number of days worked; and what was the cost of this absence. [34600]

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to the reply, 14 July 1995, column 825]:* I regret that the previous reply contained an error. The figure for estimated days lost through sickness was given as 69,363, representing 6.23 per cent. of working days. The original figures were incorrect because they included all absences, for example staff on maternity leave. New figures from the Occupational Health and Safety Agency show that 48,031 days were lost due to sickness in 1994, some 4 per cent. of working days. This is below the average for the civil service.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in each of the last three years were remanded in custody for more than 52 weeks before sentencing. [36745]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. John Whittingdale, dated 20 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners in each of the last three years were remanded in custody for more than 52 weeks before sentencing.

The available information relates to the length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales and is given in the attached table. Information for 1993 and earlier years is published in "Prison statistics, England and Wales" (tables 2.3 and 2.4 of the 1993 edition, Cm 2893), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Remand prisoners held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on remand for over 12 months on 30 June: 1993–1995[1]

On 30 June	*[2]Numbers held for over 12 months*
1993	250
1994	[3]290
1995	[3]340

[1] Awaiting trial or sentence. Time since first reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment. This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Rounded estimates.
[3] Provisional figures.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by category all reported acts of concerted indiscipline, fires, escapes and attempted escapes from prison, escapes and attempted escapes from escort, deaths, hostage situations, wrongful releases, miscellaneous or any other incidents at Doncaster prison from 1 September 1994 to 30 June 1995. [37341]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 20 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list by category of all reported acts of concerted indiscipline, fires, escapes and attempted escapes from prison, escapes and attempted escapes from escort, deaths, hostage situations, wrongful releases, miscellaneous or any other incidents at Doncaster Prison from 1st September to 30th June 1995.

The information is given in the attached table.

Incident type	*Number*
Assaults	111
Deaths	2
Self-harm	90
Barricades	1
Fires	9
Concerted indiscipline	11
Food refusal	4
Drug finds	152
Tool loss/finds	4
Miscellaneous	10
Failure to return	1
Release in error	3
Hostage	0
Recaptures/surrenders	5
Total	403

Crime Prevention (Advice to Women)

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those crime prevention initiatives and publicity campaigns which have been directly targeted at women in the last five years. [37528]

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office runs an on-going campaign providing people with advice on crime prevention. Almost 20 million copies of the original crime prevention handbook were distributed between 1988 and 1994, and 1.75 million copies of the revised edition "Your Practical Guide to Crime Prevention" have been distributed to date. The guide provides detailed advice on how everyone can reduce the risk of assault and make themselves feel safer in their everyday lives, as well as advice on what men can do to help women feel more secure.

In addition, more than 300 crime prevention schemes targeting women's safety have been supported by Government grants totalling £1.3 million under phase 1 of the safer cities programme.

The Government also launched a domestic violence awareness campaign on 24 October 1994 called "Domestic Violence—Don't Stand For It". The campaign emphasised that domestic violence is a crime and that everyone had the right to live their life free of fear and abuse. It also encouraged victims to seek the help and assistance that is available.

The Home Office continually evaluates its crime prevention strategy and recently commissioned an independent survey of women's attitudes to personal safety. The results showed that women did not support a personal safety campaign directed specifically at them. It was considered unnecessary and deemed likely to increase the fear of crime.

Police Deaths and Injuries

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been killed or injured on duty between 1 January 1992 and 1 January 1995. [37495]

Mr. Maclean: The following is the readily available information for England and Wales:

Number of assaults on police officers involving death or injury

	Fatal assault	*Serious assault*	*Other/minor assault*
1992	—	963	17,145
1993	2	886	17,062
1994 (1st quarter)	1	229	3,779
1994–95	—	1,108	14,033

Police officers killed or seriously injured in the course of either police pursuits or responses to emergency calls

	Fatal injury	*Serious injury*
1992	2	112
1993	5	113
1994	—[1]	—[1]

[1] Not yet available

Fear of Crime

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of police forces which have conducted a fear of crime survey in accordance with the Home Office guidelines, together with the results of such surveys. [37523]

Mr. Maclean: I regret that this information is not held centrally and is available only at disproportionate cost. However, the Home Office monitors fear of crime in England and Wales through its biennial British crime survey. The results are published regularly and provide a national benchmark against which the findings of local surveys can be compared.

Supermarket Car Parks (Security)

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to crime prevention advice to shoppers using supermarket car parks and to the proprietors of supermarkets about improved security. [37527]

Mr. Maclean: The Home Department takes the lead in the provision of crime prevention advice. To date, 1,750,000 copies of the revised handbook "Your Practical Guide to Crime Prevention", have been distributed. Although the guide does not contain advice aimed specifically at users of supermarket car parks, much of the advice is relevant.

Advice for motorists using car parks is included in a new Home Office car crime prevention leaflet which I shall be launching at the Earls Court motor show next week.

We are also encouraging all owners and operators of car parks to improve security on site. To this end, we have endorsed the Association of Chief Police Officers' secured car parks scheme under which awards are made to car parks meeting strict design criteria. These criteria are currently being re-examined with a view to achieving greater take-up of the scheme.

Advice for proprietors of supermarkets is available in the form of a series of crime prevention booklets produced by the retail action group, a sub-group which was set up in 1993 by the original National Board for Crime Prevention. In January 1994, advice on the prevention of robbery and of burglary was published; advice on the prevention of violence to staff, customer theft and external fraud will be published shortly.

Obscenity Laws

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the topics which have been discussed at the last two meetings of the working group on obscenity. [38169]

Mr. Kirkhope: The group has met three times so far. The main topics discussed have been the use of computer networks for the importation and dissemination of obscene material; the enforcement of laws against child pornography; the display of indecent material in newsagents; and research to compare what is considered indecent and obscene in other countries.

Mrs. Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions and convictions there were under section 2 and section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1975, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* 1985, *(e)* 1990 and *(f)* 1994; and how many of these did not involve pornography. [38167]

Mr. Maclean: The available information is given in the table. Data before 1979 are not available and the statistics cannot separately identify cases which involve pornography. The 1994 data are provisional.

The number of offenders prosecuted and the number found guilty at all courts for offences of possessing obscene material for gain[1]

England and Wales — *Number of offenders*

	Year			
	1980	*1985*	*1990*	[2]*1994*
Number of prosecutions	183	275	174	309
Total number found guilty	118	226	116	266

[1] An offence under section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 as amended by the Obscene Publications Act, 1964 section 1.
[2] 1994 data is provisional.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is now estimated the practice of slopping out will be eliminated in Her Majesty's prison Armley, Leeds. [38166]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. John Battle, dated 20 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the elimination of slopping out at Leeds prison.

It is planned that C and D wings will be closed for refurbishment (including installation of in-cell sanitation) in February 1996. Prisoners will be moved to accommodation on A wing, which is being refurbished at present. Once this is completed there will be no prisoners at Leeds without 24 hour access to sanitation.

Young Prisoners

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many 15 and 16-year-olds were held in adult prisons *(a)* in London and *(b)* nationally awaiting trial in each of the last five years. [33807]

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 12 July 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 20 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on how many 15 and 16 year olds were held in adult prisons *(a)* in London and *(b)* nationally awaiting trial in each of the last five years.

The available information is for the establishments receiving untried prisoners and is given in the attached table.

Receptions of 15 and 16 year old untried prisoners into adult Prison Service establishments in England and Wales 1990–94

Year	*Number received into an adult establishment*
1990	
London	0
England and Wales	187
1991	
London	0
England and Wales	134
1992	
London	0
England and Wales	23
1993	
London	0
England and Wales	18
1994[1]	
London	0
England and Wales	100

[1] Provisional figures.

Daily Sport

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place between the Home Office and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents and the British Retail Consortium on the positioning of the *Daily Sport*; and if he will place a copy of advice to newsagents in the Library. [38168]

Mr. Kirkhope: Officials have corresponded with the National Federation of Retail Newsagents and the British Retail Consortium about the display of *The Sport* newspapers. Following that correspondence, both organisations decided to recommend to their members that copies of *The Sport* newspapers should be displayed only on the "top shelf". We understand that the NFRN has, however, delayed the issue of its recommendation pending further discussions with the publishers of *The Sport* newspapers.

Sentencing

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if paragraph 1 of schedule 5 to the Criminal Justice Act 1993 has been implemented. [38849]

Mr. Maclean: This technical provision should have been included in commencement order No. 8. It was brought into force on 14 August by means of commencement order No. 9.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the draft CAP budget expenditure published by the EU for 1996; what is the legal limit of such expenditure; and what was the actual expenditure in each of the past 10 years. [37631]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* The 1996 draft budget for common agricultural policy expenditure has been set at the level of the guideline—the legally binding ceiling on CAP expenditure—of 40,828 million ecu or £34,069 million. Initial indicators are that 1995 expenditure will be about 35,000 mecu or about £28,000 million, some 3,000 mecu or £2,418 million below the guideline. This is 1,047 mecu or £838 million within the EU guideline of 37,944 mecu or £30,375 million. Expenditure in 1994 was 32,970 mecu or £25,264 million, some 3,495 mecu or £2,678 million below the guideline. Details of expenditure on the common agricultural policy in previous years are contained in the annual financial reports on the European Agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guarantee section, copies of which have been deposited in the Library of the House. The latest available report relates to 1993.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 23 October 1995

ENVIRONMENT

New Homes

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the total number of new homes started by *(a)* local authorities and new towns and *(b)* housing associations in England in each year since 1974, and his estimate of the likely number of starts in 1995 and 1996. [37490]

Mr. Clappison: The number of new-build homes started in England between 1974–75 and 1994–95 by housing associations, local authorities and new towns is shown in the following table.

Number of new-build dwellings started, by tenure

Year	Housing associations	Local authorities and new towns	Total
1974–75	12,300	109,569	121,869
1975–76	22,020	131,015	153,035
1976–77	25,481	106,566	132,047
1977–78	26,076	86,334	112,410
1978–79	16,713	69,068	85,781
1979–80	14,275	54,588	68,863
1980–81	11,051	28,781	39,832
1981–82	13,005	23,499	36,504
1982–83	14,191	32,210	46,401
1983–84	12,259	27,469	39,728
1984–85	10,751	20,496	31,247
1985–86	10,465	18,284	28,749
1986–87	10,619	17,001	27,620
1987–88	10,073	14,517	24,590
1988–89	11,973	12,263	24,236
1989–90	11,516	11,731	23,247
1990–91	14,183	5,362	19,545
1991–92	20,072	2,018	22,090
1992–93	30,361	1,571	31,932
1993–94	33,107	841	33,948
1994–95	30,946	441	31,387

This is, however, not the whole picture. In addition, new social lettings are provided through purchase and rehabilitation of existing properties, and released through home ownership grant schemes, which assist existing tenants to move on to their own properties.

In 1995–96 we estimate that scheme starts will be made on over 50,000 new social lettings, to be provided by housing associations and local authorities through new build, purchase or rehabilitation, or released by home ownership grant schemes.

We estimate that some 70,000 new social lettings, or completions, will be provided in 1995–96.

Plans for 1996–97 and beyond are under consideration as part of the current public expenditure round.

Water Meters

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of domestic premises are fitted with water meters in each of the English regional water companies. [37995]

Mr. Clappison: In 1995–96 the proportion of metered water customers of the 10 water and sewerage companies is as follows:

	Households Percentage [1]
Anglian	16.8
Dwr Cymru	2.8
North West	4.9
Northumbrian	0.6
Severn Trent	8.2
South West	9.1
Southern	11.8
Thames	5.4
Wessex	9.7
Yorkshire	6.0

[1] Company estimates.

Mr.Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of each of the English regional water companies on the use of water meters for domestic premises. [37996]

Mr. Clappison: Companies are developing their policies on the metering of domestic premises in the light of their particular circumstances. Most companies meter new and substantially converted properties. All companies operate voluntary schemes, which provide meters for those customers who are prepared to pay for their installation.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy on using water meters as the basis for charging domestic customers for their water supply. [37994]

Mr. Clappison: It is for water companies to decide the basis on which they charge customers. However, the Government believe that metering is, in the long term, the best basis for paying for water in many circumstances and it is consistent with the sustainable use of our water resources. It is also fair and equitable in that it relates charges directly to the amount of water used, and provides an incentive to customers to use water efficiently. For water companies, metering can form an important part of a cost-effective approach to reducing imbalances between supply and demand. The Government wish to encourage companies and customers to consider switching to meters, but we are not forcing them to do so.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are waiting for *(a)* improvement grants and *(b)* disabled improvement grants as a percentage of the population for each county in England. [37905]

Mr. Clappison: This information is not readily available.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest in England have been de-notified since 1981 on the grounds of a decline in their scientific interest. [38358]

Mr. Clappison: The information is not available in the form requested. Between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1991 statistical information on damage on SSSIs in Great Britain is set out in the annual reports of the former Nature Conservancy Council. Since 1 April 1991 similar detail for England is contained in English Nature's annual reports. Copies of annual reports are in the Library.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what basis the company Instafibre was chosen as the sole vehicle for dealing with the discount voucher scheme operated under the Energy Efficiency Office's energy efficiency scheme; [38151]

(2) what consideration and assessment was made of the impact of the discount voucher scheme operated under the energy efficiency campaign upon those companies who were not able to benefit from the discount vouchers; [38152]

(3) if the operation of the discount voucher scheme under the energy efficiency campaign was awarded on a lowest-tender basis; and if she will list *(a)* the details of the dates of the tender documents, *(b)* the number of respondents and *(c)* the way in which such tenders were invited and through which publications. [38154]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The voucher book scheme being run as the current part of "Wasting Energy Costs the Earth" is a welcome contribution by business to encouraging action on energy efficiency among domestic householders. It involves the provision of discounts or special offers by manufactures, suppliers and trade associations at their own expense to complement the Government's own spending on the campaign.

The discount relating to cavity wall insulation is no longer to be provided solely by one company. It covers the major designers of fibre-based systems and installers who are members of the industry guarantee scheme or the National Cavity Insulation Association.

In supporting the voucher scheme the Government took full account of the long-term benefits to all sectors of the energy efficiency industry from a stimulation of the market, and decisions on individual contributors were taken on a value-for-money basis throughout.

Drilling Wastes

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he will be putting forward in June at the North sea ministerial conference of the problems caused for wildlife by hydrocarbons in drilling wastes discharging from rigs. [37298]

Mr. Clappison: The next North sea conference will not be until a date in the period 2000–2002. The fourth North sea conference on June 9 1995 asked the Oslo and Paris commissions to introduce by 1997 a ban on the discharge of oil-contaminated cuttings except in exceptional circumstances and to investigate the need for, the environmental impact from and possible means of cleaning up seabeds contaminated by oily cuttings.

Tenants

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the protection afforded to tenants who have signed what otherwise is a legally binding contract for a set period of tenure but who, in the event of a landlord defaulting on his mortgage payments, can be given two weeks' notice to quit by a mortgage company, following repossession of the property. [38096]

Mr. Clappison: I sympathise with tenants whose landlords default on their mortgages and who face eviction at short notice through no fault of their own. However, I do not believe that legislation is the appropriate solution to this problem. Granting such tenants statutory rights to occupation would lead to lenders restricting mortgage loans. It would also reduce the supply of properties available in the private rented sector.

Following our discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders, it is now a condition of granting a lender an order for possession that a letter has been sent to the occupier to forewarn tenants that they will have to leave.

Sea Birds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance has been offered to the RSPCA for decontamination of oiled sea birds following the dumping of oil off the Yorkshire coastline in September. [38494]

Mr. Clappison: My Department's scientific advisers, English Nature, worked closely with the RSPCA in monitoring the effects of this off-shore oil slick. No financial assistance was provided to decontaminate oiled sea birds.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the *(a)* species and *(b)* numbers of each species involved as sea bird victims in the Yorkshire coastline oil slick of September. [38495]

Mr. Clappison: My Department's scientific advisers, English Nature, advise that between 21 and 26 September the numbers of sea birds recovered were as follows.

1138 Guillemot, 98 Razorbill, 12 Puffin and 4 other birds were recovered alive; 201 Guillemot, 29 Razorbill and 2 other birds were recovered dead.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Work

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work of his Department since 1990. [38078]

Mr. Hanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the departmental reports produced by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office each year for the last five years, which are available in the Library of the House. Their reference numbers are as follows:

1991: Cm 1502

1992: Cm 1902

1993: Cm 2202

1994: Cm 2502

1995: CM 2802

Sudan

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the governing authorities in Sudan about progress towards peace and democracy; and if he will make a statement. [38144]

Mr. Hanley: On 13 September the Secretary of State raised with the Sudanese ambassador our concerns about Sudan's alleged support for extremist groups, its human rights record and the continuing civil war.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38288]

Mr. Hanley: *(a)* The Foreign and Commonwealth Office envisages a single bargaining unit to cover all 5,440 headquarters staff and the 32 staff of the FCO's only agency, Wilton Park, at grades DS5S and below and their home civil service equivalents.

(b) The FCO proposes to recognise the Civil and Public Servants Association—CPSA—the National Union of Civil and Public Servants—NUCPS—the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists—IPMS—and the Diplomatic Service Association—DSA—for pay bargaining purposes and to conduct negotiations with them through a single table structure.

Zimbabwe

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently resident in Zimbabwe. [38017]

Mr. Hanley: The estimated size of the British community, which includes British nationals of all categories, is 20,000. Of these, about 6,000 are British citizens.

Bermuda

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to change Bermuda's constitutional status. [38012]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: There are no plans to change Bermuda's constitutional status.

Belarus

Mr. John D.Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Belarus; and if he will make a statement about relations with that country. [38013]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I last visited Belarus in July and have no further plans to do so at present. Regular contacts take place at official level and help to develop further our good bilateral relationship.

Ireland

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the annual cost in each of the last five years of maintaining the diplomatic mission to the Republic of Ireland. [38014]

Mr. Hanley: Total operating costs of the British embassy in Dublin, including rented staff accommodation, for the last five financial years are as follows:

1990–91: £2,117,098

1991–92: £2,197,640

1992–93: £2,284,956

1993–94: £2,514,718

1994–95: £2,702,525

Former Yugoslavia

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what level the United Kingdom is represented in each of the states of the former Yugoslavia. [38015]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The United Kingdom is represented at ambassador level in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia and by a charge d'affaires in Belgrade.

Flag States

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions, in each year since 1990, his Department has made representations to flag states in respect of vessels which have been detected making alleged illegal discharges of oil or other pollutants by MPCU surveillance. [37241]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office made seven such representations to other flag states in each of the years 1990, 1991 and 1992, 14 representations in 1993 and five representations in 1994. It has so far made 14 representations in 1995.

Kenya

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about human rights in Kenya. [37672]

Mr. Hanley: We occasionally receive representations from a variety of sources about human rights in Kenya. We have drawn our own concerns about aspects of the situation to the attention of the Kenyan authorities.

Commonwealth Membership

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries currently applying for membership of the Commonwealth, indicating in each case the date when their application will be determined. [37917]

Mr. Hanley: There are no outstanding applications for Commonwealth membership. Mozambique and Rwanda have expressed interest in membership, but have made no formal application.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Fatalities

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many fatalities there have been in the United Kingdom over the last five years in *(a)* boxing, *(b)* mountaineering, *(c)* skiing, *(d)* motor racing and *(e)* horse-riding. [38047]

Mr. Sproat: No figures are held for Scotland or Northern Ireland. The most recent figures available are for the years 1986 to 1991.

England and Wales

Fatalities in:

(a) boxing: 3

(b) mountaineering: 59

(c) skiing: 0

(d) motorsports: 72

(e) horseriding: 26

Historic Properties

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what support is given to help private owners of homes that have a historic and architectural interest to retain and maintain their homes. [38369]

Mr. Sproat: The Government believe that so far as possible historic properties should remain in private hands and that their owners should be encouraged to retain and care for them. In addition to grants from English Heritage, and its sister organisations in the home countries, owners of outstanding historic buildings may take advantage of a range of tax measures, for example conditional exemption from inheritance tax and tax relief in relation to heritage maintenance funds.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if she will list those private historic houses which have received grants during the past five years, giving the amount of grant paid to each house; [38368]

(2) how many historic houses have received repair and maintenance grants in each year since 1990. [38367]

Mr. Sproat: Government funding for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings in England is channelled through English Heritage, which does not hold information in the form requested. However, all repair grants offered by English Heritage to buildings and monuments of outstanding national importance are listed in their publications "Grants 1984–92", "Grants 1992–93" and "Grants 1993–94", copies of which I have placed in the Library. Private owners of listed buildings will also benefit from a significant proportion of English Heritage's conservation area grants, but a precise figure cannot be given as the minority of these are offered through schemes administered by local authorities. In 1994–95, English Heritage offered a total of nearly £60 million in grants, approximately half of which was for secular buildings and monuments and conservation areas. Local authorities may also themselves offer grants to private owners of historic houses.

Gaelic Television

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of Gaelic television programmes transmitted by the BBC, are produced by independent television companies; what percentage of such Gaelic programmes produced by the independent sector are directly funded by the BBC; and if she will require the BBC, as part of the current charter review process, to ensure that a minimum of 25 per cent. of future BBC funding for Gaelic television will be allocated to commissions from the independent sector. [38308]

Mr. Sproat: I understand from the BBC that over 45 per cent. of Gaelic programming broadcast by BBC Scotland in 1994–95 was produced by the independent sector. Of this, over 83 per cent. was funded by the BBC. Along with all other terrestrial broadcasters, the BBC is required to meet a statutory quota of 25 per cent. independent production. It is for the broadcasters to commission programming to meet the quota.

London Film Commission

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement about the funding of the London Film Commission. [38080]

Mr. Sproat: On Thursday 19 October, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the offer of a one-off grant of £100,000 to help the London Film Commission meet its set-up costs. The commission has already managed to secure commitments from both private and public sector sources to cover most of its running costs for the next four years, and prospects are good for any gaps in funding commitment to be made good. The commission should soon be ready to open its doors for business. A copy of the relevant DNH news release—No. DNH 188/95—has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Millenium Funding

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimates she has made of the future public revenue costs incurred if either the Welsh National stadium or the Cardiff Bay opera house receives millennium fund funding. [38049]

Mr. Sproat: The former Secretary of State issued a direction to the Millennium Commission to take into account the viability of projects and, in particular, the need for resources to be available to meet any running and maintenance costs associated with each project for a reasonable period. The costs of any project under consideration are, therefore, a matter for the Millennium Commission which is an independent body.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the estimated cost so far to the legal aid fund of the cases of Gaudenzio Castelli *v* Westminster council and Jose Tristan-Garcia *v* Westminster council; and what will be the estimated cost of the appeal. [37415]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only payment to date is £380 paid on account in respect of a disbursement in the case of Jose Tristan-Garcia v Westminster council. As no claim for costs has yet been received it would not be appropriate for me to speculate on the eventual cost of these cases.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Prime Minister if he was informed by the Secretary of State for Defence that he was appointing Mr. David Hart as his independent adviser. [38324]

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from the British defence industry concerning the advice of Mr. David Hart within the Ministry of Defence on procurement contracts. [38325]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, none.

Independent Advisers

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Prime Minister if his agreement is required for the appointment of independent advisers to the Secretary of State for Defence. [38326]

The Prime Minister: My agreement is not required for the appointment of unpaid independent advisers to Ministers.

National Crime Squad

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister whether the national police squad announced in his speech in Blackpool on 13 October will operate in Scotland or Northern Ireland. [38586]

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is consulting the police and others on the establishment of a national crime squad. An announcement will be made in due course.

Seal Pup Slaughter

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government last authorised the British embassy in Moscow to raise the issue of seal pup slaughter. [38475]

The Prime Minister: The embassy in Moscow was instructed to raise the question of seal culling on receipt of the 1995 seal cull figures. These arrived on 3 October and the embassy is now seeking a meeting with the relevant authorities to reiterate the British public's opposition to seal culling and to ask the Russians to reconsider their position.

Intergovernmental Conference

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy towards the IGC; and if he will make a statement. [38573]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to my speech on Europe on 1 March, *Official Report*, columns 1060-74. We will continue to seek a European Union that is open, flexible, free-trading, efficient and responsive to people's concerns.

Information Technology

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister how much was spent or allowed for the hire of consultants in each Government Department during the process of assessing bids for IT-related contracts; and if he will list the consultants used and the amounts spent in each case. [38086]

The Prime Minister: The information is not held centrally.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister what safeguards exist to prevent individual firms from establishing monopoly positions during the award of contracts for services that are carried out in all or most Government Departments, with particular reference to those for information technology. [38084]

The Prime Minister: All contracts are awarded on the basis of best value for money after a fair and open competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary. Departments will have regard to market conditions when considering bids. The procedure is no different in the case of information technology contracts.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been put in place in each Government Department to avoid corruption or conflict of interest during the market testing process. [38087]

The Prime Minister: The principles to be followed are laid out clearly in "The Government's Guide to Market Testing" and the "Civil Service Management Code". The recent White Paper on procurement, "Setting New Standards", re-emphasised the Government's commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards in procurement. All these documents are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister what mechanisms exist in each Government Department during the market testing process to test bids for risk assessment and value for money and, following the award of contracts, to monitor the performance of those contracts. [38085]

The Prime Minister: The principles to be followed are laid out clearly in "The Government's Guide to Market Testing", which is available in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Policyholders Protection Act 1975

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has completed his review of the Policyholders Protection Act 1975; and if he will make a statement. [39328]

Mr. Lang: Following publication of the consultative document "A Review of the Policyholders Protection Act 1975" in July 1994, there has been general support, both from insurers and policyholder interests, for changes in the scope and operations of the Policyholders Protection Act. I have therefore concluded that the Act requires amendment. The amendments will require primary legislation, which I will bring forward when parliamentary time permits.

The principal change which I propose to make is to the Act's geographic coverage. I propose to restrict it to insurance policies covering European Economic Area risks and commitments underwritten by United Kingdom authorised companies and UK risks and commitments underwritten by UK-located branches of EEA companies. I also intend to extend the Act's scope, subject to de minimis provisions, to include insurance policies covering UK risks which have been underwritten on a services basis by companies based elsewhere in the EEA.

I also propose to restrict the coverage of partnerships, which are currently treated more favourably under the Act than incorporated companies. I propose to put them on an equal footing by restricting compensation to partnerships and incorporated companies alike only to compulsory insurance classes.

Neither of these proposals will be retrospective: they will apply to payments by the Policyholders Protection Board triggered by any insurance failure after enactment of the proposals.

I also propose to make a number of minor changes to the Act which have been suggested during the review to improve the operation of the Act, to improve protection for insureds who are not policyholders and to reduce the Policyholders Protection Board's administrative costs.

Full details of the proposed changes are contained in a document which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Iran

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further exceptions there have been concerning the Government's export licensing policy towards Iran following his statements of 18 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *509*, and 6 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *224*. [39329]

Mr. Oppenheim: As I said in my earlier statement, a number of representations have been received by my Department concerning export business entered into before the moratorium on export licences was imposed on 17 December 1992. We have identified a third case concerning the completion of a contract for repair and overhaul in the United Kingdom of non-lethal marine components.

In the circumstances, we have agreed to issue a licence which would allow these components to be returned to their owners in Iran unrepaired.

Research Establishments

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the expected cost of conducting a prior options review of the public sector research establishments—Cm 2991; and from which budget this will be found. [38408]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The cost of conducting individual reviews of public sector research establishments will vary, but it is not expected to be substantial. The reviews will be undertaken, and the costs borne, by the respective parent or sponsoring Government Department or research council in each case.

All public sector research establishments are subject to periodic review. The Government's response to the Multi-departmental Scrutiny of Public Sector Research Establishments—Cm 2991—announced that we are bringing forward the existing programme of reviews and extending the prior options process to research council establishments to allow related establishments to be considered together.

Consultancy Brokerage Service

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what fees were paid in total to the Consultancy Brokerage Service's contractor, Salford University Business Services; [37756]

(2) what has been government expenditure to date on the Consultancy Brokerage Service including its consultants and set up costs. [37773]

Mr. Lang: Some £2.94 million. This sum includes total payments of £650,000 to all contractors, including Salford University Business Services Ltd. The sums paid to individual contractors are commercially confidential. Some £1.37 million of the total expenditure was on information technology hardware, for which alternative uses are being found.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Small Business, Industry and Energy announced on 14 September 1995 that the DTI would be working with business links to develop regional consultancy databases and that the Consultancy Brokerage Service would not now proceed. It is not expected that this alternative approach will entail any significant expenditure.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what circumstances the Astra provisions applied to the privatisation of public bodies; and if they will apply to the takeover of the National Engineering Laboratory by ASL. [38186]

Mr. Ian Taylor: An "Astra" clause is not normally made a condition of sale when privatising a public body although shortlisted bidders can be invited to say whether they would be prepared voluntarily to undertake not to seek the renegotiation of redundancy terms. The purchaser of the National Engineering Laboratory had made its

intentions known to the Department and the Department has passed on this information to staff and to the unions which represent staff at the laboratory.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if all contracts by Government Departments or agencies previously placed at the National Engineering Laboratory will now be subject to competitive tendering following the takeover by ASL of the laboratory. [38182]

Mr. Taylor: Work outstanding under letters of agreement or contracts with the National Engineering Laboratory will be transferred to the purchaser.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the value of existing contracts, split between private and public sector, held by the National Engineering Laboratory and which will be transferred to ASL on takeover. [38185]

Mr. Taylor: The value of the existing contracts of the National Engineering Laboratory is commercially sensitive information which must remain confidential.

Copyright

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his letter of 21 August to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, when he hopes to complete his review of draft regulations to implement directive 93/98/EEC on the duration of copyright in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [37297]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The review of the proposed legislation to implement directive 93/98/EEC has been completed, taking into consideration the comments received in response to the consultative draft which was circulated earlier in the year. Regulations to implement the directive are now in the course of preparation, and will be laid before both Libraries of the House as soon as possible.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguish staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38285]

Mr. Lang: My Department will contain the following bargaining units for the 1996–97 pay round: for specialist insolvency grades (currently 625 posts); for specialist in the Radiocommunications Agency (326 posts); and for the rest of DTI (9103.5 posts) including any agencies which remain within DTI's remit on 1 April 1996, but excluding staff of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service which will be a separate bargaining unit.

Proposals have been put to the trade unions—IPMS, NUCPS, CPSA and FDA—regarding the negotiating machinery.

Encryption

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to resist changes to Government policy on encryption following consideration of encryption issues by the Council of Europe and the European Union. [38164]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Officials from various Government Departments have been giving consideration to Government policy on the provision of encrypted services on public networks. Such a policy needs to take into account the legitimate requirement of industry, commerce and individuals for a range of cryptographic services and national security needs, including fighting terrorism and serious crime. In addition, the European Union has put forward draft proposals on the provision of European-wide trust services, which the Government, with other member states, are considering. But no decisions have yet been taken.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by NHS trust, the centrally returned figures for expenditure on management consultancy services in 1994–95. [38379]

Mr. Sackville: Centrally returned figures do not separately identify this information.

Departmental Work

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the work of his Department since 1990. [38073]

Mr. Sackville: The work of my Department is summarised for each year in the departmental report, alongside an explanation of the Department's expenditure plans for the following years. The first such report was produced in 1991, and contains an explanation of the major policy and service developments that occurred in 1990–91. Copies of the reports are available in the Library.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales together, in each case with the equivalent electoral registration figures also expressed as a percentage of these population figures. [36779]

Mr. Sackville: The available information will be placed in the Library.

NHS Low Income Scheme

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *1284–85, (1)* how many applicants to the NHS low income scheme are for help with prescription charges; how many were allowed; and what is the total value of the benefit consequently paid out; [37319]

(2) on the health benefits scheme, how much expenditure can be identified as resulting from applications for help through the AG1 scheme instead of total revenue forgone on health benefits. [37320]

Mr. Malone: AG1 claims to the national health service low income scheme are treated as claims for help in respect of all relevant NHS charges and travelling expenses. I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 19 July, columns *1284–85*, for the available information about prescription and dental charge revenue forgone and expenditure on sight tests and optical vouchers. Costs attributable to AG1 claims are not identified separately. Information about AG1 claims and their outcomes is shown in the table.

Number of AG1 claims received and numbers of charges certificates issued for Great Britain in 1994—95

	Outcome
Number of AG1 claim forms received	1,300,963
Number of NHS charges certificates issued for full help (AG2) which includes entitlement to free prescriptions[1]	694,135
Number of NHS charges certificates issued for limited help (AG3)	457,254

[1] People receiving income support, family credit and disability working allowance (with capital of £8,000) or less are also entitled to free prescriptions under the NHS low income scheme.

Calculators (Purchases)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many calculators have been purchased by the NHS supplies authority in each of the last five years. [37410]

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Specialist Clinics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the result of the National Centre for Primary Care Research study into the cost-effectiveness of specialist clinics in general practice. [37411]

Mr. Malone: The Centre for Primary Care Research undertook a study to establish the extent and nature of specialist outreach clinics and to describe specialists' and general practitioners' views on them. The results were published in the *British Medical Journal*, volume 38, on 23 April 1994, copies of which are available in the Library. The National Primary Care Research and Development Centre is currently conducting research in this area.

Stress

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *569*, what are the first results of the research by Dr. Toby Wall about the mental health of the NHS work force. [37412]

Mr. Malone: The first results from this research are not yet available.

Children's Homes

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the main recommendations of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes and on the main provisions of the code of practice issued by his Department following publication of the Warner report; [37700]

(2) what specific structures and systems have been established by his Department to monitor compliance on the part of local authorities with the provisions of the code of practice arising from the publication of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes; and if he will make a statement on the extent to which each local authority is *(a)* currently and *(b)* in the future planning to comply with the provisions of the code; [37701]

(3) what specific action *(a)* has been taken and *(b)* is planned in order to encourage greater compliance on the part of local authorities with the provisions of the code of practice arising from the publication of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes; [37703]

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the costs to local authorities associated with compliance with the provisions of the code of practice arising from the publication of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes; [37704]

(5) to what extent local authorities will be reimbursed in future for the increased costs associated with compliance with the provisions of the code of practice arising from the publication of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes; [37705]

(6) if he will make a statement setting out the steps which he is taking to encourage compliance with the terms of the code of practice arising from the publication of the Warner report on the selection, development and management of staff in children's homes with particular reference to the advance vetting of those seeking access to children; and if he will indicate those agencies, charities or commercial organisations of which the Department holds details and which are able to provide advice to local authorities on such vetting procedures. [37699]

Mr. Bowis: Progress on the implementation of recommendations in the Warner report by local authorities was reported in Children Act reports in 1992, 1993 and 1994, copies of which are available in the Library.

The code of practice for the employment of residential child care workers, which I endorse, was produced by the independent support force for children's residential care. It is a reference document intended for the use of local authorities and other providers of child care services. It does not impose on local authorities any new burdens or costs. Local authorities are expected to continue to be particularly rigorous in their policies, procedures and practice for the recruitment, selection and retention of staff involved in child care services. This is routinely examined by inspectors of these services.

The code of practice and existing guidance from the Department of Health provide advice to local authorities on vetting procedures: how they implement the advice is their responsibility.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what criteria are used to ascertain the suitability of an illness for inclusion in "The Health of the Nation" as a key area; and how many of these criteria are met by osteoporosis; [38426]

(2) what research has been conducted into the suitability of osteoporosis for inclusion in "The Health of the Nation" as a key area; and if he will make a statement. [38427]

Mr. Sackville: The criteria used to determine the five key areas as set out in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper (Com 1986) were:

the area should be a major cause of death or avoidable ill-health;

effective interventions should be possible, offering significant scope for improvement in health; and

it should be possible to set objectives and targets, and monitor progress towards them.

The Department of Health published the report of its advisory group on osteoporosis in January 1995. Copies of the report were distributed to all national health service bodies in England and are also available in the Library. The Department is presently working to implement many of its recommendations, including that further work be done to measure osteoporosis against the criteria for inclusion as a "Health of the Nation" key area. This year, the Department has increased its support for the National Osteoporosis Society from £20,000 to £50,000.

Unlicensed Herbal Medicines

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he proposes to take to prevent unlicensed herbal medicines being sold to the public in breach of the criminal law. [38509]

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency investigates all reports of unlicensed herbal remedies being sold to the public in breach of United Kingdom medicines legislation, and takes the appropriate action.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total costs of NHS drugs used in each of the past six years; and what is his latest calculation of the number killed by their use. [38642]

Mr. Malone: The cost of national health service drugs in England, in each of the past six years is shown in the table. The cost of drugs used by hospital and community services in 1994–95 is not yet available. In 1992, the latest year for which information is available, in England and Wales the number of deaths due to drugs, medicaments and biological substances causing adverse effects in therapeutic use was 14[1]. It is not possible to identify the adverse effects of prescribed drugs only.

£ million

Total NHS spending on drugs (England)

Year	FHS drugs	HCHC drugs	Total
1989–90	1,942	414	2,356
1990–91	2,080	460	2,540
1991–92	2,317	591	2,908
1992–93	2,641	643	3,284
1993–94	2,951	710	3,661
1994–95	3,230	—	—

Notes:
FHC = Family Health Services.
HCHS = Hospital and Community Health Services.
Source:
[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision. Data for 1993 and 1994 are being checked and should be available in 1996.

NHS Hysterectomy and Dilation and Curettage Operations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of NHS hysterectomy and dilation and curettage operations carried out in each of the past three years that are now judged to be unnecessary. [38644]

Mr. Sackville: Doctors are responsible for deciding whether an operation is needed in individual cases, in consultation with their patients. The relevant medical royal colleges are responsible for issuing guidelines on conditions and their treatments.

Boneloc Bone Cement

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the patients on whom Boneloc cement was used for their operation have now been contacted and informed of Scandinavian research of its failures. [38637]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The Department issued hazard notice HN 9501 to orthopaedic departments in the health service in April 1995 providing advice on Boneloc bone cement. Action taken with regard to individual patients as a result of departmental advice is a matter for the clinical judgment of the health service professional concerned, in light of the patient's individual circumstances.

Variations in Health

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish the report of the variations sub-group of the Chief Medical Officer's "The Health of the Nation" working group. [38913]

Mr. Dorrell: The sub-group's report on variations in health has been published today, and copies have been placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Teacher Appointments

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on bringing school teaching appointments within the provisions of Northern Ireland fair employment legislation; and if he will list those

Protestant churches which have indicated that they wish this teacher exemption to continue in the course of recent reviews. [37155]

Mr. Ancram: As provided in section 38 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, the Fair Employment Agency reviewed the exception relating to the employment of teachers in schools in 1981 and 1987. No changes were recommended to the exception. During these reviews, the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian authorities indicated that they wished to see the exception retained.

Fire Service

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the fire service in Keady was upgraded from being an auxiliary fire unit to become a retained unit; how many call-outs the fire service in Keady had in the last full year prior to it ceasing to be an auxiliary fire unit; how many call-outs the retained unit in Keady had in the calendar year of 1994; and if he will make a statement about the number of fires in the Keady area. [37551]

Mr. Moss: In 1952, the then Northern Ireland fire authority established a volunteer fire party in Keady which shortly afterwards was changed to an auxiliary fire service unit. The auxiliary fire service was disbanded nationally in 1967, but following a review of fire cover, a retained fire crew was established in Keady in November 1971.

Due to the length of time involved it has not been possible to establish the number of call-outs attended by personnel in Keady prior to Keady being upgraded to retained status.

In the calendar year 1994, Keady station dealt with 144 calls, made up as follows:

	Call-outs
Major Fires (eg, property or car fires)	19
Secondary Fires (eg rubbish or derelict property fires)	60
Chimney fires	23
False Alarm Calls	36
Special Service Calls (eg, road traffic accidents or rescues)	6

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fire call-outs the fire service has had this year to the districts of Tandragee, Richhill, Markethill, Newtownhamilton, Middletown, Bessbrook, Hamiltonsbawn and Keady. [37550]

Mr. Moss: The number of turn-outs to 30 September are as follows:

	Turn-outs
Tandragee	28
Richhill	14
Markethill	14
Newtownhamilton	182
Middletown	9
Bessbrook	110
Hamiltonsbawn	2
Keady	298

The figures for Newtownhamilton and Keady relate to calls attended within the station areas, as opposed to specifically within the town.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest estimates of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland together, in each case, with the equivalent electoral registration figures also expressed as a percentage of these population figures. [36778]

Sir John Wheeler: The 1991 electoral ward population figures taken from the Northern Ireland census, aggregated to parliamentary constituencies are as follows. Subsequent mid-year estimates are provided at district council level only and not broken down by age. Consequently the equivalent electoral registration figures relate to September 1991.

Parliamentary Constituency	*Column 1 Population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of population aged 16 years*	*Column 2 Registered Electors*	*Column 3 Percentage of Column 1*
Belfast east	54,655	53,375	97.7
Belfast north	54,931	55,587	101.2
Belfast south	55,368	52,556	94.9
Belfast west	54,960	55,280	100.6
East Antrim	64,621	63,739	98.6
East Londonderry	78,930	76,912	97.4
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	70,489	71,472	101.4
Foyle	77,264	75,970	98.8
Lagan Valley	76,053	73,688	96.9
Mid Ulster	71,186	70,410	98.9
Newry and Armagh	68,837	68,716	99.8
North Antrim	71,096	70,217	98.8
North Down	70,201	69,604	99.1
Strangford	71,468	69,855	97.7
South Antrim	71,334	68,292	95.7
South Down	78,592	77,371	98.4
Upper Bann	68,675	68,422	99.6
Total	1,158,660	1,141,466	98.5

Irish Language

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new proposals he has to improve the access to Irish medium education and teaching of Irish as a second language. [38638]

Mr. Ancram: I am prepared to respond to proposals for grant-aiding Irish-medium schools where they are clearly viable in terms of parental support and where financial support would be compatible with the provision of effective education and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. The teaching of Irish as a second language is a matter for individual schools within the common curriculum requirements. A wide range of support is available to schools to assist them in making such provision.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to use expertise from Wales and Scotland on second language education in Celtic languages to improve the teaching of Irish. [38643]

Mr. Ancram: None. In Northern Ireland, teachers of Irish, and other European languages, as a second language have a range of curriculum support material available to

them, and the education and library boards' curriculum advisory and support services provides in-service training in the teaching of modern languages as for all other aspects of the curriculum. These local materials and services are designed to meet the needs of teachers in Northern Ireland, and the boards commission any external contribution to the services they provide as they consider necessary.

RUC Report

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he hopes to publish the 1995 report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary. [39120]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Copies of the 1995 inspection report, which is the third RUC inspection report to be published, have today been placed in the Library. I welcome the report and will be considering its recommendations carefully.

I am grateful to Her Majesty's inspector for the report and am pleased to note that overall he regards the force as efficient.

Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary inspections offer the opportunity of professional examination of policing policies and priorities. This inspection forms part of an on-going programme intended to examine over succeeding years various aspects of police management. It is the third in the series to be published and has been a wide-ranging examination of the overall performance of the RUC.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria is used by the Department of Health to fund the activities of community psychiatric nurses. [37566]

Mr. Moss: The Department of Health and Social Services does not provide funding for health and personal social services on the basis of specific service needs. It is a matter for the health and social services boards, as commissioners, to determine the specific service needs of their resident populations in the light of available resources.

The Department allocates the resources available annually to boards by means of a capitation formula which is employed to facilitate equitable distribution of funds on the basis of the overall needs for health and social care of each board's resident population.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people who have been referred to a community psychiatric nurse in the south and east Belfast area. [37557]

Mr. Moss: Information is not available in the format requested. However, during the period 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995 there were 24,031 face-to-face contacts with community psychiatric nurses in the south and east Belfast HSS trust.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people who have been referred to community psychiatric nurses throughout west and north Belfast in each of the last five years. [37553]

Mr. Moss: Information is not available in the format requested. However, the number of face-to-face contacts with community psychiatric nurses in the north and west Belfast HSS trust in each of the last three years is:

1992–93: 20,908

1993–94: 21,339

1994–95: 20,400

Information is not available centrally prior to 1992–93.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the total number of people who have been referred to a community psychiatric nurse in the Eastern health board area; [37559]

(2) what is the total number of people who have been referred to a community psychiatric nurse in the Southern health board area; [37561]

(3) what is the total number of people who have been referred to a community psychiatric nurse in the Western health board area; [37560]

(4) what is the total number of people who have been referred to a community psychiatric nurse in the Northern health board area. [37562]

Mr. Moss: Information is not available in the format requested. However, the table shows the number of face-to-face contacts with community psychiatric nurses in each health and social services board area during the period 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995.

Health and social services board	*Number of face to face contacts with community psychiatric nurses*
Eastern	79,418
Northern	28,176
Southern	26,436
Western	60,427

Mental Illness

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people with severe mental illness throughout north and west Belfast; [37563]

(2) what is the total number of people with severe mental illness throughout south and east Belfast. [37564]

Mr. Moss: The information is not available in the form requested. During 1994–95 the number of people suffering from mental illness who were in contact with north and west Belfast trust social services staff was 832 and with the south and east Belfast trust social services staff was 1,603—this includes estimated data for hospital contacts.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people with severe mental illness in each of the four health board areas in Northern Ireland. [37565]

Mr. Moss: The information is not available in the form requested. The table provides information on the number of people suffering from mental illness who were in

contact with social services staff in trusts or units of management located in Northern Ireland health and social services board areas during 1994–95—this is provisional data.

Health and social services board	*Number*
Eastern	[1]4,284
Southern	2,282
Northern	[2]1,937
Western	2,128
Total	10,631

[1] Includes estimated data for hospital contacts by South and East Belfast Trust.
[2] Includes 1993–94 data for Homefirst unit of management.

Suicide

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available for the numbers of suicide attempts in each of the four health board areas for each of the last five years. [37567]

Mr. Moss: Information on the number of suicide attempts in Northern Ireland is not available.

TREASURY

VAT

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average amount paid per head in value added tax *(a)* in 1979, *(b)* in 1985 and *(c)* in the latest year for which figures are available. [37911]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The average amounts paid per head in value-added tax for financial years 1979–80, 1985–86 and 1994–95 are as follows:

	1979–80	*1985–86*	*1994–95*
Average amounts	146	341	716

Taxation (Self-certification)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the numbers of workers employed under SC60 arrangements—self-certification—in each of the most recent five years. [38323]

Mr. Jack: There are no current statistics on the numbers of individuals taxed under the SC60 deduction scheme.

Bargaining Pay

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in H.Q. functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38287]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Under the Treasury's own pay delegation, all staff who will not be members of the new senior civil service will be dealt with as a single group. The Treasury's departmental industrial relations agreement provides for discussions between management and the departmental trade union side on matters including pay and conditions.

Kenya

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the next consultative group meeting and the next Paris Club meeting on Kenya. [38021]

Mrs. Angela Knight: No date has yet been set for the next meeting of the consultative group on Kenya.

There is no Paris Club meeting currently planned on Kenya.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of tax revenue lost to the Exchequer as a result of tax avoidance by residents of *(a)* the Channel Islands and *(b)* Brecqhou. [38371]

Mr. Jack: I regret that information on which to base such an estimate is not available.

European Investment Fund

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the number of projects that have been financed through the European investment fund, the value of the loan facilities provided in each case and the date the loan was provided. [38717]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham South, (Mr. Spearing), on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *10*. The dates of the loans set out in the reply to the hon. Member are as follows:

Name	*Date signed*
Panafon, SA	[1] 23 September 1994 and [1]21 November 1994
Groupe Banque Populaire	19 December 1994
Telecom Italia	30 November 1994
SNAM Transmediterraneo	14 December 1994
Aeroporto di Malpensa	12 December 1994
Transgas	9 December 1994

Note:
[1] The Fund's guarantee in favour of Panafon covering an amount below ECU 30 million was signed in September 1994. In November 1994, the Fund's supervisory board approved a further intervention in favour of Panafon bringing the total for that project up to ECU 54.74 million.
Source:
European Investment Fund Annual Report 1994.

Investment Scheme

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the open-ended collective investment scheme, OCIS, will be available. [38492]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The Treasury is currently consulting on draft regulations, under the European Communities Act 1972, to allow the introduction of open-ended investment companies in the United Kingdom. The timetable depends on the outcome of consultations on these regulations, and on draft product regulations to be produced by the Securities and Investments Board. We hope, however, that the regulations will be made during the first half of 1996.

Loans

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total level of loan facilities provided to the United Kingdom since 1993; and what are the corresponding figures for each of the other EU member states. [38718]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The information is as follows:

	European Investment Bank financing within the European Union (mecu)	
Member State	*1993*	*1994*
United Kingdom	1,929.1	2,454.7
Belgium	371.6	615.3
Denmark	875.5	849.7
Germany	2,096.6	2,407.9
Greece	511.1	534.7
Spain	4,005.1	3,011.5
France	2,205.5	2,477.4
Ireland	388.2	291.1
Italy	3,362.0	3,099.5
Luxembourg	—	5.1
Netherlands	379.7	399.5
Portugal	1,488.8	1,109.7
Austria	—	89.5
Finland	—	60.2
Sweden	—	15.3

Source:
European Investment Bank annual reports, 1993 and 1994 (the latest year for which figures are available).

Cut Flowers (VAT)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, columns *782-83*, who has proposed a reduced rate of VAT on cut flowers; what are the arguments for this proposal; what is the proposed rate; what is the current rate; and how much revenue would be gained or lost by moving to a reduced rate. [38394]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* The European Commission has proposed an optional reduced rate for cut flowers in order to resolve a problem arising from cross-border trade.

In 1992 those member states who applied a reduced rate to cut flowers were allowed to continue to do so until the end of 1994. Because some of those member states were reluctant to move to their standard rate at the end of last year, the Commission suggested that an option to apply a reduced rate be made available to all member states.

No specific rate has been proposed, although under existing rates provisions, it could not be less than 5 per cent. Currently most member states, including the United Kingdom, apply their standard rate. The rate applicable in the remaining member states is generally in the range of 5 to 8 per cent. If the rate of VAT in the UK were reduced to 5 per cent., the estimated revenue loss would be approximately £180 million in a full year. However, the Government have consistently made clear that they would not exercise the option to apply a reduced rate even it were made available.

Adoption of the proposal requires the unanimous agreement of member states. Currently they remain divided, particularly because of concerns about cross-border distortions of competition and the revenue cost. The Government favour the application of the standard rate by all member states as the best way of addressing these concerns, and so do not support the proposal.

VAT (Collection)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much VAT has been collected by assessment and penalty for each of the last five years. [38395]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* Separate figures are not available for VAT by assessment and penalty. Net additional VAT liability, including associated penalties and interest, was established by officers as follows:

1990–91: £1,044 million;

1991–92: £1,023 million;

1992–93: £1,039 million;

1993–94: £1,365 million;

1994–95: £2,187 million.

Rebated Gas Oil

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis owners of pleasure craft are eligible for rebated gas oil; what is the cost of this rebate to the Exchequer, and what plans he has to remove this rebate. [38361]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* A rebated rate of excise duty applies to gas oil used "off road". On this basis, rebated gas oil can be used in pleasure craft as well as in most agriculture vehicles and machinery, in vehicles employed in motorway construction, forestry, mining and quarrying, and in British Rail diesel locomotives.

The estimated cost to the Exchequer of the application of the rebate to gas oil used by pleasure craft is between £5 million and £10 million.

Decisions on changes in taxation are matters for the Budget statement on 28 November.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid Budget

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the United Kingdom's aid budget in respect of the various countries in sub-Saharan Africa in each of the last five years. [37627]

Mr. Hanley: The total United Kingdom bilateral gross public expenditure on aid to countries in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990–91 to 1994–95 is set out in the table. In addition, countries also receive assistance from multilateral aid organisations to which the UK contributes.

£ thousand

	[1]*1990–91*	[1]*1991–92*	[1]*1992–93*	[1 2]*1993–94*	[1]*1994–95*
Angola	1,530	2,433	1,825	13,550	8,845
Benin	260	190	4,016	0	9
Botswana	7,442	11,608	7,462	8,412	5,235
Burkino Faso	361	969	345	248	168
Burundi	199	182	205	3,231	1,498
Cameroon	3,478	3,061	3,353	2,769	2,271
Cape Verde Islands	96	113	97	48	11
Central African Republic	80	75	21	5	13
Chad	189	227	291	424	110
Congo	277	353	281	95	1
Comoros	7	1	42	16	21
Djibouti	96	128	55	110	12
Equatorial Guinea	52	0	0	0	3
Eritrea	—	—	1,979	5,824	2,624
Ethiopia	23,799	22,912	17,506	20,177	23,694
Gabon	44	63	9	4	0
Gambia	6,094	5,814	4,919	3,685	2,403
Ghana	29,219	44,659	41,736	26,145	23,347
Guinea	499	957	504	405	279
Guinea-Bissau	39	32	9	51	31
Ivory Coast	10,503	5,813	7,204	1,646	2,065
Kenya	49,957	38,351	37,514	31,231	30,533
Lesotho	5,854	6,454	27,194	6,070	5,124
Liberia	571	722	691	2,252	912
Madagascar	715	699	940	897	813
Malawi	43,526	26,093	27,378	27,009	41,243
Mali	1,346	1,351	1,223	811	921
Mauritania	81	290	154	252	307
Mauritius	5,296	3,055	3,553	1,714	1,486
Mozambique	26,593	18,001	34,177	34,743	25,014
Namibia	1,706	2,366	4,494	3,893	3,572
Niger	376	392	373	468	539
Nigeria	35,238	14,472	15,767	9,751	7,671
Rwanda	389	214	312	1,661	45,280
Sao Tome and Principe	0	0	0	5	3
Senegal	1,159	1,561	1,066	1,010	1,014
Seychelles	1,222	1,555	1,226	2,349	958
Sierra Leone	2,937	2,486	6,483	3,989	8,262
Somalia	1,927	3,025	15,804	5,510	2,083
South Africa	8,093	9,325	11,558	14,432	15,604
St. Helena and Dependencies	11,759	9,161	9,065	9,057	8,148
Sudan	24,613	21,840	9,956	15,519	12,760
Swaziland	5,255	3,499	4,194	8,196	2,574
Tanzania	41,596	32,321	62,299	31,186	30,747
Togo	469	461	311	377	555
Uga2nda	32,211	27,836	34,707	40,470	46,534
Zaire	2,328	1,503	1,371	3,285	1,244
Zambia	49,868	34,444	47,978	47,603	55,934
Zimbabwe	33,627	47,690	44,268	41,239	35,263

[1] Figures include project aid; programme aid; emergency assistance; debt relief; and CDC investments.
[2] 1994–95 figures are provisional.
1. Prior to 1992–93, assistance to Eritrea formed part of programme to Ethiopia.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will undertake to make no reduction in United Kingdom bilateral aid in respect of poverty-relief programmes, including the provision of clean water, health care and education services. [38003]

Mr. Hanley: The overriding goal of the British aid programme is poverty reduction through sustainable development. The Government will maintain an effective bilateral programme focused on the poorest countries, including help in the water, health and education sectors.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the aid budget will be spent bilaterally in 1998–99 in the event of the aid budget being reduced by *(a)* 5 per cent., *(b)* 7.5 per cent., *(c)* 10 per cent., and *(d)* 12.5 per cent. between 1996–97 and 1998–99. [37997]

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to answer this question directly, since there is some scope to modify certain categories of multilateral spending—for example, contributions to new multilateral replenishments or voluntary contributions to UN or commonwealth bodies—particularly in the medium term.

The latest relevant published forecast, in the 1995 departmental report, indicates that bilateral aid in 1997–98 is expected to be 41 per cent. of the aid programme as set in last year's Budget.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the effectiveness of British diplomacy in *(a)* the United Nations, *(b)* the European Union *(c)* the Commonwealth and *(d)* international organisations of other reductions in Britain's bilateral aid programme; and if he will make a statement. [38148]

Mr. Hanley: Britain continues to maintain the world's fifth largest aid programme which befits her status as the fifth largest economy. We make a substantial and highly effective contribution to the multilateral institutions of which we are members.

AIDS

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects are currently being supported by the ODA to combat the spread of HIV-AIDS in developing countries. [37751]

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom currently supports bilaterally some 60 projects in 24 developing countries. Financial commitments amount to £67.4 million through the bilateral aid programme. A proportion of the United Kingdom's contributions to UN organisations, the World bank and the European Commission is also used for HIV-AIDS-related activities. In particular, the United Kingdom has provided £37.3 million to the World Health Organisation global programme on AIDS since its inception in 1987.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial, food and medical aid has been given by Her Majesty's Government to Sri Lanka during the last 12 months. [37647]

Mr. Hanley: The latest figures available show that in financial year 1994–95 total UK bilateral aid to Sri Lanka was £11.48 million. Of that, £1.16 million was financial—capital—aid, £0.52 million was emergency aid, and £0.75 million was provided for relief and rehabilitation programmes, including a small amount for food and medical supplies, which benefited families affected by conflict. The remainder was spent on technical co-operation, aid and trade provision and Commonwealth Development Corporation investments.

Population Control

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *164–65 (a)* if he will set out the reasons why the Overseas Development Administration considered it appropriate for its recent case studies in certain countries on the work of the United Nations population fund and the International Planned Parenthood Federation to be carried out using material and documents provided on the basis that information and findings would be treated in confidence and *(b)* if the information and findings will remain confidential on an indefinite basis. [37613]

Mr. Hanley: These studies are commissioned to help ODA assess how effective these organisations are relative to the aims of the United Kingdom's aid programme. ODA believes that the studies will produce more useful evidence and findings if they are undertaken on the understanding with all those concerned that the reports are not to be made public. ODA does not intend to publish these reports.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Nations Family Planning Association and the United Nations population fund have helped the Chinese Government understand how their population policies are viewed by other countries and how approaches based on voluntary choice should be introduced. [37586]

Mr. Hanley: The United Nations population fund has done this through its international advocacy of non-coercive policies and other standard-setting work in relation to population policy and family planning, as well as through training of Chinese population specialists and its direct exchanges with the Chinese Government.

Least Developed Countries

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who represented Britain at the intergovernmental meeting in September to review progress on the United Nations programme of action on least developed countries; and what pledges of financial support Her Majesty's Government made. [38149]

Mr. Hanley: Our delegation was headed by the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the United Nations and included officials from the diplomatic and aid wings of the FCO. The meeting reported progress in many international fora in tackling the problems of the least developed countries, for example through debt relief initiatives. No new pledges of financial support were made by any donor.

SCOTLAND

Student Loans

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many graduates in Scotland are now paying back student loans; how many graduates in Scotland have had student loan repayments deferred under the earnings rule for each year since the introduction of student loans; and how many students in Scotland have applied for student loans in each year. [36404]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: These are operational matters for the Student Loans Company Ltd.

I have asked the acting chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Wild Cat

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to conduct a similar investigation into the possibility of the existence of a large wild cat in Banffshire, similar to that carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Bodmin; and if he will make a statement. [36972]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My Department maintains contact with Grampian police who, with the advice of veterinary and zoology experts, have examined reported incidents. The evidence found so far involves dogs and foxes only.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources he is prepared to allocate to determine whether there is a threat to livestock in Banffshire and Buchan from a big cat; and if he will make a statement. [36943]

Mr. Forsyth: Any incidents reported to my Department will be investigated appropriately.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total value, at current prices of *(a)* exports out of Scotland and *(b)* imports into Scotland in each year since 1992–93; and if he will give a breakdown of these imports and exports in their respective industrial sectors. [37006]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

Vandalism (Schools)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of vandalism in schools in *(a)* Grampian and *(b)* Gordon district have been reported to the procurator fiscal. [37936]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* Information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the cost of vandalism to schools in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Grampian and *(c)* Gordon district. [37939]

Mr. Robertson *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* Comprehensive information on the cost to education authorities of vandalism in schools is not collected centrally.

Film Industry

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry; conducted by officials of his Department into Government support of the film industry in Scotland; if he will place a copy in the Library, and if he will make a statement. [38424]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has asked Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to consider how Scotland can be best promoted as a film location and to establish what infrastructure is needed for the production of commercial films in Scotland. He expects to receive their report early in the new year and will arrange to make copies available in the Library in due course.

Child Witnesses

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the working group set up in January to investigate the development of an integrated support scheme for child witnesses; and if he will make a statement. [38423]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The child witness support project working group is not expected to produce a final report until the latter part of 1997. The nature of the aim and objectives of the project is such as to demand a lengthy time scale.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives have been taken at *(a)* Everthorpe, *(b)* Parkhurst and *(c)* other prisons to reduce illegal drug use in the past five years; and what initiatives are planned in the next two years. [38641]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the initiatives taken (a) Everthorpe, (b) Parkhurst and (c) other prisons to reduce illegal drug use in the past five years; and what initiatives are planned in the next two years.

Everthorpe, Parkhurst and all Prison Service establishments are required to develop a local drug strategy and an action plan for its implementation by the end of 1995.

A number of initiatives have been implemented at Everthorpe to reduce illegal drug use. The prison has developed and continues to receive community linked counselling services from the Substance Abuse Referral Unit (SARU) at York and the Drug Action Response Team (DART) in Hull. The prison has also developed a voluntary drug testing unit which provides support for prisoners who agree to stay off drugs during their sentence.

Mandatory Drug Testing was introduced at Everthorpe earlier this year. Further security and control measures planned for the future include the introduction of a drug detection dog and the implementation of new searching strategies in line with the Woodcock report. Everthorpe will continue their involvement with SARU and DART and will continue to work with community drug agencies to tackle drug misuse.

Parkhurst has made significant progress in improving the security and control measures designed to reduce the level of drug misuse. Drug sniffer dogs have been trained and employed for use in searching all parts of the prison used by prisoners as well as visitors. Two visitors this year have been charged by police following drug finds on their person.

Similar progress has been achieved in implementing measures to reduce the demand for drugs in Parkhurst. The health care team offers a range of services to prisoners with drug problems. A detoxification programme has been set up for identified prisoners. Recently between twelve and twenty prisoners have been receiving medical treatment for drug addiction. A contract with the community drug agency provides for a drug counsellor to come to Parkhurst on a weekly basis.

A rehabilitation orientated regime is planned for the near future and a dedicated drug unit is also planned for chaotic drug users which will act as a day centre and community clinic for prisoners with drug misuse problems.

On 8 April 1991 all Prison Service establishments were issued with a guidance manual on the management of drug users. The manual focused on helping staff who were involved in responding

to the needs of drug misusers. It included guidance on detoxification, the use of methadone, multi-disciplinary team working, counselling and HIV.

From 1994 reducing the level of drug misuse became one of the Prison Service's strategic priorities. A new strategy was developed with the main aim of reducing the supply of drugs, reducing the demand for drugs and rehabilitating drug misusers and reducing the potential for the damage to health arising from the misuse of drugs. This strategy was issued to all establishments on 26 April 1995.

All prison establishments are reviewing their immediate operational requirements for dealing with drugs in prison. They have begun to set up the multi-disciplinary drugs teams which have to produce a local drugs strategy agreed between the governor and the area manager by the end of the year. In the meantime headquarters support is being given to a number of pilot treatment projects and to the introduction of mandatory drug testing (MDT) throughout the prison system, which is scheduled to be implemented across all establishments by the end of March 1996.

Other measures to reduce and control the supply of drugs include use of CCTV, drug sniffer dogs and enhanced search procedures.

This year the Prison Service is substantially expanding the number and type of drug treatment programmes and services available to prisoners. The schemes include therapeutic communities, dedicated treatment units, detoxification, education, counselling and thoughcare.

In the wider context, officials from the relevant departments have started to tackle the practical implications of securing a smooth transition for those who need it between treatment in prison and treatment in the community. Training is being provided for drugs strategy teams and, at a more specialist level, for health care staff and medical officers. An information package for prisoners and prison staff is being devised.

From 1996 local prison establishment drug strategies will be examined to ensure that they are consistent with the national strategy and will be subject to audit by area managers. The Prison Service will include the reduction of drug misuse as one of its Key Performance Indicators in the 1996–99 Corporate Plan, and will specify a relevant key target in its 1996—97 Business Plan together with an action plan to meet the new target.

Omasese Lumumba

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to establish an independent inquiry into the death in Pentonville prison of Omasese Lumumba. [38175]

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the death of Mr. Omasese Lumumba in Pentonville prison.

There are no plans to establish an independent inquiry into Mr Lumumba's death. an internal Prison Service investigation was conducted immediately. Its conclusion was that procedures had been correctly observed. The available evidence did not support the bringing of disciplinary charges against individual members of staff.

The circumstances of Mr Lumumba's death were separately and independently investigated by the Metropolitan Police on behalf of the Coroner in accordance with normal practice. The police report was referred to the Crown Prosecution Service which concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support criminal charges against any officers. The Crown Prosecution Service reached its decision with the benefit of the transcript of the inquest and all the original case papers. The circumstances of Mr Lumumba's death have already been the subject of thorough, independent and impartial scrutiny and there are no grounds to justify the initiation of a further public inquiry.

Criminal Cases Review Authority

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the newspapers in which the advertisement for the chairman of the Criminal Cases Review Authority was advertised; and if he will make a statement. [38374]

Mr. Kirkhope: Advertisements for the post of chairman of the Criminal Cases Review Authority were placed in *The Sunday Times, The Times and The Belfast Telegraph.*

Prison Boards of Visitors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the boards of visitors' annual reports for 1994–95 that have been received by his Department, the replies which have to date been sent to these reports and the prisons in England and Wales to which these were sent. [38392]

Miss Widdecombe: Boards of visitors are required to submit an annual report to the Home Secretary

"concerning the state of the prison and its administration, including in it any suggestions and advice they consider appropriate".

Boards were asked to submit their reports for 1994 by 31 March 1995.

As on 20 October 1995, annual reports had been received from boards of visitors for Her Majesty's prison establishments as listed:

Acklington
Albany
Aldington
Ashwell
Askham Grange
Aylesbury
Bedford
Belmarsh
Birmingham
Blakenhurst
Blundeston
Brinsford
Bristol
Brixton
Brockhill
Bulingdon
Bulwood Hall
Camp Hill
Canterbury
Cardiff
Castington
Channings Wood
Chelmsford
Coldingley
Cookham Wood
Dartmoor
Deerbolt
Doncaster
Dorchester
Dover
Downview
Drake Hall
Durham
East Sutton Park
Eastwood Park

Elmley
Erlestoke
Everthorpe
Exeter
Featherstone
Feltham
Ford
Frankland
Full Sutton
Garth
Gartree
Glen Parva
Gloucester
Grendon/Spring Hill
Guys Marsh
Haslar
Hatfield
Hindley
Hewell Grange
Highdown
Highpoint
Hollesley Bay
Holloway
Holme House
Hull
Huntercombe
Kingston
Kirkham
Kirklevington
Lancaster Castle
Lancaster Farms
Latchmere House
Leeds
Leciester
Lewes
Leyhill
Lincoln
Lindholme
Littlehey
Long Lartin
Low Newton
Maidstone
Manchester
Moorland
Morton Hall
Mount
New Hall
Northallerton
North Sea Camp
Norwich
Nottingham
Onley
Oxford
Parkhurst
Pentonville
Portland
Preston
Pucklechurch
Ranby
Reading
Risley
Rochester
Rudgate
Send
Shepton Mallet
Shrewsbury
Stafford
Standford Hill
Stocken
Stoke Heath
Styal
Sudbury
Swaleside
Swansea
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Usk
The Verne
Wakefield
Wandsworth
Wayland
Wellingborough
Wetherby
Whatton
Whitemoor
Winchester
Wolds
Woodhill
Wormwood Scrubs
Wymott

Replies to annual reports have been sent to the chairman of all the above boards—to their establishments—except for the following: Frankland, Portland, Pucklechurch and Parkhurst. In the case of the first two, the reply was delayed because Ministers were not satisfied with the information provided and asked for further investigation. Replies are currently being checked and will be sent shortly. In the case of Pucklechurch and Parkhurst, these reports were only received on 6 September and 15 September respectively. Their replies will follow shortly.

Market Testing

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to commence a second phase of market testing of existing prison establishments; and how many establishments are to be market tested; [36194]

(2) how many existing prison establishments will be market tested within the year ending 31 March 1996. [36193]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about market testing within the Prison Service.

Information has already been given in the reply to the Question from Mr Gary Streeter on 24 May (No. 232). Final decisions on timing and the number of establishments to be market tested have not been taken.

Prison Incidents

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by category all reported acts of *(a)* concerted indiscipline, *(b)* fires, *(c)* escapes and attempted escapes from prison, *(d)* escapes and attempted escapes from escort, *(e)* deaths, *(f)* hostage situations, *(g)* wrongful releases and *(h)* miscellaneous or any other incidents at (i) Wolds, (ii) Blakenhurst and (iii) Buckley Hall prisons from 1 September 1994 to 30 June 1995. [36196]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking for a list by category of all reported acts of *(a)* concerted indiscipline, *(b)* fires, *(c)* escapes and attempted escapes from prison, *(d)* escapes and attempted escapes from escort, *(e)* deaths, *(f)* hostage situations, *(g)* wrongful releases and *(h)* miscellaneous or any other incidents at (i) Wolds, (ii) Blakenhurst and (iii) Buckley Hall prisons from 1st September 1994 to 30th June 1995. Both the Wolds and Blakenhurst prisons were operational on 1 September 1994. Buckley Hall prison did not receive its first prisoner until 14 December 1994.

The information is listed in the attached table:

Incident Type	*Wolds*	*Blakenhurst*	*Buckley Hall*
Concerted indiscipline	2	2	2
Fires	2	5	1
Prison escapes	0	0	0
Prison attempted escapes	0	0	0
Escort escapes	0	0	0
Escort attempted escapes	0	0	1
Deaths	1	1	0
Hostage situations	0	0	0
Wrongful release	0	1	0
Miscellaneous	5	15	0
Assaults on staff	12	19	0
Assaults on inmates	16	65	2
Assaults on others	1	0	0
Key lock compromise	0	1	1
Food refusals	10	0	0
Temporary release failures	0	1	7
Self harm	39	29	1
Tool implement loss find	0	3	1
Drug finds	77	122	7
Absconds	0	1	0
Recaptures/surrenders	0	2	5
Total	165	267	28

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* 16-year-olds, *(b)* 15-year-olds and *(c)* 14-year-olds held in adult prisons on remand for any period of time during each of the last five years. [36257]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking, how many 14, 15, and 16 year olds were held in adult prisons on remand during each of the last five years.

The available information is for the establishments receiving untried prisoners and is given in the attached table.

Receptions of 14, 15 and 16-year-old untried prisoners into adult Prison Service establishments in England and Wales 1990 to 1994.

	Age		
Year	*14*	*15*	*16*
1990	0	52	135
1991	2	43	91
1992	1	7	16
1993	0	2	16
1994[1]	0	39	61

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average remand population in England and Wales for each of the last five years; and how many of them were *(a)* aged under 17, *(b)* aged between 17 and under 21 and *(c)* aged over 21 years. [37173]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the average remand population in England and Wales for each of the last five years; and how many of them were (a) aged under 17, (b) aged between 17 and under 21 and (c) aged over 21 years.

The information is not available in the form requested. However, information on the average population of untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners is published in successive volumes of "Prison statistics, England and Wales" (table 1.4 of the 1993 edition, Cm 2581), a copy of which is available from the Library of the House. The population of young remand prisoners by age on 30 June each year is also given in table 3.2. Information for 1994 is given in the attached tables.

Average population of remand prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in 1994[1,2]

	Males	*Females*	*Total*
Untried			
Aged 15–20	2,021	48	2,069
Aged 21 and over	6,675	303	6,978
Convicted unsentenced			
Aged 15–20	898	26	924
Aged 21 and over	2,144	113	2,257

[1] Excludes 122 untried and 7 convicted unsentenced male prisoners held in police cells.
[2] Provisional figures.

Population of young remand prisoners in Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1994[1]

Age	*Untried*	*Convicted unsentenced*
15–16	144	81
17–20	1,974	864
Aged 21 and over	7,098	2,332

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in custody in England and Wales; and how many of those were *(a)* aged under 17, *(b)* aged between 17 and under 21 and *(c)* aged over 21 years at the latest date available. [37172]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many persons were remanded in custody in England and Wales; and how many of those were (a) aged under 17, (b) aged between 17 and under 21 and (c) aged over 21 years at the latest date available.

The latest available information is for 31 August 1995. On that date, there were 11,308 people on remand in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. Of these, 221 were aged under 17 years; 2,606 were aged between 17 and 20 years; and 8,481 were aged over 21 years.

Sri Lankan Nationals

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamil *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held in custody for immigration reasons as at 9 October. [37650]

Mr. Kirkhope: The available information on all Sri Lankan nationals is given in the table; no distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans.

Sri Lankan nationals in detention under Immigration Act powers on 17 October 1995

Number of persons

Category of Person	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Port Cases[1]	7	—	7
Persons subject to enforcement action[2]	16	—	16

[1] Excluding any non-asylum port cases in detention for less than one month.

[2] Illegal entrants and persons subject to deportation action.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum have been made by Sri Lankan Tamils during each of the last 12 months. [37645]

Mr. Kirkhope: The available information is given in the table; no distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans. The total number of asylum applications in the last 12 months to September 1995 from Sri Lanka was 1,830.

Asylum application from Sri Lankan nationals (October 1994–September 1995)

	Number of persons
1994	
October	185
November	170
December	160
1995	
January	190
February	160
March	185
April	130
May	180
June	155
July	150
August	165
September	186
Total	1,830

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankan Tamils were deported from the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1994 and *(c)* to date in 1995. [37651]

Mr. Kirkhope: Information on all Sri Lankan nationals is given in the table; no distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans.

Sri Lankan nationals removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process[1]

	Number of persons
1993	8
1994	4
1995 January to September	6

[1] Including "voluntary" departures after deportation action had been initiated, but excluding illegal entrants removed.

National Lottery Charities Board

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will itemise the costs of running the National Lottery Charities Board since its establishment specifying *(a)* staff costs, *(b)* consultancy fees and *(c)* payments to individual board members. [37921]

Mr. Kirkhope: In the 14 months to September 1995, the National Lottery Charities Board spent £5.26 million on one-off start-up costs and on administration. This represents less than 3 per cent. of the money available to it through the national lottery distribution fund. Of this, approximately £1.4 million was spent on staff costs, £1.25 million on consulting fees and £44,000 on travel and subsistence payments to board members.

Fine Defaulters

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women received custodial sentences for fine defaulting on the grounds of culpable neglect in each year since 1989; [37517]

(2) if he will include in statistics for women serving custodial sentences details of the number of women receiving custodial sentences for fine defaulting. [37519]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Ms Janet Anderson, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions asking, how many women received custodial sentences for fine defaulting on the grounds of culpable neglect in each year

since 1989 and if he will include in statistics for women serving custodial sentences details of the number receiving custodial sentences for fine defaulting.

Prison statistics for sentenced prisoners include fine defaulters. These are published in the annual volume "Prison statistics, England and Wales" (Table 1.1 of the 1993 edition, Cm 2893), copies of which are available from the Library of the House. Provisional information for 1994 shows that 1,420 females were received into a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales for non-payment of a fine.

There are a range of measures available to the courts without the recourse to imprisonment for the enforcement of fines. A defaulter is only committed to custody once these methods have been tried or considered and where the court is satisfied that there has been a wilful refusal or culpable neglect to pay.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of fine defaulters for non-payment of the television licence received in prison between 1991 and 1994 by *(a)* gender and the age groups (i) 18 to 20, (ii) 21 to 25, (iii) 26 to 30, (iv) 31 to 35, (v) 36 to 40, (vi) 41 to 45, (vii) 46 to 50, (viii) 51 to 55, (ix) 56 to 60, (x) 61 to 65 and (xi) over 65, *(b)* gender and ethnic origin and *(c)* gender and sentence length imposed and average sentence length actually served. [37193]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of fine defaulters for non-payment of the TV licence received in prison between 1991 and 1994 by (a) gender and age (b) gender and ethnic origin and (c) gender and sentence length imposed and average sentence length actually served.

Information on the numbern of fine defaulters received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for using a television without a licence, is given by age, gender and ethnic origin in the attached tables. The average time served was 11 days for males and 9 days for females. The average time imposed was 4 days for males and 3 days for females.

Table 1: Receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine imposed for using a television without a licence, 1991–1994

Year and gender

	1991		1992		1993		[1]1994	
Age	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
18–20	5	8	10	6	8	15	4	4
21–25	56	35	80	46	103	78	85	70
26–30	62	32	98	50	115	67	101	60
31–35	40	26	59	15	89	42	113	37
36–40	35	11	39	21	71	31	53	36
41–45	23	13	48	12	60	26	57	14
46–50	12	7	31	7	42	14	30	13
51–55	11	3	21	1	32	2	25	5
56–60	10	1	12	2	20	2	11	2
61–65	2	—	4	—	5	1	8	2
Over 65	2	—	2	—	2	—	—	—
Total	258	136	404	160	547	278	487	243

[1] Provisional figures.

Table 2: receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine imposed for using a television without a licence, by gender and ethnic origin, 1991 [1]

	Ethnic origin					
Year	*White*	*West Indian, Guyanese, African*	*Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi*	*Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin*	*Other, not recorded (including refusals)*	*Total*
1991						
Male	248	4	3	3	—	258
Female	130	1	1	2	2	136

[1] The 1991 figures are based on an ethnic origin coding similar to that used in the EC labour force survey. The 1992 to 1994 figures use a new ethnic classification which is congruent with that used for the census of population.

Table 3: receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine imposed for using a television licence without a licence, by gender and ethnic origin, 1992–1994 [1]

	Ethnic origin				
Year	*White*	*Black African, Caribbean, other*	*South Asian Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani*	*Chinese and other Chinese, Asian other, Other*	*Total*
1992					
Male	386	12	2	4	404
Female	148	8	—	4	160
1993					
Male	519	21	5	2	547
Female	267	8	—	3	278

Table 3: receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine imposed for using a television licence without a licence, by gender and ethnic origin, 1992–1994 [1]

	Ethnic origin				
Year	*White*	*Black African, Caribbean, other*	*South Asian Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani*	*Chinese and other Chinese, Asian other, Other*	*Total*
1994[2]					
Male	462	17	4	4	487
Female	232	10	—	1	243

[1] The 1991 figures are based on an ethnic origin coding similar to that used in the EC labour force survey. The 1992 to 1994 figures use a new ethnic classification which is congruent with that used for the census of population.
[2] Provisional figures.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the rights of individual members of the public to make complaints to any of the appropriate ombudsmen about services or projects funded through the private finance initiative in his Department. [36830]

Mr. Howard: The parliamentary ombudsman can investigate complaints about projects or services funded through the private finance initiative if they are carried out by or on behalf of a Department or public body within his jurisdiction—those bodies which are listed in schedule 2 to the 1967 Act. The schedule covers the Home Office in its entirety.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the contractor has taken to exercise efficiency in the use of energy consuming utilities at Doncaster prison; and what cost savings have been accrued or received to date by his Department as a result of these efficiencies. [37349]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the efficient use of energy at Doncaster prison.

Doncaster prison operates a computerised building management system specifically designed to optimise energy utilisation.

Premier Prison Services Ltd have achieved savings by managing and developing this system in combination with arranging competitively-priced contracts with utility providers and heightening staff awareness of the need to conserve energy.

In line with the partnership agreements between Premier Prison Services Ltd and the Prison Service, the Prison Service receives 80 per cent of such saving. The amount due for this year as a result of these savings has not yet been determined.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what occasions inspectors from *(a)* the local authority's environmental health department and *(b)* the Health and Safety Executive have inspected Doncaster prison; what recommendations were made by the inspectors; which recommendations the contractor has implemented; and which recommendations are yet to be implemented. [37345]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about inspections from the local environmental health officer and the Health and Safety Executive to Doncaster prison.

The local environmental health officer visited the prison on 3 August. His report is still awaited.

The Health and Safety Executive have twice visited to examine the alarm systems available to prison staff on 29 September 1994 and 21 November 1994. They were satisfied with the systems that enable staff to raise the alarm when necessary.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amendments or alterations have been made to the contract between the Home Office and Premier Prisons Ltd. *(a)* at the contractor's request or *(b)* at his Department's request, since the contract was signed on 18 February 1994. [37343]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about amendments or alterations to the contract to manage Doncaster prison.

There have been no amendments or alterations to the contract between the Home Office and Premier Prison Services Ltd. since the contract was signed on 18 February 1994.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify which services are subcontracted by Premier Prison Services Ltd. to other companies; and if he will name the companies concerned. [37351]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the sub-contracted services at Doncaster prison.

Doncaster Prison Services Ltd do not sub-contract any operating functions involving security, the provision of prisoner programmes, health care, food services, works services or laundry.

There are several specialist contracts in place to deal with the maintenance of computer equipment, electronic locking systems, close-circuit television linked to video recording systems and specialist plant and equipment.

In addition, specialist medical personnel support Doncaster prison on a contractual basis when required.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the conditions of contract not met in respect of Doncaster prison and for which six default notices were served on Premier Prison Services Ltd. [37347]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the default notices served on Premier Prison Services Ltd in respect of their contract for the management of Doncaster prison.

To date there have been seven default notices served on Premier Prison Services Ltd since Doncaster prison opened in June 1994. The Prison Service considered that there was a default in relation to the following contractual obligations:

On 7 September 1994 in relation to Schedule 2.3.15c : for a failure to deal satisfactorily with litter and graffiti.

On 7 September 1994 in relation to Schedule 2.1.6: This referred to an error in the prison roll.

On 15 September 1994 in relation to Schedule 2.1.2a: On Sunday 11 September a category A prisoner was not escorted within the prison in accordance with Prison Service requirements.

On 19 September 1994 and 15 November 1994 in relation to Schedule 1.5.2: On three occasions in September and November individual prisoners were temporarily located in the segregation unit special cell without authorisation by the controller.

On 24 January 1995 in relation to Schedule 2.13.12: An Induction Board had not been introduced by the date required under the contract and there were no adequate substitute procedures in place.

On 28 July 1995 in relation to Schedule 2.1.2a: On 25 July 1995 a category A prisoner had been unlocked without the necessary supervision required by the Prison Service

All faults were corrected within the time specified in the default notices.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the following outcome of inquiries into a disturbance at HM prison, Doncaster on 29 November 1994. [37342]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the outcome of inquiries into a disturbance at Doncaster prison on 29 November 1994.

A full investigation was carried out by Linda Leivers into the incident. The investigation concluded that there was a clash between young offenders from different areas of Yorkshire, but that there were no warnings or indications to staff before the incident that trouble was imminent. The incident was quickly brought under control. Staff acted properly throughout the incident. The perpetrators were quickly identified and charged under Prison Rules.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the achievements under all key performance indicators applied to Doncaster prison for the first year of operation. [37350]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the achievements under all key Performance Indicators applied to Doncaster prison for the first year of operation.

The Key Performance Indicators set out in the attached table were all met.

Key performance indicators for Doncaster prison in first year of operation

	Target Level	*Actual*
Escapes		
Prison	2	1
Escort	8	0
Time out of cell	12 hours	Exceeded
Positive Regimes		
Available regime activity	12 hours	Yes
Education		
Adults	6 hours	Yes
Yos	15 hours	Yes
Visits	Statutory	Exceeded
Grievances	90 per cent. within 7 days	Yes
Assaults		
Staff	77	129
Prisoners	148	92
Total for Default	225	221

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs have been incurred by *(a)* the contractor and *(b)* his Department as a result of damage to the building, fixtures and fittings at Doncaster prison as a result of disturbances and other incidents. [37346]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the costs incurred by the contractor and the Home Office as a result of damage to the building, fixtures and fittings at Doncaster prison as a result of disturbances and other incidents.

Since the prison opened on 20 June 1994, total costs have amounted to £85,925. The costs have been met by the contractor. The Prison Service has not incurred any costs.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what dates security audits have been carried out by his Department at Doncaster prison; and what were their findings. [37344]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about security audits at Doncaster prison.

The Prison Service's standards audit unit carried out a security audit of Doncaster prison between 13–22 March this year.

The content of the audit report was not disclosed because of the security detail it contains. It would not be in the interests of either the public or the Prison Service for such information to be in the public domain.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what dates additional prisoner places above the certified normal accommodation have been required at Doncaster prison; what was the number of additional places required on these occasions; and if these requirements have led to cost increases over and above the initially agreed contract price. [37348]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the dates on which the certified normal accommodation has been exceeded at Doncaster; the number of additional places required; and any cost increases over and above the contract price.

The certified normal accommodation of 771 (CNA) has been exceeded on 47 occasions up to and including 21 September 1995. The dates and figures are given in the attached table.

There have been no additional costs to the Prison Service as a result of these increased figures.

Dates and figures for exceeded certified normal accommodation at Doncaster prison

	Exceeded accommodation
1994	
6 September	778
7 September	774
10 October	774
20 October	775
29 October	774
9 November	773
21 November	773
28 November	772
3 December	776
4 December	776
5 December	780
6 December	774
7 December	775
1995	
16 January	772
17 January	774
26 January	773
4 February	773
20 February	775
27 February	780
2 March	774
8 March	772
9 March	779

Dates and figures for exceeded certified normal accommodation at Doncaster prison

	Exceeded accommodation
13 March	774
27 March	772
28 March	772
29 March	774
30 March	776
4 April	780
24 April	782
4 May	774
8 May	778
9 May	779
24 May	778
25 May	773
5 June	786
6 June	780
27 July	776
31 July	779
14 August	777
15 August	774
16 August	778
17 August	777
21 August	773
22 August	776
19 September	774
20 September	774
21 September	774

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles are currently being detained under the provisions of section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act of 1993 at the latest date for which figures are available. [37189]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 23 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many juveniles are currently being detained under the provisions of section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act of 1993 at the latest date for which figures are available.

The total number of children and young persons aged under 18, detained under section 53 on 17 October 1995 was 306. Of these, 201 were held in young offender institutions run by the Prison Service and 105 in local authority community homes or in a Youth Treatment Centre run by the Department of Health.

Identity Cards

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many responses were received by 30 September to the consultation paper on identity cards, Cm. 2879; and if he will arrange for these to be placed in the Library along with a summary of the responses to the various points listed in paragraph 8.6 upon which views were sought. [37082]

Mr. Kirkhope: We have received some 3,000 responses to the Green Paper on identity cards. I will not be publishing individual replies but a summary of the responses will be made available in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lockerbie

37. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will now set up a Select Committee on Lockerbie. [36495]

Mr. Newton: There are no plans to do so.

Back-Bench Debates

41. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to extend the opportunities available for Back-Bench debates. [36499]

Mr. Newton: The current arrangements under which the House sits on Wednesday mornings for Back-Bench debates have proved popular and successful. Subject to the outcome of current consultation, I will shortly invite the House to make these arrangements permanent.

Staff Support

42. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has on improving staff support for hon. Members. [36500]

Mr. Newton: It is for each hon. Member to decide on the appropriate level of staff support based on his or her individual needs and circumstances.

The office costs allowance was significantly increased in real terms with effect from 1 April 1986, following recommendations by the Senior Salaries Review Body, and from 1994–95 the enhanced figure is now uprated automatically each year in line with inflation.

Divisions

43. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent representations he has received regarding the requirement on hon. Members to wear a hat when raising a point of order during a Division. [36501]

Mr. Newton: None.

Parliament Street Building

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what is the cost per individual workspace of the new phase II Parliament street building. [37878]

Mr. Channon: Phase II of the new parliamentary building is not due to open until summer 1999. The precise number and allocation of workspaces has not yet been decided and some accommodation will be allocated for conference rooms, catering facilities and other services for Members. It is thus not possible accurately to calculate the cost per individual workstation.

PDVN Network

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee what proposals he has to arrange training for hon. Members in the use of the PDVN network of *(a)* e-mail, *(b)* the Internet and *(c)* internal communications. [37712]

Mr. Waller: The staff of the information systems office provide training courses in all aspects of the parliamentary data and video network's use. Training courses have recently been revised to cover the new Internet electronic mail and world wide web services and continue to cover the traditional service, including such internal communications facilities as electronic mail, the bulletin board and the diary-scheduler.

Radio and Television Costs

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will estimate the cost of adding BBC Radio 1, 5 live, Classic FM, and Sky News and Sport to the Palace television and radio choices. [38759]

Mr. Waller: The estimated cost is £31,400 including VAT, plus satellite programme charges. The Committee plans shortly to review the use of the audio and video channels and make recommendations on changes that might be made. I shall ask the information systems officer to write to the hon. Member explaining the technical details which underly the estimated cost.

Internet

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee what proposals he had to put the proceedings of the House on to the Internet free of charge to all United Kingdom electors. [37714]

Mr. Waller: The question of the electronic publication of House documents including the possible release of *Hansard* on to the Internet is currently being considered by a group of House officials under the chairmanship of the Editor of the *Official Report*. The group expects to be in a position to make recommendations by early December.

Procedural Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Lord President of the Council what further plans he has to reform the procedure of the House; and if he will make a statement. [36497]

Mr. Newton: Subject to the satisfactory outcome of current consultations, I hope shortly to invite the House to approve a series of motions to incorporate the current Jopling experiment with revised hours of sittings into the Standing Orders of the House. These proposals represent significant reforms in our procedures which I believe enjoy the support of all sections of the House.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list all child care facilities available to staff and Members in the House. [36488]

Mr. Beith: With effect from 1 April, a child care voucher scheme for children up to the age of five years has been available to staff employed by the Commission. Under the scheme, staff receive vouchers to the value of £6 per day worked per family towards child care provision of their choosing.

The House also participates in the Westminster holiday play scheme, which is available to the children of hon. Members, their staff and staff employed by the Commission. This covers children aged between five and 12 years during school holidays.

Millbank

Mr. Morgan: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, how much has been spent in the last financial year on energy-efficient lighting at 7 Millbank. [36491]

Mr. Beith: Other than day-to-day maintenance, no work was carried out in the last financial year to modify the energy-efficient lighting at 7 Millbank.

Staff Employment Conditions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list the matters about which staff of the House of Commons are precluded by employment conditions from approaching their Member of Parliament. [37401]

Mr. Beith: Conditions of service of staff of the House are set out in the staff handbook of which each member of staff receives a copy. Paragraph 169 states:

"staff of the House of Commons should not attempt to bring political influence or influence of bodies outside the House of Commons to support their own personal claims as members of staff. This is to ensure that individual staff employed by the House of Commons are not seen to gain for themselves special concessions which are not available to others. This does not override any statutory rights of appeal, such as those conferred by the Race Relations Acts or Employment Protection Acts; nor does it restrict the right of a member of staff to approach the appropriate Member of Parliament on other matters."

Disabled People (Access)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will make a statement on progress in relation to access to the House by disabled persons. [36490]

Mr. Ray Powell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by me to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *243-46*, which describes in detail the conclusions of the review by the Accommodation and Works Committee into access for disabled people. Most of the recommended improvements are now in hand and altogether some 50 separate projects, small and large, will be implemented.

A copy of a note dated 14 June 1995 by the Director of Works detailing the improved facilities has been placed in the Library. The main achievements are as follows: access is now available for people in wheelchairs from New Palace Yard to the Strangers Gallery, the Terrace, the Principal Floor, the Main Committee Corridor, the Upper Committee Corridor and the Centre Curtain Corridor private dining rooms. The new entrance at Black Rod's Garden enables people in wheelchairs to go directly to the start of the line of route. In addition, adaptations have now been completed on lift Nos. 1 and 15 in order to take people in wheelchairs to the Strangers Gallery and to the four main floors on the river front. There is a further programme to adapt 24 other lifts in the Palace for ambulant disabled people.

New Parliamentary Building

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what steps he is taking to ensure the maximum level of British content in the new parliamentary building. [37034]

Mr. Ray Powell: All large contracts are subject to competitive tender. In putting together the tender list for each of the packages, an extensive search is carried out to ensure that British firms are invited.

Prayers

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he next plans to meet the Speaker and Speaker's Chaplain to discuss prayers in the House of Commons Chamber; and if he will make a statement. [36498]

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Departmental Select Committees

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to improve the opportunities for the House to debate the reports of departmental Select Committees. [36493]

Mr. Newton: Subject to the outcome of current consultations, I hope to respond positively to the Procedure Committee's recommendation that a number of Wednesday mornings each session should be devoted to Select Committee reports chosen by the Liaison Committee.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Noise

2. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce traffic noise in urban areas; and if he will make a statement. [36459]

Mr. Watts: Further reductions in noise limits will be introduced for all new vehicles entering into service from 1 October 1996. Levels of noise from individual vehicles have already been dramatically reduced in the last 10 years so that 10 of today's heaviest lorries make no more noise than a single lorry in the early 1980s.

Road Construction

18. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on motorway and major trunk road construction in each of the past three years, at constant prices. [36475]

Mr. Watts: Expenditure incurred on motorway and major trunk road construction for the years 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95, using the 1995–96 road construction price index of 1995, was £1,082.70 million, £1,196.86 million and £1,148.52 million respectively.

Lockerbie

19. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which aspects of the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie his Department is currently involved. [36476]

Sir George Young: My Department's principal current involvement in respect of the Lockerbie disaster is in continuing to improve the United Kingdom national aviation security programme, taking particular account of the requirements and recommendations made by the International Civil Aviation Organisation immediately after the disaster and since.

Railway Privatisation

20. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about railway privatisation. [36477]

Mr. Watts: The programme has irresistible momentum. Over 40 per cent. by revenue of passenger rail services are out to tender and the first three franchises—Great Western, LTS Rail and South West Trains—are due to be awarded at the end of the year. Railtrack will be floated in spring 1996. Businesses with a combined turnover of some £270 million have already been sold. Further, businesses with a combined turnover of nearly £3 billion are already on the market.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost to date of rail privatisation. [37914]

Mr. Watts: Costs incurred to date by the Department, the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising and the Office of the Rail Regulator are as follows. They include running costs and consultancy costs.

£ million

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*[1]1995–96*
DOT	1.0	6.7	[2]13.5	14.2	8.8
OPRAF	—	—	2.4	16.6	15.4
ORR	—	—	1.4	9.0	4.0
Total	1.0	6.7	17.3	39.8	28.2

[1] Estimated costs to 30 September 1995.
[2] Includes £1.5 million contribution by DOT to the costs of setting up OPRAF and ORR prior to formal appointments of the Franchising Director and Railway Regulator.

In addition, British Rail and Railtrack have incurred costs linked to privatisation. These are shown below:

£ million

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
BR/Railtrack	—	—	92.2	131.0	57.0

[1] Estimated costs to 30 September 1995.

Road and Rail Transport, Severnside

21. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit Severnside to discuss the future of road and rail transport in the area. [36478]

Sir George Young: I hope to visit the area later this year to inspect progress on the second Severn crossing. My Department is supporting a number of measures to develop the road and rail network in the area.

Network South

22. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had regarding British Rail's NetworkSouth. [36479]

Mr. Watts: Since the beginning of July, my Department has received about 50 representations regarding Network SouthCentral. Many were related to the draft passenger service requirement.

Holyhead-Chester-Crewe Railway Line

24. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the railway authorities concerning the need to upgrade the Holyhead-Chester-Crewe railway line; and if he will make a statement. [36481]

Mr. Watts: Railtrack continues to keep us in touch with progress on the Holyhead-Chester-Crewe upgrade. I understand that Railtrack is currently discussing upgrade options with interested parties.

Cardiff-Weston Railway Line

25. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of the evaluation of the Cardiff-Weston line for a second Severn road crossing carried out prior to the closure of the Aust-Portskewett line. [36482]

Mr. Watts: No such evaluation has ever been carried out.

M65

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the additional traffic expected on the M65 once the link with the M6 is completed. [36483]

Mr. Watts: It is anticipated that traffic on the M65 will rise by just over 10 per cent.—roughly 4,500 vehicles per day—when the road is complete.

A259

27. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in upgrading the A259 in East Sussex and Kent. [36484]

Mr. Watts: The A259 Brookland diversion scheme in Kent was completed at a cost of £2 million and opened to traffic on 9 October. Preparation work is continuing on other schemes to improve the A259.

Bournemouth Station

28. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the restoration of Bournemouth station. [36485]

Mr. Watts: The Government and Railtrack are committed to the provision of a quality rail infrastructure. As part of this commitment, Railtrack is carrying out refurbishment work on Bournemouth station, a listed building, which involves restoring and cleaning the external brickwork and masonry of the station wall facing the town centre. This work began on 14 September.

Passenger Transport Services

29. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in his plans for franchising passenger transport services. [36487]

Mr. Watts: Passenger service requirements for 55 per cent. of services, in terms of passenger revenue, have been issued for consultation. Many have completed the process and been published in their final form. Tenders have been invited for seven franchises, covering 41 per cent. of all services, in terms of passenger revenue. Invitations to pre-qualify to bid for Chiltern Railways and South Eastern were issued on 3 October. The franchising director aims to award the first three franchises, for Great Western, LTS Rail and South West Trains, in December.

Buses, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of average traffic speed of buses in central London. [36463]

Sir George Young: The Government do not monitor the speeds of buses. London Transport data suggest that in 1994 the average speed of buses in central London was around 8 mph in peak periods and 9 mph in the daytime off-peak.

Crossrail

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the hybrid Bill procedure to secure parliamentary approval for the crossrail project. [35469]

Mr. Norris: No. The Transport and Works Act 1992 is a more appropriate vehicle for this purpose.

Vehicle Registration

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present number of vehicles registered in the United Kingdom; and what is the current forecast for those numbers in 2000, 2010 and 2020. [36480]

Mr. Norris: There were 25.8 million vehicles in 1994. The Department does not make forecasts for all types of vehicles.

Nuclear and Toxic Wastes (Sea Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in the current year on the environmental hazards posed by the sea transport of nuclear and toxic wastes. [36750]

Mr. Norris: In February of this year, a representation was received from Friends of the Earth, Guernsey expressing concern about the transport of nuclear waste from France to Japan. I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 6 March, *Official Report*, column *58*.

A similar representation has since been received from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), concerning the British registered ship Pacific Pintail and its passage around Cape Horn earlier this year while carrying vitrified residue from France to Japan.

Electric Cars

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many electric cars are estimated to be in use in the London area; what range of speeds the average such car is estimated to have; and if he will make a statement. [36845]

Mr. Norris: There are 1,432 electric vehicles currently licensed in Greater London. The range and speed of these vehicles is not known but new commercially available electric cars currently available in western Europe are estimated to have an average range of 80 km—49 miles—and an average maximum speed of 86 kph—53 mph.

The Government are considering the role that electricity and other alternative fuels and vehicle technologies might play in minimising pollutant emissions from road vehicles. To this end, the development of electric vehicles has been followed with interest; but despite recent technological advances, their price, range of operation and performance still compare less favourably with that of petrol and diesel vehicles, particularly for passenger cars.

However, electric vehicles do seem to be more suitable for centralised low mileage delivery fleets like those operated by local authorities and bus companies. Such vehicles could offer air quality benefits while avoiding the limitations of electric operation and have been included in the Department's £1.2 million trial of alternative fuels.

Illegal Vessel Discharges

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many prosecutions have been brought, in respect of illegal discharges of oil or other pollutants by vessels in Scottish waters in each year since 1990; [37239]

(2) in respect of how many cases report have been made to appropriate shipping companies regarding allegations of illegal discharge of oil or other pollutants, in circumstances where there was insufficient evidence for court action; and if he will make a statement; [37240]

(3) how many prosecutions have been brought, in each year since 1990, in respect of illegal discharges of oil or other pollutants by vessels in Scottish waters. [37242]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. James Wallace, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as the questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

PQ 5/95/96

Since 1972 17 reports have been made to shipping companies regarding alleged pollution incidents involving their vessels. In all these cases, on the advice of the Treasury Solicitor, there was insufficient evidence to support court action.

PQ 6/95/96 and PQ 30/95/96

There have been 14 prosecutions brought in respect of illegal discharges by vessels in Scottish waters since 1990. There was 1 in 1990, 3 in 1991, 1 in 1992, 4 in 1993 and 5 in 1994.

Toxic Chemicals (Transport)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of the spillage of toxic chemicals on a cross-channel ferry to Ramsgate in the second week of September, and its subsequent journey on the motorway network. [37373]

Mr. Norris: This incident concerned the spillage of approximately half a litre of benzyl chloride from a road tanker while leaving the vessel Sally Eurolink at Ramsgate. The incident was satisfactorily dealt with by

the crew, and the lorry continued its journey. The incident did not demonstrate any deficiencies in the current procedure under the emergency schedule in the international maritime dangerous goods code.

Road Tolls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to introduce the tolling of vehicles for the use of *(a)* motorways, *(b)* estuarial crossings and *(c)* other roads. [38639]

Mr. Watts: None.

Non-rebateable Fuel Duty (London Buses)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 16 October, *Official Report*, column *73*, concerning the additional sums paid by London bus companies in respect of non-rebateable fuel duty to be paid in 1995–96, if he will estimate the total sum so paid consequent on all stage carriage bus services in London. [38398]

Mr. Norris: Information on fuel duty is not collected by geographical area.

Reverse Warning Aids

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to make the fitting of reverse warning aids mandatory. [38409]

Mr. Norris: I have undertaken to review the case for the compulsory fitting of reversing alarms when considering other amendments to the construction and use regulations on vehicle noise, which are currently being finalised. I intend to canvass the views of interested organisations on this matter as part of the public consultation on those amendments.

Gas-powered Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to encourage the use of natural gas-powered public service vehicles; and if he will make a statement. [38038]

Mr. Norris: The Government are currently considering the role which natural gas and other fuels may play in public service and other vehicles. To that end, they are continuing to sponsor studies of alternative fuels, including the £1.2 million collaborative field trials. Natural gas-powered buses are included. Results should be available in late 1996.

Bull Bars

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to discourage the use of bull bars; and when he plans to introduce a total ban. [38163]

Mr. Norris: The Transport Research Laboratory is currently analysing police reports of accidents involving bull bars which occurred in 1994. The results will not be available until towards the end of the year and we will then decide what, if any, legislation is needed.

Meanwhile, officials of the Department of Transport are discussing the feasibility of prohibiting bull bars with the European Commission.

Motorway Service Areas

Sir Michael Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has *(a)* evaluated and *(b)* commissioned as to the extent to which motorway service areas contribute to pollution of the environment resulting from (i) noise, (ii) litter, (iii) illumination of the night sky and (iv) atmospheric degradation from fuel emissions and to the loss of amenity caused by their development on green belt land; and if he will make a statement. [38352]

Mr. Watts: None. Since deregulation of the provision of motorway service areas in 1992, it is for private developers to provide an environmental statement for consideration by the local planning authority together with any application for planning permission for a proposed motorway service area.

Selby Bypass

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the proposed cost and length of the Selby bypass. [37880]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. William O'Brien, dated 23 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what is the proposed cost and length of the Selby Bypass.

The estimated cost of the proposed A63 Selby Bypass is £21 million; its length is 6 miles.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the timetable for the construction of the Selby bypass. [37881]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. William O'Brien, dated 23 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the time-table for the construction of the Selby Bypass.

A public inquiry into the Compulsory Purchase Order for the proposed A63 Selby Bypass was held in June of this year. In common with all other schemes in the National Roads Programme, the future timing of the Selby Bypass, particularly the start of works date, will depend on the availability of funds.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work on the channel tunnel rail link to commence. [37970]

Mr. Watts: The start of the main construction works will follow the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill gaining Royal Assent and the promoter completing sufficient design and other work to achieve the necessary raising of finance.

Rail Network (Speed Restrictions)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of rail track are currently

subject to speed restrictions on each major line throughout the rail network. [37568]

Mr. Watts: The current number of miles subject to speed restrictions on each of the major lines are:

Major Lines	*Miles*
West Coast main line	2
Midland main line	1
East Coast main line	1
Great Western	12

London Underground (Crime)

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* violent crimes and *(b)* sexual assaults took place on (i) men and (ii) women and (iii) in total in (1) 1993 and (2) 1994 at major railway stations and on London Underground. [37525]

Mr. Watts: The table shows the number of recorded offences for violent crime, including robbery, and sexual offences committed against males and females at all railway and London Underground stations in 1993 and 1994. For 1993, separate figures for males and females are not available. Figures for "major railway stations" might be available if the hon. Member would list them.

	Against males	*Against females*	*Total*
1993			
Violent crimes (including robbery)	—	—	3,878
Sexual assault	—	—	723
1994			
Violent crimes (including robbery)	3,028	642	3,670
Sexual assault	93	472	565

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Servants (Party Political Activity)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the rules relating to *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers participating in party political activity. [37999]

Mr. Horam: The rules on civil servants' political activities are set out in chapter 4 of the personnel management part of the civil service management code, a copy of which is in the Library.

Special advisers are bound generally by the rules applicable to civil servants, with specific exemptions. They may, with the approval of their Minister, attend party functions, maintain contact with party members and take part in policy reviews conducted by their party. They may accompany, act for, or speak for their Minister in situations where the Minister can be seen to be acting in his or her capacity as a member of the Government. In other circumstances, including those where their Minister is taking part in party political activities, it may be appropriate for a special adviser to accompany the Minster, to provide liaison with their Department, and advise on any departmental business that may arise.

Special advisers may assist with other internal party political matters, such as a leadership campaign, if they do so while on leave, or at times which do not interfere with their normal duties—for example out of office hours. In addition, and provided that they have the approval of their Ministers, special advisers are allowed to take part in all forms of local political activity, apart from local activities in support of national political activities.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which regulatory proposals have been abandoned because of their failure to meet the compliance cost assessment. [37755]

Mr. Freeman: The purpose of compliance cost assessments is to ensure that regulatory proposals are introduced only where they are justified and that costs to business arising from such proposals are taken into account as the policy proposal develops so that the resulting regulation imposes the least cost burden necessary. This enables different options to be considered at the policy-making stage with a choice of abandoning the proposal or amending it to reduce costs to the minimum. This is part of the Government's approach to "good regulation", making sure we get regulation right first time.

An example of a regulatory proposal that has been abandoned because of excessive cost is an EC directive which would have required tactile danger warning symbols to be placed on certain liquid petroleum gas containers. The Commission agreed to revise the directive in the light of estimated compliance costs to United Kingdom business of £289 million per annum.

Deregulation

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many new studies have been initiated in response to the deregulation task force report; what is the name of these studies and their estimated cost; and when they are expected to report their findings. [37759]

Mr. Freeman: The Government accepted the task force's suggestion for a feasibility study into the practicalities of setting up a single information point to provide start-up businesses with details of all relevant licensing and regulatory requirements. An initial study—looking at the regulatory requirements on vehicle component manufacturers, corner shops, small hoteliers and builders—started in August and is due to be completed by the end of the year. It will cost about £160,000.

The Government also agreed to undertake an independent study into how the total burden of Government surveys might be reduced by up to 25 per cent., and to initiate a study to see how the burden of administrative forms might be reduced. Terms of

reference for these studies, including estimated costs and completion dates, have yet to be finalised.

In addition to these studies, all Government Departments have been asked to review the need for existing business licences and to identify suitable areas for merging or aligning different enforcement regimes.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many deregulation units have been set up in different Whitehall Departments. [37757]

Mr. Freeman: Each regulatory department has its own deregulation unit consisting typically of two or three staff whose work on deregulation is usually only part of their duties. There are 20 such units in total.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many people work for the deregulation unit; and how many are needed to service the deregulation task force. [37772]

Mr. Freeman: The current staff total of the central deregulation unit is 41.6 staff years, including three staff who provide secretariat support to the deregulation task force.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the 250 business licences which are to be reviewed as part of the Government's new deregulation initiative, and the date each licence was originally introduced. [37758]

Mr. Freeman: My Department is currently compiling a full list of the licences which apply to business, which will be placed in the House of Commons Library, once complete.

The review is intended to examine all licences which apply to business, regardless of when they were introduced and by whom, with a view to abolition or, if there are strong arguments for retaining the licence, with a view to reducing the burden on industry. This reduced burden could be attained, for example, by simplifying the structure of the licence, continuous licensing, merging of different licences, offering greater scope for exemptions or narrowing the grounds for refusal.

WALES

Short-time Working

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates his Department has made of the number of companies currently on short-time working; and how many employees are affected by such short-time working. [37512]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information for Wales is published in table 1.13 of the *Employment Gazette*, September 1995, which indicates that an estimated 300 operatives in manufacturing in Wales were affected by short-time working in June 1995. Information on the number of companies affected is not available.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in employment *(a)* male full-time, *(b)* male part-time, *(c)* female full-time and *(d)* female part-time in Mid Glamorgan and Wales; and what were the figures in (i) 1965, (ii) 1971 and (iii) 1979. [37515]

Mr. Jones: The latest available information, which is for 1993, is published in table 4 on page 375 of the *Employment Gazette*, October 1995, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Data for 1971 and 1978 are available from the NOMIS database which can be accessed by the staff of the Library. Comparable information for 1965 and 1979 is not available.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has of the number of people under the new training for work programme who are working towards an NVQ in *(a)* Merthyr, *(b)* Rhymney, *(c)* Mid Glamorgan and *(d)* Wales. [37548]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not readily available. Once it is available I will write to the hon. Member and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Ysbyty Gwynedd

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total cost of the refurbishment of the foyer of Ysbyty Gwynedd and the consequent relocation of the WRVS shop and cafe. [37711]

Mr. Richards: This was not a scheme funded from the all-Wales capital programme and is therefore a matter for the Gwynedd hospitals NHS trust.

Public Appointments

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many advisory non-departmental public bodies there are in Wales; and what is their total membership. [38022]

Mr. Hague: Details of advisory non-departmental public bodies in Wales are set out in "Public Bodies" by HMSO. The latest edition shows that at September 1994 there were 24 such bodies with a total of 274 members.

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many executive non-departmental public bodies there are in Wales; and how many members are appointed by him in all such bodies. [38024]

Mr. Hague: There are 24 executive non-departmental public bodies in Wales to which I, or my predecessors, have appointed 184 members. Details are set out in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Farmers' Wives

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will *(a)* commission or *(b)* sponsor a study into the social and economic role played by farmers' wives in Wales. [37706]

Mr. Hague: I have no plans to do so. The Rural White Paper for Wales will address a whole range of issues which affect life in the Welsh countryside.

Marriage Counselling Services

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the marriage counselling services in Dyfed and Powys, the amount provided from public funds in support of such services and the waiting time for appointments with them. [37707]

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not held centrally.

Hare Population (Wales)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if estimates are available in respect of the hare population in Wales *(a)* as a whole and *(b)* on a local basis for the past five years; and if he will make a statement. [37708]

Mr. Hague: The most recent estimate indicates a population of approximately 50,000 brown hares in Wales in the early 1990s. No estimates are available on a more local basis. Further information can be found in "A Review of British Mammals: population estimates and conservation status of British mammals other than cetaceans" published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in 1995.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount he calculates was included in the rate support grant for each county in Wales to support under five education in the settlements for each of the last five years. [38337]

Mr. Richards: Welsh local authority standard spending assessments and revenue support grant entitlements are not hypothecated to specific services.

Planning Applications

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the planning applications which his Department has called in, in each of the last five years and so far this year indicating in each case the reasons for doing so. [38339]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows. Decisions related to applications for listed building consent are not included. All the applications were called in because it was considered that they raised matters of more than local importance.

APPLICATIONS CALLED IN 1990–95 (1 JANUARY 1990 TO 20 OCTOBER 1995)

1990

Proposed residential development and golf course, Tymawr and Bailea Farms, Gilwern, Gwent.
Proposed retail development, Rhuddlan Road, Rhyl, Clwyd.
Proposed opencast coal mining, Pwll Du, Blaenavon, Gwent.
Proposed river protection work Morfordian, Llanidloes, Powys.
Proposed highway diversion and upgrading B4248 between Brynmawr and Blaenavon, Gwent.
Proposed anemometer masts, Mynydd Cemaes, Cemaes, Powys.

1991

Proposed landfill site, Pen-y-Bont, Chirk, Wrexham, Clwyd.
Proposed mixed development at Caerleon, Newport, Gwent.
Proposed mixed development at Oystermouth Bus Station, Mumbles, Swansea, West Glamorgan.
Proposed coal storage and screening plant, land west of Griffin Valley, Pwll Du, Gwent.
Proposed extension, Masonic Hall, Tower Hill, Denbigh, Clwyd.
Proposed refuse disposal site at Blaen Pig Void, Pwll Du, Gwent.
Proposed quarrying development at Cilyrychen Quarry and Glanwenlais Quarry, Llandybie, Ammanford, Dyfed.
Proposed oil and gas terminal at Point of Ayr, Talacre, Clwyd.
Proposed residential development at Garthmyl Hall, Garthmyl, Welshpool, Powys.

1992

Proposed workshop and car track on land south of Newton Road, Wentloog, Cardiff.
Proposed mixed development at Oystermouth Bus Station Site, Oystermouth Square and the quarry site, Mumbles Road, Mumbles, Swansea, West Glamorgan.
Proposed windfarm development on land at Marcheini, Rhayader, Powys.
Proposed landfill proposal at Aberthaw Quarry, Aberthaw, South Glamorgan.
Proposed golf course, access road and parking, Croes Bleddyn Farm, Itton, Chepstow, Gwent (Departure Application).
Proposed golf course Porthcasseg Farm, St. Arvans, Chepstow, Gwent (Departure Application).
Proposed industrial development, Shotwick, Deeside, Clwyd.

1993

Proposed residential development at Rhydyware, Montgomery, Powys.
Proposed residential development at Maespwll, Llanwnen Road, Lampeter, Dyfed.
Proposed resiential development at Pant, Nantgaredig, Dinefwr, Dyfed.

1994

Propsed golf course, Dynevor Home Farm, Llandeilo, Dyfed.
Proposed horse schooling and breaking centre Leeswood Hall, Mold, Clwyd.
Proposed touring caravan site, Lakeside, Llangorse, Brecon, Powys (Departure Application).
Proposed leisure development, Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan.
Proposed residential development Pwllcoch Uchaf, Rhosybol, Ynys Mon (Departure Application).
Proposed port development, Mostyn Docks, Deeside, Clwyd.

1995

Proposed residential development near Tregaron Dyfed (Departure Application).
Proposed residential development Henllan, Llandysul, Dyfed (Departure Application).
Proposed development at Mostyn Docks, Mostyn, Deeside, Clwyd.
Proposed residential development, Gurrey, Millfield, Llandeilo, Dyfed.
Proposed residential development, Jordanston, Milford Haven, Dyfed.

Nursery Voucher Scheme

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current estimate of the administrative cost of his proposed voucher scheme for nursery education in Wales. [38363]

Mr. Richards: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Brigend (Mr. Griffiths) on 18 July, *Official Report*, column *1197*.

Departure Applications

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of departures for county structure plan policies notified to his Department in each of the last five years and so far in this year for each county in Wales. [38338]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

Departure applications notified by county area 1990–95 (1 January 1990 to 30 September 1995)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Clwyd	8	4	1	4	4	0
Dyfed	4	2	11	8	12	6
Gwent	1	4	3	3	3	4
Gwynedd	1	2	0	2	4	4
Mid Glamorgan	4	2	0	0	1	2
Powys	1	1	0	2	6	2
South Glamorgan	1	0	1	3	3	2
West Glamorgan	2	2	0	2	3	1

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the Worldwide Fund for Nature report on the alternative feeding grounds for wading birds displaced by the Cardiff Bay barrage. [38761]

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Thursday 19 October at Column *341*

Cardiff Royal Infirmary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the formal application for the transfer of the accident and emergency services from the Cardiff royal infirmary to the University Hospital of Wales at the Heath, for his determination under the statutory procedure for opposed changes; how long he expects he will take to make the determination; what provisions he is making for evaluating the alternative scheme proposed by the Cardiff community health council: and if he will make a statement. [38763]

Mr. Hague: I understand that South Glamorgan health authority's proposals for the future of the Cardiff royal infirmary, together with the Cardiff Community health council's alternative proposals, will be submitted to me very shortly.

I shall of course treat the matter with the urgency it deserves. I will, however, need to consider all the issues involved very carefully, including the community health council's alternative proposals. My decision will be made on the basis of clinical safety, access and value for money.

Millennium Commission Projects

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Millennium Commission in relation to the funding of and priority for projects in Wales and in particular the national botanical garden, the Welsh national rugby stadium redevelopment scheme and the Cardiff Bay opera house; and if he will make a statement. [38764]

Mr. Hague: I have had no such consultations with the Millennium Commission. My officials have provided factual responses to any questions asked of them by commission officials, in relation to these and other applications before them.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list *(a)* the numbers and *(b)* the percentage of three-year-olds and four-year-olds that received local authority nursery education or were in local education authority infant classes in each county in Wales on each of the last five years. [38362]

Mr. Richards: Figures for local education authority schools only are not readily available. The following tables show the figures for both LEA and grant maintained schools.

Three and four-year-olds in maintained nursery and primary schools, by county.

Nursery schools

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
1989–90									
Number	292	166	1,052	[1]—	1,107	[1]—	725	184	3,526
Per cent.	2.8	1.9	8.8	[1]—	7.5	[1]—	6.4	2.0	4.7
1990–91									
Number	146	190	1,051	[1]—	1,120	[1]—	737	184	3,428
Per cent.	1.4	2.2	8.7	[1]—	7.5	[1]—	6.4	2.0	4.5
1991–92									
Number	169	188	945	[1]—	1,150	[1]—	737	191	3,380
Per cent.	1.6	2.2	7.4	[1]—	7.4	[1]—	6.3	2.0	4.3
1992–93									
Number	171	196	913	[1]—	1,099	[1]—	713	182	3,274
Per cent.	1.6	2.3	7.2	[1]—	7.0	[1]—	6.1	1.9	4.2
1993–94									
Number	195	181	914	[1]—	1,084	[1]—	725	181	3,280
Per cent.	1.9	2.2	7.4	[1]—	7.1	[1]—	6.2	1.9	4.3

Primary schools

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
1989–90									
Number	7,651	5,062	7,131	2,354	9,437	1,406	5,284	7,581	45,906
Per cent.	73.4	58.3	59.9	40.8	63.9	50.4	46.4	81.6	61.2
1990–91									
Number	8,093	5,210	7,246	2,079	9,427	1,457	5,449	7,562	46,523
Per cent.	77.0	60.3	59.9	35.4	62.9	51.3	47.0	81.3	61.3
1991–92									
Number	8,345	5,412	7,637	2,024	9,883	1,509	5,692	7,714	48,216
Per cent.	77.3	62.2	60.1	33.7	63.4	52.0	48.6	80.4	61.8
1992–93									
Number	8,376	5,258	7,941	2,680	9,931	1,563	6,124	7,668	49,541
Per cent.	79.2	61.5	62.7	44.5	63.3	54.2	52.4	81.3	63.9
1993–94									
Number	8,475	5,197	7,866	2,578	9,875	1,497	6,293	7,684	49,465
Per cent.	81.1	62.9	63.3	43.2	64.5	53.5	54.1	82.2	64.9

Figures shown are for January in each year and are for pupils estimated to be three or four years old at 31 December.

DEFENCE

BMARC

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 4 April, *Official Report*, columns *1097–98* and 19 June, *Official Report*, column *31*, if he will list the companies other than Astra/BMARC to which the documents discovered on 16 June referred; on what date he was informed by his Department's police that further documents have been found relating to BMARC have Astra plc; whether these documents included sales documentation of arms exports by BMARC and Astra; and if he will make a statement. [38364]

Mr. Soames: Ministers were informed on 16 June of the discovery of the further documents. On the other points, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 18 July, *Official Report*, column *1188*.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates his Department took possession of documents taken from the company BMARC; and on what dates these documents were handed over to the Scott inquiry. [38365]

Mr. Soames: Documents were taken by MOD police from BMARC on 4 and 5 April 1990, 19 and 20 May 1990, 11 July 1990 and 7 August 1990. All documents taken from BMARC, belonging to that company, have been returned to the company liquidators. The provision of these documents to the Scott inquiry is therefore a matter for the liquidators.

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what checks have been made of Mr. David Hart to enable him to have access to classified information. [38255]

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer I gave him on 19 October, *Official Report* column *360*.

Dr. Clark : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he received from the British defence industry concerning the role of Mr. David Hart in procurement contracts. [38254]

Mr. Portillo: None.

Dr. Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultancies held by Mr. David Hart relating to defence companies have been disclosed to him; and if he will list those companies involved. [38253]

Mr. Portillo: None.

Nuclear Weapons, France

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place in the Library copies of the financial arrangements in place to support nuclear co-operation with France; [37619]

(2) if he will list the dates, since 1979, when technical discussions have taken place with France on nuclear weapons; and in which meetings Ministers participated; [37620]

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress made in technical discussions with France on nuclear weapons safety and stewardship. [37621]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *37*.

Metrication

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what year the armed forces (i) announced and (ii) implemented metrication. [37676]

Mr. Arbuthnot: In 1965 the Government announced their intention that metric units should become the primary system of measurement in the United Kingdom. That intention was subsequently confirmed in the 1972 White Paper on metrication—Cm 4880. A defence

standard prescribing the metric units to be used by the Ministry of Defence, including the services, was developed and published in 1976.

Helicopters

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what capability the Royal Air Force Hercules C.1K fleet has to refuel *(a)* Royal Air Force Sea King HAR.3 helicopters, *(b)* Royal Navy Sea King HAR.5 helicopters and *(c)* Royal Air Force Chinook helicopters; and what air-refuelling capability will be incorporated in the EH–101. [37533]

Mr. Arbuthnot: RAF and RN Sea Kings, and current RAF Chinooks, do not have an air-to-air refuelling capability.

All 22 EH101 HC Mk1 for the RAF will be capable of being fitted with flight-refuelling probes. Six complete sets of probes will be supplied as a role-fit equipment for the EH101 HC Mk1 fleet.

There is no requirement for EH101 Merlin to have an air-to-air refuelling capability.

Joint Services College

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest estimates of the cost of establishing a joint services command and staff college at Camberley. [37965]

Mr. Soames: I have no reason to believe that the capital costs of establishing a joint services command and staff college at Camberley will be greater than those projected in the document I placed in the Library of the House following my announcement of the Government's decision on the staff college site on 30 March 1995. We continue to refine costs, and as work develops there is every expectation that the capital costs will fall.

It is possible that there will be an increase in running costs from those previously announced as we now plan a larger joint service command and staff college to accommodate a greater number of foreign and commonwealth students. This is independent of the choice of the site for the joint service command and staff college.

Eurofighter

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes his Department has made to the management of the Eurofighter 2000 project in the last 12 months. [38251]

Mr. Arbuthnot: With our Eurofighter 2000 partners, we have taken the opportunity offered by the planned merger of the Eurofighter 2000 and Tornado management agencies to review the intergovernmental management arrangements for the programme. Measures have been agreed to define the merged agency's role more precisely, to improve its business processes and to clarify the responsibilities of senior committees.

Airmobile Brigade

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he made of the operational deployment of the 24 Airmobile Brigade to the former Yugoslavia. [38252]

Mr. Soames: Earlier this year, 24 Airmobile Brigade was deployed to the former Yugoslavia to make clear our determination to enhance the effectiveness of UNPROFOR and to provide additional protection to British troops. Those objectives have been achieved.

Gibraltar

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the strategic importance of Gibraltar to the United Kingdom's defence interests and that of NATO. [37465]

Mr. Soames: Gibraltar commands the important sea lane of communication between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Notwithstanding the end of the cold war, its strategic significance has not diminished. Gibraltar has well equipped and organised command facilities which support a NATO HQ—COMGIBMED.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Stocks

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the letter from the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) of 7 April, what was the result of the Food and Agriculture Organisation Conference, relating to straddling and highly migratory fish stocks; and if he will make a statement. [37300]

Mr. Baldry: The United Nations conference on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks adopted a legally binding agreement on 4 August. I welcome this development. The agreement will require states to co-operate with each other in managing such stocks according to the best scientific advice available and to submit disputes to legally binding dispute settlement procedures. It includes a tough new scheme for international enforcement of conservation and management measures.

The agreement opens for signature on 4 December in New York.

The relevant provisions of the UN agreement have been incorporated into the FAO code of conduct for responsible fisheries, which is currently being considered by the FAO General Council with a view to its adoption at the FAO conference in Rome from 25 October to 2 November.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost per family in the United Kingdom of the common agricultural policy in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* the latest year for which figures are available. [37927]

Mr. Baldry: A note entitled "The Cost of the Common Agricultural Policy to Taxpayers and Consumers", produced by the Department, was deposited in the Library of the House on 9 March. This gives estimates of the cost of the CAP to UK consumers and taxpayers of £3.88 per person per week, equivalent to £15.52 per week per family of four, in 1993, the latest year for which estimates

have been made. The equivalent figures for 1985 and 1990 are respectively £8.48 and £13.64 per week per family of four.

These estimates have been based on calculations by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of total transfers resulting from agricultural policies in the European Union, with adjustments in respect of the abatement to the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Union budget.

The estimates are likely to overstate the savings which could be made by UK consumers and taxpayers if the CAP were removed; in the absence of support, world prices would be higher than at present.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the amount the common agricultural policy costs the average family *(a)* per week and *(b)* per year. [39251]

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 9 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *328*.

Departmental Work

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the work of his Department since 1990. [38074]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: MAFF publishes information about the work which it carries out and since 1991, MAFF has, like other Departments, produced an annual departmental report, copies of which are available from the House of Commons Library. The report describes the activities, expenditure and plans of the Department. The latest report, published in March 1995 by HMSO, Cm 2803, includes expenditure details since 1989–90.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the levels of intervention stores for each EEC country for each commodity; and if he will tabulate this information against the number of days supply represented by each commodity in international stores per member state. [37907]

Mr. Baldry: The levels of intervention stocks for each member state are shown in the table. Information on the number of days' supply which these stocks represent is unavailable.

Tables showing levels, including days' supply, of all produce held in intervention within the EU as a whole, are placed in the House at regular intervals, most recently on 5 October. The information currently held in the House Library goes back to January 1985.

Agricultural produce in public intervention for each member state (figures in thousand tonnes)

	Member state				
	Ö	B	DK	D	E
Beef (bone in)	0	0	[1]—	0	0
Beef (bone-less)	0	0	[1]—	0	0
Wheat	0	54	265	1,400	0
Durum	0	0	0	0	0

Agricultural produce in public intervention for each member state (figures in thousand tonnes)

	Member state				
	Ö	B	DK	D	E
Barley	0	40	95	3,500	30
Rye	0	0	285	2,750	50
Maize	0	0	0	0	0
Butter[2]	0	0	0	0	4
SMP[2]	0	0	0	0	0

	Member state				
	F	GR	IRL	I	L
Beef (bone in)	0	0	5	0.5	0
Beef (bone-less)	0	0	3	[1]—	0
Wheat	850	100	0	0	0
Durum	0	51	0	100	0
Barley	29	0	0	0	0
Rye	0	0	0	0	0
Maize	0	104	0	0	0
Butter[2]	0	0	13	8	0
SMP[2]	0	0	14.5	0	0

	Member state				
	NL	P	S	SF	UK
Beef (bone in)	0	0	0	0	[3]7.5
Beef (bone-less)	0	0	0	0	[3]5
Wheat	0	0	0	0	5
Durum	0	0	0	0	0
Barley	0	0	0	0	863
Rye	0	0	0	0	0
Maize	0	0	0	0	0
Butter[2]	0	0	0	0	1
SMP[2]	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:

[1] Less than 500 tonnes.

[2] Latest figure is for 19 October 1995.

Figures rounded to the nearest 500 tonnes.

Sources:

Beef figures published by the European Commission 28 September 1995.

UK beef figures published by the Intervention Board 19 October 1995.

Cereal figures published by the European Commission 21 June 1995.

Butter and SMP figures provided to Milk Management Committee 12 October 1995.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current United Kingdom stocks held by the intervention board of *(a)* butter, *(b)* cheese and *(c)* wine; and what was the figure for 12 months ago. [38296]

Mr. Baldry: Tables showing levels of all produce held in intervention within the EU, with levels for the United Kingdom separately identif[illegible] are placed in the House Library at regular interv[illegible] recently on 5 October. The information currentl[illegible] in the Library goes back to January 1985.

Fishing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to increase the

nephrop total allowable catch for area VI; and if he will make a statement. [38425]

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) during oral questions on 18 October, *Official Report*, column 348.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate his Department has made of the percentage of lone parents in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)*1993 who are (i) divorced or (ii) widowed. [37009]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The information is in the table:

	1984	*1993*
Single never married	20	37
Divorce/ Separated	68	57
Widowed	12	6

Source: DSS data.

War Pensions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of war pensions are accepted as suffering from post traumatic stress disorder attributable to service. [37085]

Mr. Heald: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war pensioners currently receive war pensions based on an assessed disablement of 50 per cent. or more. [37087]

Mr. Heald: As at 30 June 1995, the latest date for which figures are available, 70,894 people were receiving war disablement pensions based on assessed disablement of 50 per cent. or more.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect the acceptance that post traumatic stress disorder is attributable to service has on an assessed war disablement pension which was based upon physical injury. [37086]

Mr. Heald: Except for certain specified injuries, the assessment of disablement for war pension purposes is a matter of medical judgment. Disablement is assessed on a percentage basis by comparing the condition of the disabled person with that of a healthy person of the same age and sex. Where there is more than one injury or disease accepted as due to service, the certified assessment takes into account the overall degree of disablement from all the accepted causes. When a new condition is accepted as attributable to service, a new assessment is made of the overall degree of disablement from all the accepted conditions. The maximum possible assessment is 100 per cent.

Social Fund

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if financial assistance will be made available to claimants of income support who need to produce medical reports for third parties or other purposes such as insurance claims but are unable to pay the hospital consultant's fee because such work is classed as category 2 work. [37157]

Mr. Roger Evans: We have no plans to do so. In this type of case, the practitioner concerned has discretion to decide whether to make a charge and how payment should be made. Furthermore, where a person is granted legal aid to pursue a claim for personal injury, the legal aid fund will meet all reasonable costs of successfully proving the case. This will include the cost of obtaining a medical report. It is also open to a person receiving income support to apply to the social fund for an award to meet an occasional expense which is difficult to budget for. Decisions on social fund applications are made by social fund officers who are required to exercise discretion when making decisions and to operate within a fixed budget.

Lost Giro Cheques

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Giro benefit cheques are lost each week. [37171]

Mr. Heald: The information requested is available only on an annual basis. In the year 1994–95 the following losses were recorded:

	Number of losses
Department of Social Security issued girocheques reported lost	125,973
Department of Employment issued girocheques reported lost	313,285

These figures represent the number of loss reports forwarded to Girobank and not subsequently cancelled.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to introduce a limit to the number of properties generating an income which a tenant can own before being able to receive housing benefit. [37091]

Mr. Roger Evans: We have no such plans. The capital and earnings regulations in the housing benefit scheme ensure that, where a claimant has substantial capital assets or a significant income from one or more tenanted properties, entitlements to benefit will be reduced or extinguished accordingly.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average contribution to private residential and nursing homes costs through state benefits and pensions. [37246]

Mr. Burt: The information requested for Great Britain and for Wales is in the tables:

	Number of cases	Average income support £	Average amount of other benefits[1]
Great Britain			
Preserved rights:			
Residential care	117,000	155.53	69.53
Nursing homes	85,000	222.49	74.43
Residential allowance	81,000	57.12	53.58
Total	284,000	147.33	66.42
Wales			
Preserved rights:			
Residential care	7,000	149.77	73.02
Nursing homes	7,000	216.22	76.14
Residential allowance	5,000	55.84	53.52
Total	18,000	148.39	68.89

Notes:

[1] Includes social security benefits and pensions taken into account in the assessment of income support.

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. Due to rounding some of the totals may not tally.

2. Personal allowance of £13.10 (Nov 1994) is included in the average amount of income support.

3. Preserved rights cases receive the special higher limits of income support. Cases under the community care scheme receive normal income support which includes residential allowance and the balance of their fees are met by the local authority.

4. Information shown is for independent sector homes which includes private and voluntary homes.

Source:

Income Support Statistics Residential Care/Nursing Home Quarterly Enquiry November 1994.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when a report will be laid concerning the changes in social security regulations which he proposes to make affecting asylum seekers. [37752]

Mr. Roger Evans: The report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on these proposals and the Department's response will be presented to Parliament at the same time as the amendment regulations are laid.

Widow's Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to uprate the widow's payment. [38162]

Mr. Heald: The next uprating of benefits is due to take effect in April 1996. The proposals will be announced at the appropriate time.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Child Support Agency's departures system for assessing the needs of absent parents with distant children will come into force. [37678]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: We anticipate that the departure system will come into force towards the end of 1996. The exact date will be decided in the light of the pilot exercise which, once parliamentary approval is secured, should run from April until July 1996.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *181*, on the benefit savings achieved by the liable relatives unit in 1991–92, whether the figure provided includes an allowance for parents with care who ceased to claim income support within four weeks of being contacted by his Department or for parents with care who ceased to claim income support after maintenance had been arranged; and what would the like-for-like benefit saving figure be for the Child Support Agency in 1994–95. [37614]

Mr. Mitchell: The benefits savings figure for 1991–92 included amounts for cases where claims ceased within four weeks of the Department taking action to arrange, increase or enforce payment of maintenance. It included spousal maintenance recovery and related only to income support cases.

A direct comparison with 1991-92 is not possible because the agency makes benefit savings across all the income-related benefits and does not arrange spousal maintenance.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the trend in the size of average maintenance awards paid by absent parents as a percentage of their total net income in the 10 year period before the creation of the Child Support Agency. [37585]

Mr. Mitchell: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

State Pensions

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the numbers of claimants moving from incapacity benefit on to retirement pension who lose benefit for (i) one day, (ii) two days, (iii) three days, (iv) four days and (v) six days as result of their birthday falling before the Monday payday for retirement pension. [38513]

Mr. Heald: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people have been found capable of work under the all-work test of incapacity in each of the quarters ended June and September; and how many of these were (i) previously receiving invalidity benefit and (ii) new claimants of incapacity benefit; [38503]

(2) how many people who have failed to return the IB50 within the time allowed and without good cause were *(a)* previously receiving invalidity benefit and *(b)* new claimants of incapacity benefit; [38504]

(3) how many examinations have been scheduled where the claimant has failed to attend; in how many of these the claimant had good cause for non-attendance; and how many of the non-attenders were *(a)* previously receiving invalidity benefit and *(b)* new claimants of incapacity benefit; [38505]

(4) how many of the IB50 all-work test questionnaires have been issued by his Department in each of the quarters ended June and September; how many of these

have been returned within the time allowed; and how many of these have not been returned where there was no good cause for the delay; [38506]

(5) how many medical examinations for the all-work test of incapacity have taken place in each of the quarters ended June and September; and how many in each quarter were *(a)* previously receiving invalidity benefit and *(b)* new claimants of incapacity benefit. [38507]

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. The information available is in the table.

The data reflects activity during a time when the take-on of cases has been carefully controlled to match capacity as experience of the new procedures grows. It is not representative and it is too early to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the new procedures.

	Quarter to end of June	*Quarter to end of September*
All work test questionnaires issued	314,555	258,725
Questionnaires returned[1]	213,800	195,310
Examinations[2]	8,212	88,485
Failed to return questionnaire (IB50) without good cause	733	1,927
Found capable of work following all work test	1,152	17,743

[1] Customers have six weeks in which to return the questionnaire. Figures for questionnaires returned includes some questionnaires which may have been returned outside the time limits but no decision has been taken on whether there has been good cause for delay.

[2] A significant proportion of customers have failed to attend for medical examination. As most of these cases have yet to be adjudicated upon it is not possible to say how many have good cause for not attending.

1. Figures include only incapacity benefit claimants and are subject to change.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people who have been found capable of work have lodged an appeal against this decision in each of the quarters ended June and September; how many of these were *(a)* previously receiving invalidity benefit, and *(b)* new claimants of incapacity benefit; and how many appeals are outstanding. [38510]

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the format requested. Information on how many of these appeals were made by people previously receiving invalidity benefit or how many were made by new claimants of incapacity benefit is not available.

The figures that are available are in the table.

	Quarter ending June 1995	*Quarter ending September 1995*
Lodged	170	7,095
Outstanding	n/a	6,520

Retirement Pension

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of changing retirement pension paydays to the day that the claimant reaches pensionable age. [38512]

Mr. Heald: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 1 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *109*.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the costs to the Benefits Agency of the administration of the habitual residence test in relation to income support between 1 August 1994 and 31 July. [37734]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 20 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what were the costs to the Benefits Agency of the administration of the habitual residence test in relation to Income Support between 1 August 1994 and 31 July 1995.

The current assessment of the cost to the Agency for the period in question is: £3,428,940.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants have been refused income support under the habitual residence test in each Benefits Agency district office in England, Wales and Scotland; and if he will update the information in his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *547–48*. [37694]

Mr. Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 20 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question which asked how many claimants have been refused Income Support under the habitual residence test in each Benefits Agency district office in England, Wales and Scotland, and for an update on information supplied in his answer of 28 February, Official Report, column 547–48.

Information about the number of people refused Income Support after failing the HRT has been collated for the period 1 August 1994—31 August 1995 and is shown in the attached table. A copy of this table has been placed in the library, it shows the 20 Area Directorates that make up Great Britain and lists the Districts that make up each are.

This information is now placed in the House of Commons Library on a monthly basis.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Annex A: failed habitual residence test figures 1 August 1994 to 31 August 1995

	Total
Anglia	
Cambridgeshire	131
Leaside	1,087
Northamptonshire	111
North and East Hertfordshire	60
Norwich	56
Suffolk	82
West Hertfordshire	134

Annex A: failed habitual residence test figures
1 August 1994 to 31 August 1995

	Total
Chilterns	
Barnet	515
Bedfordshire	265
Buckinghamshire	162
Ealing	1,280
Euston	4,472
Harrow and Hillingdon	647
Oxfordshire	243
South London and West Sussex	
South Downs	370
West Sussex	99
Palace	1,665
London Central	1,397
South West Thames	1,329
Bankside	422
North Surrey	606
West Country	
Bristol Brunel	111
Bristol Severnside	106
Cornwall	65
Dorset	219
Devon	67
Gloucestershire	81
Somerset	39
South Devon	94
East London and Essex	
Barking and Havering	197
City East	278
Essex South East	68
Essex South West	23
Hackney and Islington	187
Lea Roding	531
Newham	464
North Essex	41
South East	
Canterbury and Thanet	73
Channel	48
North Kent	155
East Sussex	62
Thameside	92
Neasden	699
South Circular	1,234
West Kent	99
Wessex	
Wiltshire	44
Berkshire	180
Surrey Downs	126
Hampshire North	35
Solent and Forest	87
Hounslow and Kingston	1,431
South East Hampshire and Isle of Wight	85
East Midlands	
Chesterfield and Worksop	15
East Nottinghamshire	52
Leicestershire North	141
North Nottinghamshire	11
South Leicestershire	73
Wash Coast	29
West Lincolnshire	39
West Nottinghamshire	71
Midlands and South West	
Birmingham Chamberlain	134
Birmingham Heartlands	73
Birmingham North West	66
Birmingham South East	85

Annex A: failed habitual residence test figures
1 August 1994 to 31 August 1995

	Total
Birmingham South West	115
Coventry	35
Hereford and Worcester	85
Warwickshire	40
West Mercia	
Central Derbyshire	39
Central Staffordshire	45
North Staffordshire	26
North Worcestershire	41
Sandwell	51
Shropshire	19
South Derbyshire	12
Walsall	40
Wolverhampton	74
Wales	
Cynon, Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	14
Gwyneddigion	23
Mid Wales and Maelor	19
North Gwent and Brecon	10
North Wales Coast	30
Ogwr Afan Nedd	21
South Glamorgan	118
South Gwent and Islwyn	66
Swansea	49
Taff Rhondda	5
West Wales	16
Merseyside	
Knowsley	10
Liverpool Central	10
Liverpool North	17
Liverpool South	56
Sefton	27
South Cheshire	21
South West Lancashire	11
Wirral	34
Greater Manchester	
Manchester Central	126
Manchester Salford	27
Manchester South	125
Manchester Trinity	107
North Cheshire	22
Oldham	109
Sale and East Cheshire	45
Stockport	51
Tameside	25
Lancashire and Cumbria	
Blackburn and Accrington	33
Blackpool	40
Bolton	36
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	27
Lancaster and South Cumbria	55
North Cumbria	13
Preston	44
West Pennine	109
Wigan and Leigh	25
Tyne Tees	
Newcastle	118
North Durham	17
North Tees	22
North Tyneside	1
Northumberland	13
South Durham	22
South Tees	44
South Tyneside	29
Wearside	18

Annex A: failed habitual residence test figures
1 August 1994 to 31 August 1995

	Total
South Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	19
Doncaster	22
East Yorkshire	14
Hull	64
Rother and Dearne	27
Sheffield East	116
Sheffield West	148
South Humberside	35
North and West Yorkshire	
Bradford	244
Kirklees	55
Leeds Aire and Wharfe	141
Leeds Ridings	49
North Yorkshire	44
Wakefield	10
Yorkshire Pennine	93
Scotland and Northern	
Glasgow City	29
Glasgow East	7
Glasgow Laurieston	32
Glasgow South West	11
Glasgow West	17
Renfrew	19
Springburn and Cumbernauld	16
North, Central and West Scotland	
Clyde Coast and Cowal	5
Coatbridge	105
Forth Valley	28
Highlands and Islands	61
Irvine and Kilmarnock	11
Lomond and Argyll	6
Clyde Valley	18
South West Scotland	26
East Scotland	
East Lowlands	79
Fife	42
Grampian and Shetland	23
Lothian Central	199
Lothian West	34
Tayside	17
Total	27,291

These figures are provisional and are subject to amendment.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance has been given to his Department's staff with reference to informing claimants of their rights to interim payments pending appeal while refused benefits under the habitual residence rules; [37141]

(2) what information has been given to *(a)* his Department's staff, *(b)* claimants and *(c)* the general public about the right to interim payment pending appeals of people refused benefit under the habitual residence rules. [37142]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 20 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about guidance provided to the Department's staff and information available to the public on the subject of interim payments.

Interim payments can be made where there is a reasonable expectation that benefit will be awarded at a future date. Whilst it is possible to make an interim payment where a person has appealed against a decision not to award benefit, the fact that a person has lodged an appeal is not in itself a reason for making a payment. The Secretary of State will, therefore, need to be satisfied that the customer may become entitled to benefit following the appeal.

Staff in Benefit Agency offices are aware of the need to consider interim payments and guidance is provided in the Income Support Payments Guide, paragraphs 6000–6499. A copy of the Guide is in the Library. Information on interim payments is included in the leaflet IS20 "A Guide to Income Support" which is available to the general public from many outlets such as Benefit Agency offices, Citizen Advice Bureaux, doctors surgeries, public libraries and Post Offices. I enclose a copy of this leaflet for your information.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Class Sizes

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage and how many primary school pupils were in classes of 36 or more in January in each local education authority and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers from January 1994 in each local education authority and in total. [38727]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 36 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 11994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 provisional		change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
City	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Camden	0	0.0	3.6	0.4	36	[3]—
Greenwich	0	0.0	122	0.7	122	[3]—
Hackney	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hammersmith	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Islington	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	36	0.7	0	0.0	—3.6	—100.0
Lambeth	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lewisham	0	0.0	120	0.6	120	$
Southwark	0	0.0	37	0.2	37	$
Tower Hamlets	37	0.3	50	0.3	13	35.1
Wandsworth	195	1.4	221	1.6	26	13.3

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 36 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 11994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 provisional		change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Westminster	76	1.1	39	0.6	—3.7	—48.7
Barking	232	1.6	323	2.1	91	39.2
Barnet	115	0.6	112	0.5	–3	–2.6
Bexley	72	0.4	73	0.4	1	1.4
Brent	338	1.8	346	1.8	8	2.4
Bromley	146	0.7	291	1.3	145	99.3
Croydon	229	1.0	110	0.4	–119	–52.0
Ealing	145	0.7	78	0.4	–67	–46.2
Enfeild	36	0.2	36	0.2	0	0.0
Haringey	75	0.4	39	0.2	–36	–48.0
Harrow	72	0.5	72	0.4	0	0.0
Havering	146	0.8	37	0.2	–109	–74.7
Hillingdon	474	2.7	513	2.8	39	8.2
Hounslow	749	4.7	828	5.0	79	10.5
Kingston upon Thames	185	2.0	256	2.6	71	38.4
Merton	331	2.7	361	2.9	30	9.1
Newham	116	0.5	76	0.3	–4.0	–34.5
Redbridge	402	2.5	435	2.7	33	8.2
Richmond upon Thames	265	2.7	60	0.6	–205	–77.4
Sutton	144	1.2	114	0.9	–30	–20.8
Waltham Forest	112	0.6	0	0.0	–112	–100.0
Birmingham	1,434	1.5	1,187	1.2	–247	–17.2
Coventry	601	2.4	859	3.2	258	42.9
Dudley	973	4.0	1,429	5.9	456	46.9
Sandwell	1,312	4.8	913	3.3	–399	–30.4
Solihull	511	2.8	917	4.9	406	79.5
Walsall	511	2.3	553	2.4	42	8.2
Wolverhampton	381	1.8	626	2.9	245	64.3
Knowsley	644	3.8	951	5.2	207	47.7
Liverpool	960	2.0	1,253	2.7	293	30.5
St. Helens	851	5.9	1,011	6.9	160	18.8
Sefton	516	2.1	1,018	4.1	502	97.3
Wirral	518	1.8	627	2.1	109	21.0
Bolton	2,036	9.2	2.176	9.6	140	6.9
Bury	1,152	7.4	801	5.1	–35.1	–30.5
Manchester	1,173	2.9	1,185	2.8	12	1.0
Oldham	871	4.2	970	4.5	99	11.4
Rochdale	720	3.9	560	2.9	–160	–22.2
Salford	1,214	5.5	847	3.7	–367	–30.2
Stockport	1,366	5.6	896	3.6	–470	–34.4
Tameside	1,136	5.3	738	3.4	–398	–35.0
Trafford	1,422	7.7	1.234	6.5	–188	–13.2
Wigan	2,424	9.3	2,434	9.1	9	0.4
Barnsley	471	2.4	576	2.9	105	22.3
Doncaster	1,252	4.7	1,646	6.3	394	31.5
Rotherham	235	1.1	308	1.4	73	31.1
Sheffield	1,460	3.9	1,652	4.2	192	13.2
Bradford	567	1.8	1,207	3.7	640	112.9
Calderdale	326	1.9	108	0.6	–218	–66.9
Kirkless	981	3.1	1,824	5.7	843	85.9
Leeds	2,719	4.6	2,694	4.5	–25	–0.9
Wakefield	1,258	4.7	2,124	7.6	866	68.8
Gateshead	76	0.5	153	0.9	77	101.3
Newcastle upon Tyne	760	3.7	890	4.4	130	17.1
North Tyneside	497	3.3	463	3.1	–3.4	–6.8
South Tyneside	541	3.7	850	5.8	309	57.1
Sunderland	22	0,8	191	0.7	–3.1	–14.0
Isle of Scilly	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Avon	1,058	1.4	1,369	1.8	311	29.4
Bedfordshire	1,750	4.7	2,040	5.3	290	16.6
Berkshire	1,070	1.9	913	1.6	–157	–14.7
Buckinghamshire	2,402	4.2	3,614	6.1	1,212	50.5
Cambridgeshire	1,100	2.0	735	1.3	–365	–33.2
Cheshire	3,006	3.6	3,409	4.0	403	13.4
Cleveland	2,523	4.4	2,527	4.3	4	0.2
Cornwall	1,032	2.7	1,126	2.9	94	9.1
Cumbria	817	2.1	1,078	2.7	261	31.9
Derbyshire	4,369	5.8	5,888	7.6	1,519	34.8
Devon	1,847	2.4	1,815	2.3	–32	–1.7

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 36 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 11994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 provisional		change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Dorset	580	1.4	980	2.3	400	69.0
Durham	1,283	2.5	1,240	2.4	–43	–3.4
East Sussex	435	0.9	470	1.0	35	8.0
Essex	768	0.6	1,209	1.0	441	57.4
Gloucestershire	479	1.1	551	1.3	72	15.0
Hampshire	3,484	2.7	2,013	1.6	–1471	–42.2
Hereford and Worcester	478	1.0	522	1.1	44	9.2
Hertfordshire	686	0.9	734	0.9	48	7.0
Humberside	4,110	5.3	4,838	6.1	728	17.7
Isle of Wight	190	2.7	11	1.6	–79	–41.6
Kent	697	0.6	1,007	0.8	310	44.5
Lancashire	6,008	5.1	6,542	5.4	534	8.9
Leicestershire	673	0.9	1,837	2.5	1,164	173.0
Lincolnshire	667	1.4	1,037	2.1	370	55.5
Norfolk	591	1.0	273	0.5	–318	–53.8
North Yorkshire	1,049	1.9	1,648	2.9	599	57.1
Northamptonshire	188	0.4	332	0.7	144	76.6
Northumberland	1,600	8.4	1,310	6.8	–290	–18.1
Nottinghamshire	2,822	3.4	3,729	4.5	907	32.1
Oxfordshire	608	1.6	482	1.2	–126	–20.7
Shropshire	555	1.7	668	1.9	113	204..4
Somerset	402	1.2	636	1.8	234	58.2
Staffordshire	6,500	7.5	5,226	5.9	–1,274	–19.6
Suffolk	222	0.5	254	0.6	32	14.4
Surrey	677	1.0	736	1.1	59	8.7
Warwickshire	756	1.8	1,074	2.5	318	42.1
West Sussex	475	0.9	660	1.2	185	38.9
Wiltshire	401	0.9	696	1.5	295	73.6
England	97,178	2.5	107,985	2.8	10,807	11.1

[1] Pupils in single teacher classes of 36 or more expressed as a percentage of all pupils in single teacher classes.
[2] Change in the number of pupils in classes of 36 or more pupils taught by one teacher between 1994 and 1995 expressed as a percentage of pupils in classes of 36 or more pupils taught by one teacher in 1994.
[1] no pupils in classes of 36 or more taught by one teacher in 1994.

Mr. Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the average class size for primary schools in January in each local education authority; and what was the actual and percentage change from January 1994 in each local education authority. [38725]

Mr. Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Average size of single teacher classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994	1995		
	Average class size		Actual change 1994–95	Percentage change 1994–95
City	27.0	26.8	–0.3	–0.9
Camden	27.1	27.3	0.2	0.9
Greenwich	26.1	26.4	0.3	1.2
Hackney	25.7	26.1	0.5	1.8
Hammersmith	25.2	25.6	0.5	1.8
Islington	25.9	26.6	0.7	2.6
Kensington and Chelsea	24.9	25.1	0.2	0.8
Lambeth	24.2	24.6	0.5	2.0
Lewisham	26.0	25.4	–0.5	–2.0
Southwark	26.9	26.9	0.0	0.0
Tower Hamlets	26.4	26.7	0.3	1.1
Wandsworth	25.0	25.2	0.2	0.9
Westminster	24.0	25.3	1.4	5.6
Barking	26.1	26.7	0.6	2.4
Barnet	26.4	26.5	0.1	0.4
Bexley	27.5	28.6	1.1	4.0
Brent	27.0	26.9	0.0	–0.1
Bromley	28.1	28.4	0.4	1.3
Croydon	27.6	28.1	0.4	1.5
Ealing	26.6	26.6	0.0	0.1
Enfield	27.8	28.4	0.6	2.0

Average size of single teacher classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994	1995		
	Average class size		Actual change 1994–95	Percentage change 1994–95
Haringey	26.7	27.2	0.5	1.9
Harrow	26.8	27.1	0.3	1.0
Havering	27.5	27.4	–0.1	–0.5
Hillingdon	27.1	26.8	–0.3	–1.2
Hounslow	26.2	27.4	1.1	4.3
Kingston upon Thames	28.9	29.5	0.6	2.0
Merton	27.2	27.0	–0.2	–0.7
Newham	27.5	27.5	0.0	0.1
Redbridge	29.3	29.2	0.0	–0.1
Richmond upon Thames	25.7	26.1	0.4	1.5
Sutton	28.3	28.0	–0.3	–1.1
Waltham Forest	26.8	26.5	–0.3	–1.0
Birmingham	28.2	28.2	0.0	0.0
Coventry	27.1	27.8	0.7	2.6
Dudley	27.0	27.3	0.3	1.2
Sandwell	27.9	28.2	0.3	1.2
Solihull	27.3	27.6	0.3	1.1
Walsall	25.7	26.0	0.4	1.5
Wolverhampton	25.9	26.2	0.2	0.9
Knowsley	27.7	28.0	0.3	1.0
Liverpool	26.9	27.1	0.2	0.9
St. Helens	26.8	27.0	0.2	0.7
Sefton	27.2	27.6	0.4	1.6
Wirral	25.9	26.1	0.2	0.8
Bolton	28.1	28.7	0.6	2.3
Bury	27.5	27.8	0.3	1.1
Manchester	26.5	26.9	0.3	1.2
Oldham	28.6	28.5	0.0	–0.2
Rochdale	29.5	29.2	–0.3	–0.9
Salford	27.1	27.3	0.1	0.5
Stockport	27.7	27.5	–0.2	–0.7
Tameside	29.6	29.5	–0.1	–0.4
Trafford	29.0	29.0	0.0	–0.1
Wigan	27.9	28.0	0.1	0.5
Barnsley	27.4	27.5	0.1	0.3
Doncaster	27.5	28.1	0.6	2.1
Rotherham	25.1	25.8	0.7	2.8
Sheffield	26.3	26.8	0.5	2.0
Bradford	27.3	27.8	0.5	1.8
Calderdale	27.9	27.5	–0.4	–1.3
Kirklees	27.2	28.2	1.0	3.8
Leeds	27.9	28.2	0.3	1.0
Wakefield	27.5	27.9	0.3	1.2
Gateshead	25.8	26.0	0.1	0.6
Newcastle upon Tyne	27.3	27.6	0.2	0.8
North Tyneside	26.5	26.9	0.4	1.5
South Tyneside	26.3	26.3	0.1	0.2
Sunderland	25.6	25.4	–0.3	–1.1
Isles of Scilly	18.7	17.3	–1.3	–7.1
Avon	27.7	27.8	0.1	0.4
Bedfordshire	26.3	26.8	0.4	1.7
Berkshire	27.1	27.0	–0.1	–0.5
Buckinghamshire	27.2	27.3	0.2	0.7
Cambridgeshire	27.4	27.3	0.0	–0.2
Cheshire	27.4	27.3	–0.1	–0.4
Cleveland	26.8	26.9	0.1	0.4
Cornwall	26.8	27.0	0.2	0.6
Cumbria	25.7	26.2	0.5	2.0
Derbyshire	27.3	27.9	0.6	2.3
Devon	26.4	26.7	0.3	1.3
Dorset	27.5	27.6	0.1	0.4
Durham	27.5	27.7	0.2	0.8
East Sussex	27.4	27.5	0.2	0.6
Essex	26.9	26.9	0.0	0.1
Gloucestershire	26.4	26.7	0.3	1.1
Hampshire	27.4	27.7	0.3	1.1
Hereford and Worcester	25.1	25.5	0.5	1.8
Hertfordshire	26.4	26.5	0.0	0.1

Average size of single teacher classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994	1995	Actual change 1994–95	Percentage change 1994–95
	Average class size			
Humberside	27.5	27.7	0.2	0.6
Isle of Wight	26.0	26.3	0.3	1.1
Kent	27.6	27.7	0.1	0.3
Lancashire	27.7	27.9	0.2	0.6
Leicestershire	25.8	26.5	0.7	2.7
Lincolnshire	26.5	26.8	0.4	1.3
Norfolk	25.1	25.4	0.2	0.8
North Yorkshire	25.7	26.2	0.5	2.0
Northamptonshire	26.4	26.7	0.3	1.1
Northumberland	27.0	27.2	0.1	0.5
Nottinghamshire	27.0	27.4	0.4	1.5
Oxfordshire	25.6	25.9	0.3	1.3
Shropshire	26.4	26.6	0.1	0.5
Somerset	26.9	27.0	0.1	0.4
Staffordshire	27.7	27.6	–0.1	–0.5
Suffolk	24.8	24.9	0.0	0.1
Surrey	25.5	25.6	0.1	0.5
Warwickshire	26.5	26.9	0.4	1.5
West Sussex	26.2	26.5	0.4	1.4
Wiltshire	26.6	26.9	0.3	1.0
England	26.9	27.1	0.2	0.8

Mr. Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage and how many primary school pupils were in classes of 40 or more in January in each local education authority and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers compared with January 1994 and in each local education authority and in total. [38726]

Mr. Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 40 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 (provisional)		Change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
City	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Camden	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Greenwich	0	0.0	50	0.3	50	[3]—
Hackney	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hammersmith	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Islington	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lambeth	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lewisham	0	0.0	47	0.3	47	[3]—
Southwark	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tower Hamlets	0	0.0	50	0.3	50	[3]—
Wandsworth	45	0.3	0	0.0	–45	–100.0
Westminster	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Barking	40	0.3	52	0.3	12	30.0
Barnet	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bexley	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Brent	40	0.2	308	1.6	268	670.0
Bromley	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Croydon	80	0.3	0	0.0	–80	–100.0
Ealing	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Enfield	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Haringey	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Harrow	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Havering	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hillingdon	323	1.8	326	1.8	3	0.9
Hounslow	120	0.8	41	0.2	–79	65.8
Kingston Upon Thames	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Merton	63	0.5	178	1.4	115	182.5
Newham	40	0.2	0	0.0	–40	–100.0
Redbridge	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Richmond Upon Thames	153	1.5	60	0.6	–93	–60.8
Sutton	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 40 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 (provisional)		Change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Waltham Forest	40	0.2	0	0.0	–40	–100.0
Birmingham	221	0.2	267	0.3	46	20.8
Coventry	120	0.5	115	0.4	–5	–4.2
Dudley	644	2.7	1,027	4.2	383	59.5
Sandwell	240	0.9	362	1.3	122	50.8
Solihull	0	0.0	40	0.2	40	[3]—
Walsall	0	0.0	42	0.2	42	[3]—
Wolverhampton	120	0.6	80	0.4	–40	–33.3
Knowsley	80	0.5	92	0.5	12	15.0
Liverpool	122	0.3	230	0.5	108	88.5
St. Helens	120	0.8	160	1.1	40	33.3
Sefton	41	0.2	40	0.2	–1	–2.4
Wirral	44	0.2	40	0.1	–4	–9.1
Bolton	628	2.8	394	1.7	–234	–37.3
Bury	128	0.8	0	0.0	–128	–100.0
Manchester	280	0.7	297	0.7	17	6.1
Oldham	252	1.2	308	1.4	56	22.2
Rochdale	208	1.1	87	0.4	–121	–58.2
Salford	167	0.8	254	1.1	87	52.1
Stockport	221	0.9	47	0.2	–174	–78.7
Tameside	80	0.4	40	0.2	–40	–50.0
Trafford	162	0.9	81	0.4	–81	–50.0
Wigan	85	0.3	87	0.3	2	2.4
Barnsley	175	0.9	233	1.2	58	33.1
Doncaster	480	1.8	601	2.3	121	25.2
Rotherham	160	0.7	200	0.9	40	25.0
Sheffield	80	0.2	244	0.6	164	205.0
Bradford	120	0.4	80	0.2	–40	–33.3
Calderdale	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kirklees	320	1.0	491	1.5	171	53.4
Leeds	120	0.2	266	0.4	146	121.7
Wakefield	120	0.4	214	0.8	94	78.3
Gateshead	40	0.2	80	0.5	40	100.0
Newcastle Upon Tyne	80	0.4	174	0.9	94	117.5
North Tyneside	90	0.6	90	0.6	0	0.0
South Tyneside	52	0.4	103	0.7	51	98.1
Sunderland	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Isles of Scilly	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Avon	0	0.0	132	0.2	132	[3]—
Bedfordshire	169	0.5	829	2.1	660	390.5
Berkshire	40	0.1	165	0.3	125	312.5
Buckinghamshire	212	0.4	830	1.4	618	291.5
Cambridgeshire	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Cheshire	324	0.4	293	0.3	–31	–9.6
Cleveland	0	0.0	40	0.1	40	[3]—
Cornwall	40	0.1	87	0.2	47	117.5
Cumbria	85	0.2	230	0.6	145	170.6
Derbyshire	594	0.8	834	1.1	240	40.4
Devon	40	0.1	45	0.1	5	12.5
Dorset	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Durham	200	0.4	40	0.1	–160	–80.0
East Sussex	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Essex	0	0.0	230	0.2	230	[3]—
Gloucestershire	40	0.1	80	0.2	40	100.0
Hampshire	240	0.2	166	0.1	–74	–30.8
Hereford and Worcester	0	0.0	41	0.1	41	[3]—
Hertfordshire	166	0.2	82	0.1	–84	–50.6
Humberside	377	0.5	605	0.8	228	60.5
Isle of Wight	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kent	80	0.1	285	0.2	205	256.3
Lancashire	324	0.3	284	0.2	–40	–12.3
Leicestershire	80	0.1	584	0.8	504	630.0
Lincolnshire	0	0.0	82	0.2	82	[3]—
Norfolk	186	0.3	55	0.1	–131	–70.4
North Yorkshire	244	0.4	90	0.2	–154	–63.1
Northamptonshire	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Northumberland	81	0.4	161	0.8	80	98.8
Nottinghamshire	1,724	2.1	1,943	2.3	219	12.7
Oxfordshire	85	0.2	98	0.3	13	15.3

Numbers and percentages of pupils in classes of 40 or more taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England: 1994 and 1995 (provisional)

Position in January each year

	1994		1995 (provisional)		Change	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Shropshire	40	0.1	120	0.3	80	200.0
Somerset	0	0.0	53	0.1	53	[3]—
Staffordshire	1,540	1.8	1,137	1.3	–403	–26.2
Suffolk	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Surrey	162	0.2	249	0.4	87	53.7
Warwickshire	240	0.6	375	0.9	135	56.3
West Sussex	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Wiltshire	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
England	14,057	0.4	18,223	0.5	4,166	29.6

[1] Pupils in single teacher classes of 40 or more expressed as a percentage of all pupils in single teacher classes.
[2] Change in the number of pupils in classes of 40 or more pupils taught by one teacher between 1994 and 1995 expressed as a percentage of pupils in classes of 40 or more pupils taught by one teacher in 1994.
[3] No pupils in classes of 40 or more taught by one teacher in 1994.

Employment Service

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many copies of the 1994–95 Employment Service annual report and accounts were published; how they were distributed; and what was the cost of printing and distribution. [38496]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. David Hinchliffe dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the printing and distribution costs of the 1994–1995 Employment Service (ES) Annual Report and Accounts.

In 1994–1995, HMSO printed off 5,500 copies of the Annual Report and Accounts. The ES had 5,000 of these copies at a cost of £16,890 and then arranged distribution of the Report by post from two central sites. The total cost of distribution was £1,390.15.

HMSO also distribute the Report to the Vote Office, the Printed Paper Office of the House of Lords and to HMSO bookshops, for sale to the public, at no cost to the ES.

I hope this is helpful.

Training

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what targets are set for training and employment for young unemployed. [38497]

Mr. Paice: The Government do not set numerical targets for the unemployed but offer a wide range of assistance to those in this position. The youth training guarantee exists to ensure that all 16 to 17-year-olds who are not in full-time education or a job and who are seeking training are offered a suitable YT place. Help is also available through the careers service and jobcentres. In addition, the Government have endorsed the national education and training targets, whose aim is to raise skill and education levels across all age groups in the United Kingdom.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many of the 1.7 million persons placed into work, identified within the 1994–95 Employment Service annual report and accounts were *(a)* full-time and permanent, *(b)* part-time and permanent, *(c)* full-time temporary or *(d)* part-time temporary. [38498]

Mr. Forth. Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of unemployed people who were placed into work in 1994/95.

I am pleased to tell you that the Employment Service exceeded its target of 1.7 million and actually placed 1,876,856 unemployed people into work in 1994/95. This is made up of the following:-

(a) Full-time and permanent jobs - 900,933

(b) Part-time and permanent jobs - 435,069

(c) Full-time temporary jobs - 382,849

(d) Part-time temporary jobs - 110,223

The above figure is 47,782 less than the overall total. This is because a small number of placings are not captured on our computerised recording system in a way which allows a distinction to be made in the form you have requested.

I hope this is helpful.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many people who have been found capable of work under the all-work test of incapacity have subsequently signed on as unemployed; and how many of these were (i) previously receiving invalidity benefit and (ii) new claimants of incapacity benefit. [38511]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your question about the number of people found capable of work under the All Work Test of Incapacity Benefit (IB), who have subsequently signed on as unemployed; and how many of these were previously receiving invalidity benefit and how many were new

claimants of IB. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Employment Service.

In the period April to September 1995, 8,974 people disallowed IB following the All Work Test have made a claim to unemployment benefit (UB). No figures are available on how many of these were previously receiving invalidity benefit and how many were new claimants of IB.

I hope this is helpful.

Special Needs Pupils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much is currently spent from public funds on school transport for special educational needs pupils. [38042]

Mr. Robin Squire: LEA expenditure in England on home-to-school transport for pupils in special schools was £120 million in 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available. The figures does not include expenditure on pupils with special educational needs in primary and secondary schools.

Nursery Voucher Scheme

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what are the implications of the introduction of the proposed nursery voucher scheme for the local management of schools formula. [38159]

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department is considering the implications of the nursery voucher scheme for LMS scheme. However, since LMS schemes vary, the implications will be different for each scheme.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment which local education authorities will receive negative standard spending assessment for pre-school education services as a consequence of the clawback of funds to finance the proposed nursery voucher scheme. [38158]

Mr. Squire: Based on current available data, we estimate that no local education authority will have a negative standard spending assessment after a deduction has been made for the purposes of the nursery voucher scheme.

Jobcentres, Doncaster and Mexborough

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list for each jobcentre in the Doncaster and Mexborough area, how many restart interviews were carried out; and what evaluation she has made of their impact on *(a)* jobs, *(b)* other benefits, *(c)* signing off and *(d)* enrolment on her Department's employment programmes for each of the last two years, and the current year to date. [38303]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the current level of spending per child in England for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school children; and what were the figures in current terms in 1979. [38044]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table sets out, at 1994–95 prices, net institutional expenditure per pupil in LEA maintained *(a)* pre-primary/primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in England for 1978–79, 1979–80 and 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available.

Unit costs 1994–95 prices, England

Year	*Pre-primary and primary schools*	*Secondary schools*
1978–79	1,068	1,545
1979–80	1,072	1,516
1993–94	1,659	2,284

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 24 October 1995

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fees Office

Mr. Stern: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will seek to define and publish targets for the work of the House of Commons Fees Office.

Mr. Beith: Performance indicators for the House of Commons Fees Office have been published in the 1993–94 and 1994–95 annual reports of the House of Commons Commission. Copies of these reports are available in the Library.

Asbestos

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) if asbestos products have been used in the works which have taken place in the Palace of Westminster since 20 July; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what record is kept in the Palace of Westminster of the presence of asbestos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: No asbestos products have been used in the works which have taken place in the Palace of Westminster during the summer recess. Like most older buildings, the Palace of Westminster contains some asbestos, which used to be incorporated for insulation purposes. Since it became known that exposure to asbestos dust can be dangerous, the Parliamentary Works Directorate, and its predecessors, has sought to follow strictly the guidelines and procedures laid down by the Health and Safety Executive. An asbestos register is maintained recording the locations both where asbestos is known to remain—usually because it is inaccessible—and from which it has been removed. Only firms on an approved list are used for asbestos removal work and the work is carried out in the approved manner.

It is the practice to remove asbestos found when undertaking maintenance and other works services. For example, during the installation of the wiring for the parliamentary data and video network and fire alarm system this summer, a considerable amount of previously undiscovered asbestos was found and removed. The result is that all ceiling voids and under-floor spaces which have so far been cabled for the parliamentary data and video network are now free of asbestos. All the evidence available indicates that the asbestos had not been disturbed for some considerable time and should not therefore have presented any risks. However, a full record has been made of the discoveries and will be kept on the register.

Disabled People (Access)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what recent improvements have been made in access to all parts of the Palace of Westminster for disabled people; what plans there are for further improvements; and if he will make a statement. [38393]

Mr. Ray Powell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 8 February at column *243*, which described in detail the conclusions of the review by the Accommodation and Works Committee into access for disabled people. Since then the Parliamentary Works Directorate has continued to implement many of the recommended improvements. The new entrance, which has been created at Black Rod's Garden, enables people in wheelchairs to go directly to the start of the line of route. A ramp has been constructed at the entrance to Speaker's House giving access to the North Door. The ramps in Star Chamber Court allow access for people in wheelchairs to the Strangers Gallery via lift number 1 and the new ramp at the Medals Corridor enables them to go on to the Terrace, the private dining rooms and via lift number 15, to the Principal Floor and Committee Rooms. This lift has been specially adapted to include such features as relocated control panels with embossed and illuminated buttons, handrails to the sides and rear of each car, and door edges with time delay sensors. Lifts numbers 3, Peers and Gallery, and 17, Speaker's House, have been similarly adapted as has one in the other place. Modifications to lavatories have been carried out and there are now specially adapted facilities in the following locations:

> Centre Curtain Corridor, Lower Waiting Hall, opposite Committee Room 7 on the Main Committee Corridor, and opposite Committee Room 19 on the Upper Committee Corridor.

In addition, a continuous handrail has been ordered for installation on the Strangers' Gallery staircase and a platform lift is shortly to be installed to take people in wheelchairs from Westminster Hall to the Grand Committee Room. In time, we hope to install a proper lift in that area as part of the plans for a visitor centre in 1996–97. It is planned to spend a further £250,000 on overhauling five lifts including the provision of facilities for the disabled and £55,000 on other access facilities.

Some £688,000 is to be spent this financial year in the Palace of Westminster on facilities for disabled people.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the latest figure for the amount of legal aid paid to Kevin and Ian Maxwell. [38196]

Mr. John M. Taylor: It would not be appropriate for me to give further details of payments in this case while the trial is in progress.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of those years what was the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated and (2) subsequently recovered. [39125]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is set out in the table. In many cases we cannot establish whether a fraud was by an employee or an outsider, and by no means all attempted frauds succeeded. The table therefore includes known cases of actual fraud attributable to staff. Some further recoveries may have been made since the records for each year were compiled, and further recoveries may be made, especially in relation to frauds in 1994–95. I have asked the chief executives of the Public Record Office and Her Majesty's Land Registry to reply to the hon. Member directly.

Losses (£) due to proven staff fraud

	1991–92			*1992–93*		
	Number	*Loss*	*Recovered*	*Number*	*Loss*	*Recovered*
Lord Chancellor's Department [1,2]	11	313,754	7,753	7	58,890	2,026
Northern Ireland Court Service	2	1,166.70	nil	1	17,507.01	265.70
Non-Departmental Public Bodies[3]	1	324	324	1	500	nil
Total	12	314,078	8,076	8	59,389	2,026

	1993–94			*1994–95*		
	Number	*Loss*	*Recovered*	*Number*	*Loss*	*Recovered*
Lord Chancellor's Department [1,2]	4	180,876	54,961	7	23,703	72
Northern Ireland Court Service	nil	nil	nil	1	20	nil
Non-Departmental Public Bodies[3]	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Total	4	180,876	54,961	7	23,703	72

[1] The Public Trust Office became an executive agency on 1 July 1994. For ease of comparison data since then has been separated.
[2] The Court Service became an agency on 1 April 1995.
[3] The frauds shown in the table above relate to the Legal Aid Board. There are no reported frauds from any of LCD's other NDPBs.

Letter from Edward Beardsall to Mr. Malcolm Bruce, dated 24 October 1995:

In the absence of the Chief Executive who is presently away from the office I have been asked by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, to reply to your recent question concerning the total number of all forms of fraud committed by employees in the Land Registry for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95 and for each of these years the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated and (2) subsequently recovered. All cases related either to misuse of official postage, misuse of the telephone or abuse of the flexible working hours system. I can provide the following information:

	Number of cases	*Total sum* *Misappropriated* £	*Recovered* £
1991–92	7	380.66	380.66
1992–93	4	(Minor sums of less than £10)	
1993–94	4	760	760
1994–95	1	58	58

I do hope that this answers the points raised with the Parliamentary Secretary but please contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. Malcolm Bruce, dated 24 October 1995:

I have been asked by the Lord Chancellor's Parliamentary Secretary to reply to your question about employee fraud.

There were no cases of fraud committed by employees of the Public Record Office in the years that you list.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to publish the report of the Securities and Investments Board/Department of Social Security study of the sale of personal pensions to low-income earners; and what are the terms of reference of the study. [38259]

Mrs. Angela Knight *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Securities and Investments Board will be responsible for publishing a report into potential mis-selling of personal pensions to people who were previously in the state earnings-related pensions scheme. I understand that SIB hopes to report on this issue by the end of the year.

SCOTLAND

Farm Sizes

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of farms sized *(a)* 1–25 hectares, *(b)* 26–50 hectares, *(c)* 51–75 hectares, *(d)* 76–100 hectares, *(e)* 101–150 hectares, *(f)* 151–200 hectares and *(g)* 201 or more hectares for the last available year and for 1985. [36431]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The information is given in the table:

Number of farms of size (hectares)	*1985*	*1994*
Less than 26	11,413	12,592
26–<51	4,759	4,754
51–<76	3,567	3,476
76–<101	2,579	2,490
101–<151	3,083	3,205
151–<201	1,590	1,652
201 or more	4,357	4,344
Total	31,348	32,513

The figures come from the June agricultural census in 1985 and 1994 and relate to main holdings. The hectarages refer to total agricultural areas which include rough grazings.

Red Deer Commission

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the future of the Red Deer Commission; and if he will make a statement. [36939]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 10 May 1995 *Official Report*, column *450*. In addition, a policy and financial management review of the Red Deer Commission is currently being undertaken, in accordance with the Government's commitment to appraise effectiveness and value for money in all non-departmental public bodies on a regular basis.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what subsidies were paid out for environmentally sensitive areas in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94, *(c)* 1994–95 and *(d)* 1995–96; and how many individuals were recipients of these payments in these years. [37125]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The total payments made under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme and the number of participants for the years requested are set out in the table.

	Amount paid £ thousands	*Number of participants*
1992–93	1,086	802
1993–94	963	583
1994–95	1,044	717
1995–96 (to 31 August)	781	847

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what area in hectares and percentage terms of environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland is made up of productive, or potentially productive, agricultural land. [37124]

Mr. Robertson: The information is set out in the table.

	Estimated hectares of agricultural land in each designated area	*Estimated percentage of total area designated*
Breadalbane	140,000	78
Loch Lomond	36,900	75
Stewartry	48,500	82
Central Borders (formerly Whitlaw and Eildon)	28,800	81
Machair of the Uists and Benbecula, Barra and Vatersay	12,000	79
Central Southern Uplands	220,300	81
Western Southern Uplands	131,000	52
Cairngorms Straths	148,700	68
Argyll Islands	177,400	84
Shetland Islands	144,900	99
Total	1,088,500	76

New Homes

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the total number of new homes started by *(a)* local authorities and new towns and *(b)* housing associations in Scotland in each year since 1974, and his estimate of the likely number of starts in 1995 and 1996. [37492]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The information requested on the number of new homes started is set out in the table. Housing associations plan to start 6,155 houses in 1995–96 and 193 new town starts are expected during 1995 and 1996. Information on planned local authority starts is not held centrally.

New housebuilding starts—Scotland, 1974 to 1994

	Local authorities	*New towns*	*Housing associations*
1974	16,324	2,600	660
1975	12,326	3,683	592
1976	7,578	2,665	1,362
1977	5,829	1,673	629
1978	4,185	2,202	1,365
1979	4,858	984	963
1980	2,770	1,155	1,261
1981	1,929	733	1,051
1982	2,585	765	2,446
1983	2,141	194	1,068
1984	1,755	126	1,239
1985	1,693	190	1,487
1986	1,671	141	1,414
1987	2,145	374	1,988
1988	1,433	495	2,068
1989	871	680	2,748
1990	886	720	2,111
1991	848	134	3,448
1992	429	395	3,051
1993	503	429	5,062
1994	544	208	4,807

Housing association figures are likely to be subject to future revision.

Short-time Working

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate his Department has made of the number of companies on short-time working; and how many employees are affected by such short-time working. [37514]

Mr. Kynoch: Available information is restricted to operatives—manual workers—in the manufacturing sector. In the week ending 9 June 1995, the latest date for which figures are available for Scotland, an estimated 1,300 operatives in manufacturing industries were affected by short-time working. Of these, 900 were stood off the whole week. The source of these figures is the Central Statistical Office.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will increase hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1996. [37918]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Decisions on the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances are taken by Ministers in the light of the annual autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands, which is currently under way.

Health Service Revenue

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to revise the Scottish hospital resource allocation formula—SHARE—in a manner similar to the revision of the NHS formula for allocating hospital and community health service revenue resources in England. [38001]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no immediate plans to revise the Scottish hospital resource allocation formula. We do, however, continually consider whether there is scope to improve the formula.

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about a policy and financial management review of the royal botanic garden, Edinburgh. [39728]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As part of the Government's rolling programme of five-yearly policy and financial management reviews of non-departmental public bodies, my Department will conduct a thorough review of the work of the royal botanic garden, Edinburgh between now and March 1996. The first stage of the review will take the form of a "prior options" study. This will include an examination of what scope there is, if any, for discontinuing, or undertaking in some other way some or all of the functions which the garden carries out. This will include looking at how it takes forward its statutory obligations, including its objectives, as set out in the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985.

The second stage of the review will concentrate on the garden's financial management systems and controls.

I would welcome comments from interested parties. They should be sent by 30 November 1995 to:

Mr. K. K. Steven
The Scottish Office Agriculture Environment and Fisheries Department
Pentland House
47 Robb's Loan
Edinburgh
EH14 1TY.

Vandalism (Schools)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what help is available to schools in Scotland suffering especially severe problems of vandalism. [37937]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* The response to acts of vandalism will depend on the nature of each incident and the circumstances in which they have been perpetrated. It is for the education authority concerned to consider appropriate measures having regard to the local circumstances and physical characteristics of the schools affected.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Kenya

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date programme aid was suspended to Kenya. [37675]

Mr. Hanley: Programme aid to Kenya has not been suspended. But disbursements continue to depend, as they always have, on Kenya continuing to implement economic programmes agreed with International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and on the overall political environment in Kenya.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards Kenya at the World Bank, and if he will make a statement. [37674]

Mr. Hanley: Discussions between the World Bank and the Kenyan Government continue. We hope that there will be sufficient progress in Kenya to allow early agreement on a structural adjustment credit.

Bilateral Aid Programme

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the bilateral aid programme in promoting political and economic stability in the least developed countries. [38145]

Mr. Hanley: We believe that British bilateral aid, with its emphasis on good government and sound economic policies, has played a vital role in promoting political and economic stability in many of the least developed countries, notably in the Commonwealth. The effectiveness of British aid in meeting this objective is kept under constant review.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the foreign policy implications of reduction in Britain's bilateral aid programme; and if he will make a statement. [38147]

Mr. Hanley: The bilateral aid programme is a very significant part of the United Kingdom's relationship with the developing world. The size of the programme is kept under constant review, along with all the other factors which contribute to the relationship with developing countries, including trade and investment.

ENVIRONMENT

European Building Projects

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many British firms secured contracts on the *(a)* European Parliament building, Strasbourg, *(b)* European Parliament building, Brussels, and *(c)* Bundestag building, Berlin, projects; and what was the value of these projects. [37045]

Mr. Clappison: My officials are currently assembling the information requested and I will write to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Housing Initiatives

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what assessment he has made of the impact of his Department's policy initiatives since 1979 on the housing associations. [37677]

Mr. Clappison: Between 1979–80 and 1994–95, capital and revenue grants totalling more than £16 billion have been made to registered housing associations, which are now the main providers of new social housing. By April 1995 there were around 860,000 housing associations properties, compared with around 350,000 in 1979.

In 1988, we introduced mixed funding for housing association developments which has enabled associations to raise over £5 billion in private finance. This has generated almost 100,000 more housing association homes than would have been possible without the private finance input.

Our shared home ownership and incentive initiatives have helped people who wanted to buy their own home but could not otherwise afford to do so. These initiatives represent good value for money, particularly where they release rented lettings for others in housing need. From 1990–91 to the end of 1994–195 more than 60,000 households have benefited from these initiatives, and more than 40,000 existing social lettings have been released for others in housing need.

We have also encouraged housing associations to take on former local authority housing. Since 1988, 43 new housing associations have been created for this purpose. More than 180,000 dwellings have been transferred from local authority ownership, generating some £2.8 billion of linked private sector investment for the purchase, repair and long-term maintenance of the properties.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38282]

Sir Paul Beresford: The pay bargaining units and the union recognition and bargaining arrangements proposed for 1996 are:

DoE (central)

Staff in headquarters, staff in the Government offices for the regions and rent assessment panels; current patterns of union recognition will remain and procedural agreements for future consultation and negotiation are under discussion.

Planning Inspectorate

Staff in the agency; union recognition will be on current lines and procedures for negotiations are in place.

Building Research Establishment

BRE already has responsibility for negotiating the pay of its industrial staff and will take this on for all staff in the agency; union recognition will be on current lines and procedures for negotiations are under discussion for non-industrial staff.

PSA Services

Staff in the centre will become part of the DoE (central) bargaining unit. Those on secondment to the successor businesses to PSA will have their pay determined by analogue to arrangements in DoE (central).

Property Holdings (to become Property Adviser to the Civil Estate)

Staff in the PACE agency; union recognition will be on current lines and procedures for negotiations are under discussion.

Security and Facilities Executive

SAFE already has responsibility for negotiating the pay of its industrial staff and will take this on for the other staff in the agency; union recognition will be on current lines and procedures for negotiations are under discussion.

The Buying Agency

Staff in the TBA agency; union recognition will be on current lines and procedures for negotiations are under discussion.

It is planned that the final three bodies listed will have become the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by 1 April 1996.

In addition, the Health and Safety Executive, the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre agency and the Ordnance Survey already have responsibility for their own pay arrangements and have agreed arrangements for negotiating with those unions recognised.

Asbestos

Mr. Ian McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring is taking place following the Health and Safety Executive's increased emphasis on the risks of casual exposure to asbestos as outlined in the HSE statement on asbestos 1994. [38052]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive is currently commissioning an independent evaluation of its asbestos awareness campaign. The results should be available towards the middle of 1996.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the number of cases identified where respiratory protective equipment has been used but where the respirable asbestos dust levels exceed the respiratory protective equipment manufacturers claimed level of protection since July 1992; [38055]

(2) what sanctions are applied to contractors who are caught using respirable protective equipment but where the level of respirable asbestos dust exceeds the respiratory protective equipment manufacturers claimed level of protection; [38056]

(3) how many contractors have been sanctioned for using respiratory protective equipment where the level of respirable asbestos dust exceeds the respiratory protective equipment manufacturers claimed level of protection since July 1992; [38057]

(4) how many contractors have been fined for using respiratory protective equipment where the level of respirable asbestos dust exceeds the respiratory protective equipment manufacturers claimed level of protection since July 1992; and what is the average level of the fine. [38058]

Sir Paul Beresford: If standards of health and safety are not adequate, health and safety inspectors have the statutory power to serve improvement or prohibition notices, or prosecute duty holders. Information is not centrally available on the number of cases or contractors sanctioned involving the use of respiratory protective equipment where the level of respirable asbestos dust exceeds the manufacturers claimed level of protection. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many instances have been identified in each of the last three years for which figures are available of asbestos removal work being carried out by licensed contractors using self-employed operatives who have been required to provide their own respiratory protective equipment; [38059]

(2) what sanctions have been applied to licensed asbestos removal contractors who have been found using self-employed operatives who have been required to provide their own respiratory protective equipment. [38060]

Sir Paul Beresford: Licensed asbestos removal contractors cannot require self-employed operatives to provide their own respiratory protective equipment. Where self-employed operatives voluntarily provide their own respiratory protective equipment the licensed contractor, as duty holder under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987, remains responsible for ensuring that the equipment is suitable for the work to be undertaken, taking into account the approved code of practice.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what work is being carried out to monitor the Health and Safety Executive's July 1992 initiative to reduce exposure to asbestos dust during the removal of asbestos insulation; and if he will make a statement. [38065]

(2) what evidence he has of reduced exposure to asbestos dust during the removal of asbestos insulation since July 1992; [38066]

(3) what progress has been made on reduced exposure to asbestos by measures other than the use of respiratory protective equipment since July 1992. [38068]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive does not hold quantitative data on the progress made in reducing exposure to asbestos by measures other than the use of respiratory protective equipment since July 1992.

Licensed asbestos removal contractors are required to provide the appropriate enforcing authority with written notification of the proposed work entailing the removal of asbestos insulation or asbestos coating. On the notification form, the licensed asbestos removal contractor is required to specify the dust suppression or dust control technique to be used. Where dust suppression methods—controlled wet stripping—are not to be used, that decision has to be justified to the satisfaction of the enforcing authority which can monitor the action being taken by the contractor in accordance with the July 1992 initiative.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many cases have been identified, in each of the last three years for which figures are available, of operatives directly employed by licensed asbestos removal contractors who are not under medical surveillance; [38050]

(2) how many cases have been identified, in each of the last three years for which figures are available, of operatives directly employed by licensed asbestos removal contractors who have not been medically examined within the preceding two years. [38051]

Sir Paul Beresford: This information requested is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contractors have been *(a)* sanctioned and *(b)* fined for asking little attempt to use effective dust suppression or dust control measures and relying on respirators to protect against high levels of respirable dust, since July 1992; and what is the average level of fine. [38054]

Sir Paul Beresford: This information requested is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent on publicity to increase awareness of the risks of casual exposure to asbestos since the publication of the Health and Safety Executive statement on asbestos 1994. [38070]

Sir Paul Beresford: In February this year HSE launched a major campaign to raise awareness of the risks of casual exposure to asbestos and of the appropriate precautions which should be taken when working with it. A total of £227,700 was spent on national newspaper and trade journal advertising alone. A low-cost telephone order line and the production and distribution of more than 250,000 free leaflets and pocket cards cost a further £244,000.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what approaches have been made to employers' associations and trade unions to participate in a joint publicity drive to highlight the risks of casual exposure to asbestos as outlined in the HSE statement on asbestos 1994. [38053]

Sir Paul Beresford: Trade unions and employers' associations have been involved in HSE's asbestos awareness campaign, through the usual channel of the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committees, and in particular the Health and Safety Commission's construction industry advisory committee. In addition, HSE recently sought the help of all local authorities to ensure that workers and contractors involved in building maintenance are aware of the risks of exposure to asbestos dust.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sanctions are applied to contractors who make little or no attempt to use effective dust suppression or dust control measures and rely on respirators to protect against high levels of respiratory dust. [38069]

Sir Paul Beresford: If standards of health and safety are not adequate, health and safety inspectors have the statutory power to serve improvement or prohibition notices, or prosecute duty holders. The Health and Safety Executive may revoke a licence if an asbestos removal contractor is convicted of an offence of failing to discharge a duty relating to work with asbestos insulation or asbestos coating to which he is subject by any health and safety legislation.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on reducing the risk of heat stress during the removal of insulation from hot plant and pipework, since the publication of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance note EH 57, "The problems of Asbestos Removal at High Temperatures" in December 1992. [38067]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive has not undertaken a formal assessment of the impact of the advice contained in guidance note EH 57.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been taken by the Health and Safety Executive to enforce asbestos regulations since the publication of the HSE Statement on Asbestos-1994, and what was the corresponding number of prosecutions taken in the preceding period covering the same time span. [38071]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive's statement on asbestos was published in September 1994. Details of informations laid by Health and Safety Executive inspectors alleging contravention of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987, the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 or the Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1992 are given in the table. Statistics from April 1995 have not yet been compiled.

Period	*Number of months*	*Number of informations*
1 August 1993 to 31 August 1994	13	[1]52
1 September 1993 to 31 March 1994	7	31
1 September 1994 to 31 March 1995	7	[1]27

[1] Provisional: Statistics for April 1994 to March 1995 not yet verified.

Safety Consultants

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many safety consultants are currently in operation in the United Kingdom; [38061]

(2) what qualifications are required and what BSI standard is to be achieved before a person is recognised as a safety consultant; [38062]

(3) what type of training, and for what duration, is required before a person is recognised as a safety consultant; [38063]

(4) if safety consultants operating in British industry are required to register with the Health and Safety Executive. [38064]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive has no information on the numbers of safety consultants. Safety consultants are not required to register with HSE or to have any specific qualifications or undergo any particular type or duration of training. While there are a range of qualifications in health and safety, including National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Occupational Health and Safety Practice, there is no British Standard. HSE has published a free booklet, "Selecting a health and safety consultancy", which helps business to find competent consultants.

Local Government Finance, Dorset

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total percentage increase in the various categories of standard spending assessments for Dorset compared with inflation since 1990. [38376]

Sir Paul Beresford: The information is as follows:

Dorset County Council SSA (unadjusted for changes in function)

SSA Element	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
Education						
£ million	157.560	184.435	200.117	185.549	191.515	197.952
Percentage change	—	+17.1	+8.5	−7.3	+3.2	+3.4
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+17.1	+8.5	+4.4	+3.2	+1.1
Per Social Services						
£ million	43.495	53.506	57.420	59.481	68.427	77.623
Percentage change	—	+23.0	+7.3	+3.6	+15.0	+13.4
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+23.0	+7.3	+3.6	−1.4	+0.2

Dorset County Council SSA (unadjusted for changes in function)

SSA Element	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
Fire						
£ million	9.527	10.928	11.753	12.065	12.179	12.444
Percentage change	—	+14.7	+7.6	+2.7	+0.9	+2.2
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+14.7	+7.6	+2.7	+0.9	+2.2
Police						
£ million	20.801	22.879	26.993	28.043	29.218	[2]—
Percentage change	—	+10.0	+18.0	+3.9	+4.2	[2]—
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+10.0	+18.0	+3.9	+4.2	[2]—
Highways maintenance						
£ million	21.758	24.680	24.632	24.273	24.292	24.828
Percentage change	—	+13.4	–0.2	–1.5	0	+2.2
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	—13.4	–0.2	+5.5	+0.1	+2.2
Capital financing						
£ million	24.207	27.321	24.253	24.240	22.181	20.065
Percentage change	—	+12.9	–11.2	–0.1	–8.5	–9.5
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+12.9	–11.2	+0.1	–8.5	[3]–6.2
All other services						
£ million	12.992	18.069	24.608	23.839	23.731	25.362
Percentage change	—	+39.1	+36.2	–3.1	–0.5	+6.9
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+39.1	+36.2	–2.8	–0.5	+5.4
Total SSA						
£ million	290.339	341.818	369.776	357.489	371.543	358.274
Percentage change	—	+17.7	+8.2	–3.3	+3.9	–3.6
Percentage adjusted[1]	—	+17.7	+8.2	+3.4	+1.1	+0.9
GDP Deflator						
Percentage change	—	+4.1	+3.0	+1.8	+3.0	+3.0

[1] For 1993–94 onwards, an adjusted SSA figure has been used to provide an appropriate year on year comparison. Details of the calculation are included in the annual Standard Spending Assessment Handbook.
[2] In 1995–96, Dorset police authority's SSA is £31.619 million. This includes a police SSA element of £31.109 million, a capital financing element of –£0.273 million and an all other services element of £0.783 million. The comparable figures for 1994–95 and earlier years are included in Dorset county council's SSA.

Regional Planning Guidance, West Midlands

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to review the regional planning guidance for the west midlands, to reduce the level of new house building required in Worcestershire and correspondingly increase it in Birmingham. [38146]

Sir Paul Beresford: We shall keep our recently issued regional planning guidance for the west midlands under review. In particular, I have asked the local authorities to reconsider the housing figures in the light of the latest national household projections. They will advise me on this next year and we will then consider whether to revise our guidance. However, I cannot promise the hon. Member that the outcome will be a lower figure for Worcestershire and a higher figure for Birmingham.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of reorganisation in each of the individual local authority areas affected. [38412]

Sir Paul Beresford: It is too early to estimate the final cost of reorganisation in each area. The reports of the Local Government Commission give estimates of costs and savings for the main options they considered and for their recommendations. The outcome will depend on how authorities implement reorganisation.

EU Fur Imports Ban

Mr. Heppel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when a technical working group of the European Union with Canada and the USA was established to develop humane trapping standards; and if he will make a statement on its activities. [38705]

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that EC Regulation 3254/91 to Ban the Import of Fur from Certain Species will be implemented at the end of the year and that no further delays in its implementation occur; and if he will make a statement. [38706]

Mr. Clappison: I understand that the working group was established in August this year. The United Kingdom is not represented on it and we have not so far received any written report from it. We would expect any advice from the working group to be submitted to the Council of Ministers.

The Government strongly support the objectives of EC Regulation 3254/91 which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in November 1991. The ban will come into force on 1 January 1996. We are currently awaiting formal receipt of the Commission's detailed proposals for implementing the ban on the import of certain furs from countries which still use leghold traps. The proposals are expected to include a list of countries which have already banned the use of leghold traps and can therefore continue to trade in fur products from the 13 species listed in the regulation.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he will publish revised financial guidelines for the management agreements with owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest; [39242]

(2) when he will publish recommendations, advice and information to aid owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest in accordance with section 33 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. [39243]

Mr. Clappison: Work on revising these documents is continuing. They will be the subject of consultation with interested parties before being finalised and issued.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review permitted development rights for temporary activities within or adjacent to sites of special scientific interest. [38525]

Mr. Clappison: Following a review in 1992, permitted development rights for certain recreational uses of sites of special scientific interest were withdrawn. The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 remove permitted development rights which would adversely affect the integrity of a Natura 2000 site which is also a site of special scientific interest. We have no plans for a further review.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to prevent Mickletownings site of special scientific interest from receiving sewage-created nutrient input. [38529]

Mr. Clappison: In 1991, following a series of accidental sewage overflows during storm conditions in the 1980s, English Nature initiated a 10-year monitoring programme agreed with British Coal Opencast and Leeds city council to monitor the physical and chemical nature of the pond waters within the site of special scientific interest. Evidence points to an improvement in water quality and no damage to the special interest.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made and received on the impact of sea level rises on sites of special scientific interest in the Humber estuary. [38530]

Mr. Clappison: English Nature is working with the National Rivers Authority to address the concerns expressed and develop a comprehensive framework for the future management of the flood defences of the Humber.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to protect Skipwith Common site of special scientific interest from dredging and drainage operations. [38531]

Mr. Clappison: Routine maintenance, including dredging and drainage, does not adversely affect the scientific interest of this site.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to protect Bingley South Bog site of special scientific interest from damage arising from road construction. [38532]

Mr. Clappison: Appropriate mitigation measures will be taken to protect the scientific interest of this site.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to protect *(a)* Broadhead Clough, *(b)* Dark Peak and *(c)* Haworth Moor site of special scientific interest from acid deposition. [38533]

Mr. Clappison: The southern Pennines, in which the three sites lie, has had a long legacy of air pollution from the effects of the industrial revolution in neighbouring Lancashire and Manchester. The special interest of the sites of special scientific interest is presently maintained but long-term sustainability can only be ensured through the UK's commitment to reducing sulphur emissions. UK emissions of sulphur dioxide have fallen by 45 per cent. since 1970. The Government are committed to making further cuts under the EC Large Combustion Plants Directive, which will substantially reduce the proportion of the UK surface area suffering from acid damage by the end of the century.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to protect the Leeds-Liverpool canal site of special scientific interest from development for a boat and caravan storage facility. [38534]

Mr. Clappison: Appropriate mitigation measures have been taken to protect the nature conservation interests of this site.

European Biodiversity Strategy

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the pan-European biological diversity strategy in relation to no climbing areas or seasons; and what discussions he has held with the British Mountaineering Council on this matter. [38029]

Mr. Clappison: The strategy is on the agenda of the European Environment Ministers conference in Sofia, which the Secretary of State is currently attending.

The strategy is a useful framework for international action but further work is needed on it, particularly consultation with relevant interests, including the British Mountaineering Council.

Mines Rescue Service

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future size, location and funding of the mines rescue service. [38262]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Government have been concerned to ensure that a mines rescue service continues to be available to those mines who may have need of it. To this end I will be making regulations in the near future requiring the owners of certain types of mines to participate in a mines rescue scheme approved by the Secretary of State and which would ensure that appropriate and effective rescue services continue to be available. Once these regulations are made I will consult the Health and Safety Commission and others whom I consider to be appropriate, on proposals for approval of such a mines rescue scheme. A scheme has already been submitted for approval which proposes to maintain the current level of provision of six central rescue stations in strategic locations and a minimum of 80 full-time

employees. The mines rescue service is currently operated by British Coal on a contract basis, and funded by the mine owners. Within the framework of the relevant statutory requirements, including the regulations and the scheme when these come into force, the future organisation of mines rescue service will be a matter for the mine owners.

Local Government Residuary Body

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue the management statement to the chairman of the Local Government Residuary Body (England). [39322]

Sir Paul Beresford: I have today issued the management statement to the chairman of the Local Government Residuary Body (England). I am placing a copy in the Library.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated in such frauds and (2) subsequently recovered. [39130]

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested is in the table:

	Number of frauds	*Total misappropriated* £	*Total recovered* £
1991–92			
Department	7	84,139	57,215
Agencies	0	0	0
NDPBs	6	19,690	2,442
1992–93			
Department	7	9,024	7,635
Agencies	0	0	0
NDPBs	9	3,056	1,028
1993–94			
Department	5	3,241	3,241
Agencies	1	1,025	0
NDPBs	6	50,230	50,000
1994–95			
Department	4	84	84
Agencies	0	0	0
NDPBs	2	397	0

Environment Council

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 6 October. [39829]

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at the Environment Council in Luxembourg held on 6 October.

Common positions were reached on a decision on the exchange of information on air quality and on a directive temporarily deferring the emission standards for certain diesel engines, in line with technical progress. On the latter I secured the deletion of text relating to fiscal incentives. Political agreement was secured on the second phase of the financial instrument for the environment—LIFE—which agreed a budget of 450 mecu over four years, 1996–1999, to be reviewed in 1997. Political agreement was also achieved on an amendment to the Waste Shipments Regulation. In both cases a common position is expected in December.

There was a policy debate about the proposed amendment to Directive 85/337 on Environmental Impact Assessment. I secured some helpful amendments to the proposals and further detailed discussions will now continue in the experts working group. The Presidency is aiming for a common position in December.

Council conclusions were agreed on a number of international conferences taking place in the coming months. These include the third pan-European conference, "Environment for Europe", the seventh conference of the parties to the Montreal protocol, the second conference of the parties to the biodiversity convention and the Euro-Mediterranean conference. Agreement was also reached on Council conclusions deferring the review of the functions of the European Environment Agency for two years.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour and direct service organisations failed to meet their statutory financial objectives in 1993–94. [39828]

Sir Paul Beresford: On 25 July this year, 18 statutory notices were served on 18 local authorities concerning the failure of their direct labour and service organisations to meet the required financial objectives in 1993–94. A further five notices were served on the London borough of Islington for failure to submit unqualified accounts.

My right hon. Friend has now considered the responses to those notices and has today given six directions to Corby borough council on vehicle maintenance, to Devon county council on grounds maintenance, to the London borough of Islington on building maintenance, grounds maintenance, and highways and sewers work, and to Ryedale district council on sports and leisure management.

The directions take three forms:

preventing the authority from carrying out the work if it fails to meet the financial objective in 1995–96:—Corby, vehicle maintenance.

requiring the authority to retender the work if they fail to meet the financial objective in 1995–96, and to seek the Secretary of State's prior consent where the work has to be retendered and where the authority subsequently wishes to award the work in-house:—Devon, grounds maintenance, and Ryedale, sports and leisure management.

preventing the authority from carrying out the work if they fail to submit unqualified accounts for work carried out in 1995–96:—the London borough of Islington, building maintenance, grounds maintenance and highways and sewers.

The Secretary of State has also decided to take no further statutory action in respect of financial failure in 1993–94 by:

Bedford, refuse collection; Colchester, sport and leisure management; Coventry, grounds maintenance; Dacorum, vehicle maintenance; Gedling, grounds maintenance; High

Peak, grounds maintenance; Hove, sports and leisure management; the London borough of Islington, refuse collection and sports and leisure management; Mansfield, refuse collection; New Forest, building cleaning; North Cornwall, building maintenance; Sedgefield, refuse collection; South Herefordshire, building maintenance; Stoke-on-Trent, other catering; Torbay, grounds maintenance; and Wakefield, schools and welfare catering.

A decision on Lincolnshire county council's failure to meet the financial objective for highways and sewers work has been deferred and will be announced at a later date.

To date, 120 statutory notices have been served by the Department on local authorities for losses incurred by their DLOs/DSOs in 1993–94. A further five statutory notices have been served on the London borough of Islington following its failure to submit unqualified accounts. Today's decisions follow those announced on 6 June, 11 July and 22 August 1995.

Dounreay Reactor Site

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the results to date of the survey carried out of the whole of the Dounreay reactor site in respect of radioactive hotspots, and if he will make a statement. [38302]

Mr. Page: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Agency has been carrying out an extensive survey of contamination on the Dounreay site and any areas of significant contamination on the Dounreay site have either been removed or have been barriered off to restrict access. A strategy for dealing with those areas where contamination has not yet been removed is being prepared for submission to the Health and Safety's Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate, the Scottish Office and Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate . The survey is now well advanced and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Details of the UKAEA's findings have been reported to the relevant regulatory and advisory bodies and have been the subject of UKAEA "facts faxes" which have been issued to the site work-force, the hon-Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) members of the Dounreay local liaison committee, the Highland regional council and the local media. I am now arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

TREASURY

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress made on the implementation of the SIB/PIA review of pension transfer opt-outs and non-joiners. [38263]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The Government fully support the efforts of the financial services regulators to arrange for reviews to identify cases in which investors face financial loss as a result of bad investment advice not given in compliance with regulatory rules, and to ensure that redress is made where it is due. Progress in implementing the review has been delayed by a judicial review of the Securities and Investment Board's guidance earlier this year. However the Personal Investment Authority has now issued guidance, and many firms now have reviews in hand.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the proportion of purchasers of personal pensions contracted according to the SIB/PIA guidelines by *(a)* tied agents, *(b)* independent financial advisers and *(c)* all vendors of personal pensions. [38264]

Mrs. Knight: I regret that this information is not currently available. However, the Securities and Investments Board plans to collect data to monitor the progress of the review and I understand that it should be available early next year.

Fish Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investigations have been made by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the EEC Commission of the origin of fish products and prawns or shrimps imported into this country on EURI certificates from (i) Iceland, (ii) Norway and (iii) the Faroe Islands; how many staff were involved and for what period of time; and what information about consignments was made available to them. [37954]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No investigations have been made in Iceland, Norway or the Faroe Islands by Customs an Excise. The EC Commission has sent mission teams to all three countries. No information is available as to the precise duration of the inquiries or the number of staff involved.

A team visited Iceland on several occasions from July 1992 to early 1993, in connection with exports of prawns. They were able to examine processing plant records, which identified the source of raw materials through to consignments of finished product. In 1995 another team visited Iceland to look at cod. The result of their inquiries are still being evaluated.

A team visited Norway to make inquiries about cod. These inquiries were subsequently pursued by the Norwegian customs authorities who reported their conclusions to the EC Commission in January and March 1995.

The mission to the Faroe Islands took place in 1991. Processing plant and export consignment records were examined.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many retrospective claims against how many firms, for what total sums of money and for what period are being made by his Department against importers of prawns or shrimps in respect of *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands and at whose behest. [37946]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of claims	*Number of firms*	*Total (£)*	*Period*
a–i) Iceland (mission)	15	12	435,000	October 1990 to August 1992
a–ii) Iceland (disclosure)	11	9	23,000	1993
c) Faroes (mission)	13	13	1,900,000	May 1989 to October 1991

a–i) and c) were the result of EC missions, while a–ii) was a disclosure by Icelandic customs in respect of one of their exporters.

No claims have been made against importers in respect of Norway.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has made to the EEC Commission for compensation for British importers of prawns or shrimps innocently imported from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands on EUR1 certificates now considered by the European Commission to be invalid, what scale of compensation has been proposed; when it will be payable; and what response has been forthcoming from the Commission. [37955]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such proposals have been made because duty recovery has been suspended pending completion of the legal process. Therefore, compensation is not appropriate in the circumstances. The Commission and member states are being urged to produce a lasting solution which properly balances safeguarding the Community budget and the interests of European business. Such a solution will need to address the future as well as the past.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice was and is now given by his Department to importers of fish products from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands coming in duty free under EUR1 certificates about their liability if the certificates issued in the country of origin prove to be invalid, about how they can safeguard themselves against such retrospective charges and about how they can test the validity of EUR1 certificates. [37948]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Advice is set out in Customs notice No. 826. This recognises the difficulties that importers may experience in trying to establish whether a certificate is valid or whether goods shown on it are eligible for preferential tariff treatment. For very many years the notice has warned of the potential further duty liability and since July 1990 has advised importers to consider the advantages of including a clause in contracts allowing them to recover any duty charge from the supplier. In addition, Customs have regularly contributed articles for trade journals and participated in trade seminars and the consequences of invalid documentation has been covered on each occasion.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in levying retrospective duty on prawns or shrimps imported from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands with valid EUR1 certificates, he makes any allowance for the fact that a proportion of those prawn/shrimps will in fact have been caught in that country; what proportion he estimates this to be; and whether this is estimated as being constant or can be specifically assessed for each consignment. [37952]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The mission to Iceland found that most processing plants kept sophisticated records which identified the source of raw materials through to consignments of finished product. Duty demands were issued only for consignments where there was a clear audit trail from the non-originating prawns through to deliveries to specific companies in the EC. Where part of a consignment qualified, typical because it comprised prawns of different sizes and origin, then the duty demand was restricted to the non-originating element.

No duty demands have been issued for prawns or shrimps imported from Norway.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish the evidence provided to him by the European Commission that prawns or shrimps imported from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands in fact originated elsewhere; and indicate what proportion of the imports from the Faroe Islands this applied to. [37947]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: EC mission team reports, which contain sensitive commercial information, are protected by EC agreements which restrict their issue or publication.

The proportion of imports from the Faroe Islands established as non-originating was 66 per cent. for 1989, 81 per cent. for 1990 and 53 per cent. for 1991.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has made to his customs counterpart in *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands about their acceptance of EUR1 certificates for the export of fish products to Britain which subsequently proved to have originated elsewhere than in Iceland; what compensation he has requested from them for British importers trusting these certificates; and what procedures his Department has put in place to check the validity of EUR1 certificates for Iceland. [37951]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such representations have been made to third country customs authorities.

The UK has, however, made strong representations concerning these difficulties at recent EC meetings and gained considerable support from other member states. A number of different proposals have been put forward to alleviate the burdens on importers and these now have to be considered carefully. It will be for the European Commission to write to third country authorities if this is considered appropriate.

In accordance with normal practice, EUR1 certificates are from time to time returned to exporting countries for verification by their customs authorities.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the outcome of all court cases pursued by his Department against importers of prawns or shrimps from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands on the basis of EUR1 certificates now considered by him to be invalid; what costs have been awarded and to whom; how much retrospective duty has actually been paid; and by how many firms. [37956]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Two of the companies who received duty demands in respect of imports from the Faroe Islands submitted an application for a judicial review on the grounds that the demands were incorrect in law. The High Court referred a number of questions to the European Court of Justice and awarded costs against Customs. No reason was given for the award and Customs are still in correspondence on the matter. The judgment of the European Court of Justice is expected by early December.

There have been no other relevant court cases, although several importers have appealed to the VAT and duties tribunal. These cases are being stood over by the tribunal pending the European Court of Justice judgment. Payment of duty will not be pursued until the legal process is completed.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims for duty have been made in each year since 1980 for duty not paid on fish products imported from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands on EUR1 certificates which subsequently proved to be invalid. [37949]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is as follows:

	1992	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*
Iceland	—	12	—	9
Norway	—	—	—	2
Faroe Islands	13	—	—	—

Figures are not available for imports of fish products prior to 1992.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what burden of proof about the origin of fish products imported on EUR1 certificates falls on *(a)* his Department *(b)* the British importer, *(c)* the customs of the originating country and *(d)* the exporter issuing the EUR1 certificate where such certificates are deemed by his Department to be invalid; on what basis such retrospective claims are made by his Department; and what time limitations apply. [37953]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The responsibilities of the various parties are set out in the preferential trade agreements between the European Community and Iceland, Norway and the Faroe islands. The prime responsibility for determining whether particular goods qualify for preferential status lies with the exporter. Where it is not possible to determine the origin of goods, or where they are non-originating—that is, they do not come originally from the exporter's country—an EUR1 certificate is inappropriate.

The responsibility for accounting for any import duties due falls on the importer in the country of destination.

The customs authorities in the country of importation are responsible for collecting any duties due, including duties charged retrospectively where EUR1s are found to be invalid.

The customs authorities in the country of export are responsible for issuing EUR1s verifying any certificates returned by foreign import authorities and considering sanctions against exporters who abuse the system.

Customs and Excise have issued retrospective duty demands only where either the customs authorities for the exporter have advised that certificates were invalid or where an EC mission has provided firm evidence that goods did not meet the rules of origin.

The time limitation for retrospective duty demands is three years from importation.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what instructions he has had from the European Commission about retrospective duty on prawns or shrimps imported from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands on EUR1 certificates; how much he has been required to recover; to whom this is payable; what information he has about the levy of such duties in each fish importing member of the EU; and what representations he has made to the Commission about such changes. [37950]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No specific instructions have been received from the European Commission about retrospective duty on prawns or shrimps. However, where checks on EUR1s show that the goods were not entitled to relief, duty at the full rate becomes payable under the terms of the preferential trade agreement with the country concerned, which in the community are implemented in EC law. Customs duty is collected by member states and remitted to the Community as own resources.

In the case of retrospective duty demand on prawns from Iceland, Customs and Excise are aware that duty recovery action has also been taken by Denmark and Germany, the only other countries with a major interest.

Customs have made strong representations at recent EC meetings about the problems associated with duty recovery in respect of invalid documentation, including EUR1s, and have gained considerable support from other member states. Over the next few weeks, Customs will continue to press for urgent attention to be given to this issue with a view to reaching consensus among member states on the best solution.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount collected in value added tax *(a)* in 1979, *(b)* in 1985 and *(c)* in the latest year for which figures are available. [37910]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Net receipts of value added tax for financial years 1979–80, 1985–86 and 1994–95 are as follows:

£ million

Net receipts		
1979–80	*1985–86*	*1994–95*
8,189.3	19,331.4	41,817.3

Independent Television (Taxation)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of taxation paid by the ITV companies to the Exchequer *(a)* in 1985, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* in the latest year for which figures are available. [37966]

Mr. Jack: Companies licensed by the Independent Television Commission to provide Channel 3 services had an estimated corporation tax liability in 1993 of approximately £50 million. Figures for 1985 and 1990 are only available at disproportionate cost.

Kenya (IMF Facility)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the enhanced structural adjustment facility for Kenya at the International Monetary Fund; and if he will make a statement. [37673]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Discussions between the IMF and the Kenyan Government continue. We hope that there will be sufficient progress in Kenya so as to allow early agreement on an enhanced structural adjustment facility.

Tobacco Smuggling

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take to reduce tobacco smuggling into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [38040]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs and Excise will continue to take vigorous action against those who smuggle tobacco goods. Working closely with the trade and developing intelligence to identify offenders remains the best method of achieving successful detections.

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what numbers of Customs and Excise officers have been involved in pursuing tobacco smuggling into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years. [38041]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The duties of Customs and Excise officers cover a wide range of revenue and prevention functions. Officers are not normally assigned to deal with a single commodity.

The information requested is not available.

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss of revenue in each of the last five years caused by the smuggling into the United Kingdom of *(a)* hand-rolling tobacco, *(b)* cigarettes, *(c)* pipe tobacco and *(d)* cigars. [38082]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is particularly difficult to make meaningful estimates of smuggled tobacco goods. What can be relied upon however is the number of detections made by Customs and Excise. In the period from 1 January 1993 to 31 August 1995 there were 4,124 detections of smuggled tobacco goods representing a revenue value of some £7.05 million.

The information requested for the last five years is not available. However following recent discussions with the trade, Customs are actively considering methods of deriving credible estimates of smuggling of tobacco goods.

Government Debt

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of general Government gross debt for each country within the EU; and what were the figures for 1991, 1987 and 1983. [38335]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The Government do not produce estimates for general Government gross debt for countries in the EU other than the UK. The most recent figures for the UK are available in the Summer Economic Forecast. Historical data are available in the Financial Statement and Budget Report. Forecasts and historical figures for the rest of the EU can be found in the "OECD Outlook" of June 1995. All three publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Tourism

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of British competitiveness of the level of VAT on tourism products; and what conclusions he has reached. [38454]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no compelling evidence that the fiscal and regulatory environment in the United Kingdom places tourism at a disadvantage. We have a lower standard rate than most EU member states and our zero rate is applied to a wide range of consumer expenditure.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in the consultations between Customs and Excise and the travel industry about the effects of the Value Added Tax (Tour Operators) (Amendment) Order 1995; and if he will make a statement. [39727]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There have been extensive and very productive talks over the summer between Customs, the travel industry and its representatives. These talks have produced a package of options to be publicised today which should allow most tour operators to organise their business so as to minimise any potential for distortion of competition while still fully respecting the provisions of the order. Unlike earlier proposals put forward by some in the industry, this package will not increase taxation for four operators' products. The major trade associations have confirmed that the options adequately address the industry's immediate concerns. Customs' review of the tour operators' margin scheme will now proceed to its second phase which will involve an examination of longer-term issues, including possible simplification of the scheme.

Social Security (Liaison)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often he liaises with the Secretary of State for Social Security. [38815]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Frequently.

Share Option Schemes

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Inland Revenue has made of the percentage of option holders who cash in their options or shares as soon as possible; and if he will publish the assumptions made and the basis of calculation. [37963]

Mr. Jack: Two independent surveys indicate that up to 90 per cent. of option holders sell all or most of their shares on exercise.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has from internal or external sources of the average income of all employees granted share options under approved discretionary share options schemes in each of the last three years. [37902]

Mr. Jack: A provisional estimate of the average relevant emoluments of those granted share options under approved discretionary share option schemes in 1994–95 is approximately £45,000. Estimates for the earlier years are not readily available.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish the results of all research conducted by the Treasury or Inland Revenue since 1984 on the use of share option schemes by small and medium-sized enterprises; [37960]

(2) if he will publish the results of all research conducted by the Treasury or Inland Revenue since 1984 on the use of share option schemes for the benefit of low and middle income employees; [37961]

(3) if he will publish the results of all research carried on by the Treasury or the Inland Revenue since 1984 on the tax revenue gains resulting from increased payment of corporation tax and other taxes in companies whose shares increased in value and which operated successful approved discretionary share option schemes; and if he will publish the research. [37962]

Mr. Jack: A report by KPMG Management Consulting on employee share schemes, prepared for the Inland Revenue, Treasury and Department of Employment, was published by the Inland Revenue in 1991. This report addressed a wide range of issues, including an analysis of employee share schemes by company size. It did not consider the income of employees or any possible impact on corporation tax receipts. In addition regular monitoring is published in "Inland Revenue Statistics".

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much corporation tax was paid in the last three tax years; and what proportion of the total corporation tax paid was by companies operating approved discretionary share option schemes. [37882]

Mr. Jack: The figures for corporation tax receipts are as follows:

Year	*Corporation tax £ million*
1992–93	15,783
1993–94	14,887
1994–95	19,390

Estimates of the proportion of total corporation tax paid by companies operating approved discretionary share option schemes are not available.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies started *(a)* save-as-you-earn share option schemes and *(b)* profit sharing schemes in each of the last three tax years and the current year to date. [37901]

Mr. Jack: Available information is given in the table.

Year	*Profit-sharing schemes*	*Savings-related share option schemes*
1992–93	61	95
1993–94	35	104
1994–95	47	144
1995–96[1]	17	77

[1] Year to date.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Inland Revenue has made of the value of revenue savings to be made by the proposed changes in taxation of share options; and if he will publish the assumptions made and the basis of the calculation. [37964]

Mr. Jack: There will be no effect on tax receipts for the next three financial years and the full-year level will not be reached until approximately 2002–03 as a result of transitional arrangements for options granted before 17 July 1995. A provisional estimate of the full-year revenue yield is about £80 million each year based on current levels of exercise, size of gains and the 1995–96 income tax and capital gains tax systems.

An outline of the methodology and underlying assumptions for the estimated cost of tax relief for approved discretionary share option schemes was published in chapter 6 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1991." It has been assumed that the bulk of schemes will continue after the tax relief is withdrawn, and that the gains made on the exercise of options will generate income tax.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what percentage of companies which floated on the Stock Exchange during the last year had approved discretionary share option schemes in operation; [37879]

(2) how many United Kingdom subsidiaries of United States parent companies operate approved discretionary share option schemes involving options being granted over shares in the United States parent companies; [37900]

(3) how many of the 100 largest corporation tax paying United Kingdom—registered companies in the last year operated share option schemes; [37885]

(4) what assessment he has made of the relationship between changes in the value of share options normally and over the longer term and the profitability of companies; [37972]

(5) how many of the companies which have set up approved discretionary share options schemes since 1984 *(a)* had turnover below £50 million, *(b)* has pre-tax profits below £10 million and *(c)* did not have occupational pension schemes in the year the option schemes were approved by the Inland Revenue. [37903]

Mr. Jack: This information in the form requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, discretionary share option schemes have been monitored since the scheme began in 1984 and statistics published each year in "Inland Revenue Statistics", copies of which are in the Library.

Loans to Business

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of loans to business are for *(a)* under three years, *(b)* under four years, *(c)* under five years and *(d)* over 10 years. [38829]

Mrs. Angela Knight: This information is not collected by the Government. Figures on major British banking groups' advances to non-personal customers resident in the UK, analysed by residual maturity, are set out in table 1.10 of the British Bankers Association "Annual Abstract of Banking Statistics" which is in the Library.

Import Duty on Wine

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds Customs and Excise are now expressing the import duty on wines in terms of ecu per hectolitre, details of which have been sent to the Minister in charge of Customs and Excise; and on what legal basis this description of duty is used. [37629]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The legal basis for customs duties on goods imported into the European Union is an EC agreement on a common tariff which is then incorporated into the UK tariff. To ensure equity, duties are expressed in the same units in all language versions of the common tariff. In the case of wine imports, one element of the duty is defined in monetary terms. In order that the same rate of duty is levied throughout the community, this is expressed in ecu, but is of course converted to national currency for payment.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Church Repair Grants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will list those churches which *(a)* have received, *(b)* are currently receiving and *(c)* have been granted but have not yet received, grant aid from English Heritage towards repairs necessitated by atmospheric pollution together with the amounts in each case. [38635]

Mr. Sproat: English Heritage does not categorise its grants according to the causes which have necessitated structural repairs. Therefore, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of English Heritage's grant expenditure for work resulting from atmospheric pollution to churches. During 1994–95, English Heritage offered £14 million in grants for repairs to historic churches.

Imperial War Museum

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans she has to construct or assist with the construction of an imperial war museum for the north of England; and if she will make a statement. [39037]

Mr. Sproat: It is for the trustees of the imperial war museum to decide on whether there should be a branch of the museum in the north of England.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the report of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art 1994–95 will be published. [39780]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The reviewing committee's annual report 1994–95 has been published today, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Film Industry (Financial Support)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will publish details of the total financial support for the film industry during each of the last three years for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [38134]

Mr. Sproat: My Department's total expenditure on film over the past three years is as follows:

1993–94: £24.34 million (out-turn)

1994–95: £26.16 million (out-turn)

1995–96: £26.07 million (planned expenditure)

Funds are provided to two non-departmental public bodies, the British Film Institute and the National Film and Television School; three private-sector companies: British Screen Finance, the European Co-production Fund and the British Film Commission, and a number of European initiatives.

Libraries (Internet Connections)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many libraries and what percentage of the total are currently linked to the Internet; what is the estimated cost of linking those libraries not hitherto connected; and if she will make a statement. [38585]

Mr. Sproat: We do not have precise information about the total number of public libraries with Internet connections, but we believe that a minimum of 35 out of 167 library authorities—over 20 per cent.—have connections to the Internet or are about to become connected. The cost of connection depends very much on how a library wishes to use the Internet but a basic package could cost from about £2,000, including hardware.

Millennium Commission Funding

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals she has to reinforce compliance with the principle for Millennium Commission funding that it shall not replace, but be additional to already available sources of Government funding, while maintaining the principle of matching Millennium Commissions funding only with private funding. [38415]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* National Lottery funding is additional to existing provision. Millennium Commission projects can attract partnership funding from any eligible source, including public and private funds.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of her *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39133]

Mr. Sproat: The information requested is as follows:

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Total number of cases of fraud committed by employees of			
(a) DNH	Nil	1	Nil
Total monetary sum			
(i) misappropriated	—	£31.70	—
(ii) recovered	—	Nil	—
(b) its agencies	Nil	Nil	Nil
(c) its NDPBs	6	6	9
Total monetary sum			
(i) misappropriated	£202,422	£10,913	£80,759
(ii) recovered	£138,637	£6,155	£76,270

The figures for the year 1991–92, prior to the establishment of my department in April 1992, are not available.

Pay Delegation Plan

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will provide in respect of her plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38272]

Mr. Sproat: The pay delegation plan that my Department submitted to the Treasury covered staff in the Department of National Heritage only. The Royal Parks Agency and the Historic Royal Palaces Agency are preparing separate delegation plans in consultation with my Department. The information requested for each bargaining unit is:

Department of National Heritage

The pay delegation plan covers all staff in my Department at grade 6 and below. This is currently 334 staff in grades as follows:

	Staff
Grade 6	8
Grade 7	48
SEO and equivalent	24
HEO and equivalent	71
EO and equivalent	61
AO and equivalent	59
AA and equivalent	24
Secretarial group	26
Support grades	13

My Department is recognising all relevant unions for pay bargaining purposes and is currently in discussion with the trade unions about a procedural agreement which will enable negotiations to take place about changes to terms and conditions and pay progression.

Royal Parks Agency

The Royal Parks Agency already has delegated pay authority for the royal parks constabulary and negotiates this with the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. My Department is in discussion with the RPA about its delegation plan for all remaining staff, apart from the chief executive—currently 98 staff in the following grades:

	Staff
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	3
SEO	4
SPTO	2
HEO	9
HPTO	1
EO	15
AO	27
AA	1
Typist	2
Park Manager	4
Assistant Park Manager	7
Park Supervisor	13
Groom	6
Cartographer	1
Wildlife Officer	1
Assistant Wildlife Officer	1

It has not yet finalised its negotiating arrangements with its trade unions for these staff.

Historic Royal Palaces Agency

The Historic Royal Palaces Agency already has delegated pay authority for its industrial staff. The agency is in discussion with my Department about a pay delegation plan covering all other staff in the agency, except the chief executive and any other staff who may form part of the new senior civil service. These staff number 394 staff in the following grades, excluding the chief executive.

	Staff
Grade 5	6
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	15
SEO and equivalent	18
HEO and equivalent	26
EO and equivalent	47
AO and equivalent	141
AA and equivalent	140
Industrial staff	55

The agency has held preliminary discussions with all the unions currently represented, but has not yet reached agreement on formal negotiating arrangements.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Support Agency (Inquests)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many suicide cases evidence relating to the activities of the Child Support Agency has been presented at a coroner's inquest since April 1993. [37593]

Mr. Kirkhope: Information about the evidence submitted at individual inquests is not held centrally.

Mobile Phone Fraud

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the figures for the incidents for *(a)* each category of mobile phone cloning reported and/or investigated and *(b)* each category of mobile phone theft reported and/or investigated by each police force in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in each of the last two years for which figures are available and the totals for the last five years. [38344]

Mr. Maclean: The information is not collected centrally. However, I understood that the mobile telecommunications industry has provided some estimates on mobile phone fraud as part of its contribution to the work of the industry and Government study group on mobile phone fraud. I understand that a copy of the briefing paper containing these estimates is in the Library.

Burglaries (Amersham and Slough)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the incidence of burglary in the Amersham and Slough police areas in the latest quarter for which figures are available and for the corresponding quarter a year earlier. [38438]

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available centrally although figures for the 12 months to June 1995 for Thames Valley as a whole are published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/95, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Fine Defaulting (Young Offenders)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by individual centres the numbers of young people who have been committed to young offenders' centres for defaulting on fines in each of the last six years. [39277]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Mark Fisher, dated 24 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking, if he will list by individual centres the numbers of young people who have been committed to young offenders' centres for defaulting on fines in each of the last six years.

The information requested is in the attached table and is for young people aged under 21 for the years 1990 to 1994. Data for 1989 is not available.

Receptions of young people into young offender institutions.

Establishment	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Closed YOIS (male)					
Brinsford	—	—	—	97	51
Deerbolt	1	—	—	—	—
Dover	1	—	—	1	—
Feltham	84	26	185	237	218
Glen Parva	184	37	214	323	321
Guys Marsh	—	—	—	—	—
Hollesley Bay	—	1	—	—	1
Huntercombe	—	1	—	1	—
Lancaster Farms	—	—	—	19	66
Moorland	—	5	24	13	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	21	—
Wetherby	133	181	—	—	—
Total closed YOIS (male)	403	251	423	712	657
Open YOIS (male)					
Guys Marsh	—	—	—	2	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	1	1
Thorn Cross	—	2	1	12	—
Usk	—	—	—	6	32
Total open YOIS (male)	—	2	1	21	33
Short sentence YOIS (male)					
Eastwood Park	6	26	176	—	—
Hollesley Bay	96	107	61	—	—
Lowdham Grange	9	4	—	—	—
Werrington	3	6	—	—	—
Wetherby	29	609	703	—	—
Total short sentence YOIS (male)	143	752	940	—	—
Juvenile YOIS (male)					
Feltham	—	—	51	35	—
Lancaster farms	—	—	—	—	1
Werrington	—	—	5	—	—
Total Juvenile YOIS (male)	—	—	56	35	1
Total all YOIS (male)	546	1,005	1,420	768	691
Closed YOIS (female)					
New Hall	23	6	12	22	14
Styal	—	—	—	—	—
Total closed YOIS (female)	23	6	12	22	14
Open YOIS (female)					
Drake Hall	1	—	2	12	21
Total open YOIS (female)	1	—	2	12	21
Total all female YOIS (female)	24	6	14	34	35
Total all YOIS	570	1,011	1,434	802	726

Police Funding (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will now announce the date of his proposed visit to Liverpool and Mersyside to

discuss funding of the police authority; and if he will make a statement; [38832]

(2) if he will list the hon. Members and organisations who have asked him to visit Merseyside to discuss police funding and the recent disturbances on Liverpool streets; and if he will make a statement; [38833]

(3) what representations he has received from Merseyside police authority and hon. Members concerning police funding; and if he will make a statement. [38834]

Mr. Maclean: I have received invitations from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) and the chairman of the Merseyside police authority to visit Merseyside. I would be happy to visit the area when a suitable opportunity arises and when it would be practical to do so.

I have received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members, local councils, and members of the public about the funding of Merseyside police. The police funding formula has been subject to some further developmental work this year. I cannot say at present how this will affect the allocation of funding to Merseyside for 1996–97. I have, however, taken note of the views of the police authority.

Special Constables

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide funding to police forces to assist the recruitment of special constables and improvements to their conditions and training. [39830]

Mr. Maclean: We have established a new challenge fund for special constables. It includes £4 million of Government grant in 1995–96. Police forces in England and Wales are being invited to bid for money to help to resource an increase in the size of their local special constabularies and to help bring the training and equipment of special constables to a more consistent standard.

We have asked forces to look for other sources of support, such as local sponsorship, to boost the fund. Sponsors are also invited to contribute on a national basis.

The special constabulary makes a valuable contribution to the policing of this country by supplementing the efforts of the regular force. Specials provide an important and visible link between the police and local communities. I hope that the fund will not only increase numbers towards the Government target of 30,000 but improve the quality of the assistance special constable can give to regular police officers.

We have issued guidance to all forces in England and Wales about bidding for grants from the fund. I am placing a copy of it in the Library.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the split between operations and policy in each agency which reports to him. [38853]

Mr. Howard: There are four executive agencies within the Home Office: the Prison Service, the United Kingdom Passport Agency, the Forensic Science Service and the Fire Service College. In all cases, responsibility for day-to-day management is delegated to the chief executive, and responsibility for policy rests with me. This division is reflected in the framework document of each of these agencies, copies of which are in the Library.

Police Stations

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations in each county in England have *(a)* closed permanently and *(b)* restricted their opening times in each year since 1987. [38568]

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations in each English county are in premises shared with *(a)* the fire brigade, *(b)* the local authority and *(c)* other organisations. [38569]

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Closed Circuit Television

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral answer of 17 October, *Official Report*, column 142, when he expects to announce where the 10,000 CCTV cameras will be; what will be the rules of the competition for them; and if he will make it his policy that cameras will be allocated regardless of party political affiliations. [38720]

Mr. Maclean: I am currently considering the detailed funding arrangements for the support of further closed circuit television schemes. A challenge competition will be run and bidding guidance explaining the rules for the competition is being drawn up. Copies will be distributed shortly. The bids will be judged against the criteria set out in that guidance.

Prison Cell Sharing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners currently share two to a cell designed for (i) one and (ii) two; [38292]

(2) how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male prisoners currently share a cell with three or more other inmates; and if he will make a statement; [38290]

(3) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners currently share three to a cell designed for (i) one, (ii) two and (iii) three. [38291]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 24 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about cell sharing in the Prison Service.

The only information recorded centrally is about the number of prisoners sharing two and three to a cell designed for one. At the end of September 1995 there were no prisoners sharing three to a cell designed for one. On that date there were 8,440 male prisoners and 56 female prisoners sharing two to a cell designed for one.

Child Prostitution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to hold centrally information in respect of the number of cases of child prostitution that are reported in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement. [38298]

Mr. Maclean: Statistics on cautions and convictions for soliciting offences committed by children are already held centrally. Details are contained in the table.

Convictions and cautions for soliciting offences for children under the age of sixteen years

Offence	*Legislation*	*Year*	*Number convicted/ cautioned*
Common prostitute loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution (Female only offence)	Street Offences Act 1959 section 1	1992	145
		1993	183
		[1]1994	194
Soliciting by a man (Male only offence)	Sexual offences Act 1956 section 32	1992	6
		1993	4
		[1]1994	4

[1] Provisional.

Police Discipline (Blackburn)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what disciplinary proceedings were taken against a police officer of the Lancashire police force in respect of the loss and recovery in Blackburn town centre in June 1994 of police revolvers; and if he will make a statement. [38969]

Mr. Maclean: Police disciplinary matters are the responsibility of individual chief officers. However, I understand that the officer concerned was reprimanded at a disciplinary hearing for neglect of duty in respect of this incident and has been removed from firearms duties.

Rohan Thomas

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he was informed that Scotland Yard had allowed Rohan Thomas into the United Kingdom to help with investigations that were being undertaken by the Metropolitan police; and on what date he granted permission. [38391]

Mr. Maclean: The granting of leave to enter this country is a matter for the immigration service alone. Rohan Thomas presented a passport in a false identity and was given leave to enter the United Kingdom for six months as a visitor on 28 March 1993. The immigration service was informed of his true identity a few days later. He was served with notice of intention to remove him as an illegal entrant after he was apprehended on 19 June 1993.

Family Passports

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his policy whereby husbands on dual passports are eligible to travel alone without their wives, but wives are not allowed to travel without their husbands; and if he will make a statement. [38414]

Mr. Kirkhope: Family passports, which included details of the passport holder's wife or husband, were discontinued in 1988, through those issued previously remain valid until their normal date of expiry. It is still possible to include particulars of children under 16 years of age on the passports of either or both parents. In accordance with international practice, only the person in whose name the passport is issued may travel on it alone.

Fire Service College

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firefighters have been trained at the Fire Service College in each of the last five years. [38160]

Mr. Kirkhope: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Fire Service College under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from N. K. Finlayson to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 24 October 1995:

Your Parliamentary Question seeking information relating to the number of Firefighters trained at the Fire Service College in each of the last five years, has been referred to me by the Home Secretary as falling within my delegated authority.

In each of the 5 years up to and including the year 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995, the following numbers of students from United Kingdom Fire Brigades were trained at the Fire Service College.

1990–91: 3,915 students

1991–92: 4,187 students

1992–93: 4,383 students

1993–94: 4,571 students

1994–95: 4,297 students

Witness Intimidation

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to prevent intimidation and harassment of witnesses *(a)* before, *(b)* during and *(c)* after completion of trials. [37971]

Mr. Maclean: The Government have introduced provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which make it an offence to intimidate a witness, juror or someone assisting the police. The relevant section, section 51, came into force on 3 February this year.

Responsibility for the protection and relocation of witnesses rests with the police. They will consider in each case the degree of intimidation and assess the capability of those making the threats to carry them out.

Sri Lankan Tamil Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons or detention centres at which Sri Lankan Tamils are being held while their application for asylum is being considered. [37644]

Mr. Kirkhope: Information for Sir Lankan Tamils is not recorded separately. As at 17 October 1995, all Sri Lankan nationals detained pending consideration of their applications for asylum were held at the immigration detention centre, Campsfield house.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the longest period to date that a Sri Lankan Tamil has been held in custody pending a decision on their application for asylum. [37646]

Mr. Kirkhope: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Costs

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly cost of imprisonment in each category of prison *(a)* in 1985, *(b)* in 1990 and *(c)* in the latest year for which figures are available. [37958]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Bruce Grocott, dated 24 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the average weekly cost of imprisonment in each category of prison.

The attached table gives the average weekly net operating cost per inmate for the years 1984–85, 1989–90 and 1993–94, which is the latest year for which figures are readily available.

Net operating cost per prisoner per week in cash terms (£)

Category of establishment	*1984–85*	*1989–90*	*1993–94*
Local prisons and remand centres	241	309	441
Contracted out establishments	—	—	385
Dispersal prisons	482	554	659
Category B training prisons	255	318	404
Category C training prisons	196	257	336
Adult male open prisons	164	218	269
Young offender closed establishments	269	346	415
Young offender open establishments	294	459	473
Young offender remand establishments	—	—	420
Female establishments	363	433	540

Fear of Crime

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give details of recent meetings he has had with representatives of women's organisations to discuss crime and the fear of crime; [37522]

(2) what recent representations he has received from women's organisations on the subject of crime and fear of crime. [37521]

Mr. Maclean: Although there have been no further meetings since my reply to the hon. Member on 22 March at column *202*, a number of wide-ranging representations have been received from women's organisations on issues relating to domestic violence issues. Many of these were received during the preparation of the recently published inter-agency circular on domestic violence.

Domestic Violence

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve recorded information about incidents of domestic violence against women. [37520]

Mr. Maclean: Measures aimed at improving the quality of information on incidents of domestic violence are to be considered at forthcoming meetings of the official and ministerial groups on domestic violence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rugby Football in Schools

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will conduct an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the banning of Gavin Gordon from playing Rugby Union for Campbell college, Belfast; and if he will make a statement. [38527]

Mr. Ancram: The Irish Rugby Football Union has advised the headmaster at Campbell college that there is now no restriction on the selection of Gavin Gordon for the school's rugby team. His selection for the team is therefore a matter for the school.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy with regard to the playing of Rugby League by pupils in state schools in Northern Ireland. [38528]

Mr. Ancram: None. While team games are an important element of the physical education curriculum for Northern Ireland schools, the Government do not prescribe which team games should be played. That is a matter for schools to decide.

Paramilitary Arms and Explosives

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on progress towards the decommissioning of arms and explosives held by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. [36901]

Mr. Ancram: No paramilitary arms or equipment have been decommissioned to date. The Government believe that progress on this issue is essential to create the necessary trust and confidence for successful all-party talks. I remain hopeful that progress can, and will, be made.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95 and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated in such frauds and (2) subsequently recovered. [39132]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of frauds*	*Sums misappropriated £*	*Sums recovered £*
Departments (including agencies)			
1991–92	17	96,892	50,314
1992–93	14	5,323	37,847
1993–94	21	161,676	30,954
1994–95	13	94,846	89,267
Non Departmental Public Bodies			
1991–92	5	67,403	13,231
1992–93	3	189,440	6,351
1993–94	2	14,665	21,016
1994–95	9	26,675	16,089

PRIME MINISTER

Belfast

8. **Rev. Martin Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he plans to visit Belfast, South. [36596]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36846]

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 October. [36848]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the commemorations for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in New York.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mobile Phone Fraud

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the recommendations of the industry and Government study group on mobile phone fraud which was set up in June. [39327]

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am pleased to announce the recommendations of the study group on mobile phone fraud which I set up in June. The group, comprising senior representatives from the industry, the Federation of Communication Services, my Department, the Home Office and the police, has analysed in detail the technical and legislative issues which need to be tackled if this fraud is to be combated more effectively.

The recommendations which Government will consider are:

1. Industry and the Government should fully support the introduction of the crime prevention scheme being set up by the FCS and endorse its early implementation. Once the scheme is in force, the four network operators—Vodafone, Cellnet, One 2 One and Orange—service providers and dealers in the industry must use their best endeavours to ensure that any equipment bought or connected by them is not stolen and that records are kept to demonstrate the precautions they have taken. Those that are found not to conform to this scheme will be unable to operate in the industry. Subject to the Director General of Fair Trading being satisfied with the scheme on competition grounds, it should be launched by December 1995.

2. The Government should consider extending the range of offences under section 42 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 so that, in addition to the existing offence of dishonestly obtaining telecommunications service with intent to avoid payment, it would also cover, broadly, the possession or supply of equipment capable of use in the course of or in connection with the current section 42 offence. The maximum penalty for these new offences should be five years and the penalty for the existing section 42 offence should also be increased from two to five years. This would make all offences arrestable, provide the police with powers to search for and seize evidence and will be a major deterrent to those intent on using scanners or other high technology equipment with intent to defraud the network.

3. Industry, police and Government should take action to build on previous initiatives to raise the level of public awareness of the problem of mobile phone fraud and crime and foster further crime prevention initiatives. In particular

the industry increases its work with the police through seminars and training packages to raise the level of awareness of police forces around the UK to mobile phone fraud and crime and works with the police to implement any new legislation,

the industry and the police take action to encourage owners of handsets to mark their phones.

The Government welcome the recommendations of the study group, especially the proposed crime prevention scheme which should make a substantial contribution to reducing fraud within the industry. The group rightly recognises that the proposal for further legislation will need to be considered carefully, in particular taking into account any resource implications. The Government also welcome the practical suggestions of the study group to raise the level of public awareness. I am keen to see wider use of mobile phone marking schemes, such as post code markings or a register. It is only when those who own mobile phones appreciate that their phone is an attractive target for fraud and crime, and protect it accordingly, that serious inroads will be made into reducing the problem.

I am delighted at the work done by this group over the last few months. It has proved a highly effective forum for the industry, the police and the Government to work together to consider what further actions are needed to underpin the work of the industry in fighting mobile phone fraud and crime. These recommendations need to be considered very carefully. In respect of the suggested change to the Telecommunications Act, I am having discussions with ministerial colleagues, including at the Home Office, in respect both of the legislative programme and the implications for resources.

A briefing paper describing the group's summary of the threat posed by mobile phone fraud and the group's subsidiary recommendations has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by his industry and government study group of mobile phone fraud and associated topics; and if he will make a statement as to his current and future proposals on these matters; [38340]

(2) if he will set out the evidence, together with all figures of the incidence of cloning of mobile telephones for *(a)* each network licensed by his Department and *(b)* the combined networks, stating the source from which the figures were obtained and measures taken to verify those figures that have been presented to his Department; [38342]

(3) if he will place in the Library a copy of all evidence, and including all figures, indicating the source from which they were obtained, and indicate the measures taken to verify those figures presented to his recent industry and Government study group on mobile phone fraud and associated topics; [38341]

(4) if he will set out the evidence, with the figures, stating the individual sources from which they were obtained, concerning the cases of fraud involving the provision and use of mobile phones overall and for each network licensed by his Department. [38343]

Mr. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). Individual cases of mobile telephone fraud are a matter for the companies involved, the police and the prosecution authorities. The mobile telecommunications industry did provide some estimates for the overall scale of mobile phone fraud as part of their contribution to the work of the industry and government study group on mobile phone fraud. These have been reproduced in the briefing paper mentioned in my answer. The paper has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Copyright Tribunal

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he has made and what further changes he proposes to make to the procedures of the Copyright Tribunal; and if he will make a statement. [38740]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Last year, my Department sought the views of users of the Copyright Tribunal to determine how satisfied they were with its performance, and how its procedures might be improved. The vast majority of respondents considered that tribunal procedures were fair,

flexible, unintimidating and thorough. There were, however, some concerns about the cost and speed of procedures and some suggestions were made for improvement in these and other respects. The Department is still considering, in consultation with the chairman of the tribunal, possible changes to the procedures in the light of suggestions with a view to proposing a statutory instrument providing for some amendments to the tribunal rules in due course. In the meantime, some useful changes have been made to the Copyright Tribunal practice direction and the new version was sent in July to all solicitors involved in cases currently before the tribunal and respondents to the user survey. The practice direction is issued for the guidance of parties, with a view to achieving a just, expeditious and economical disposal of proceedings. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

British Coal Enterprise

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if British Coal Enterprise will be sold as a single entity or broken down into its constituent parts; and if he will make a statement; [37658]

(2) what plans exist for Grosvenor Career Services, the outplacement division of British Coal Enterprise, in the event of an outright sale of British Coal Enterprise; and if he will make a statement. [37659]

Mr. Page: Bids will be invited for all of British Coal Enterprise or its main activities—workshops, business funding and outplacement services (Grosvenor).

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the timetable for the proposed privatisation of British Coal Enterprise; and if he will make a statement. [37655]

Mr. Page: British Coal expects that the process will be concluded by March 1996.

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on future methods of funding of British Coal Enterprise, Fast Track and Enterprise Fund; and if he will make a statement. [37657]

Mr. Page: Direct Government Funding of BCE, through British Coal, will continue until March 1996. Thereafter, funding will be a matter for the new owners of BCE.

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what are the criteria for the sale of British Coal Enterprise; and if he will make a statement; [37656]

(2) what priority he attaches to ensuring the continuation of effective assistance to the coalfield communities in the event that British Coal Enterprise is privatised; and if he will make a statement. [37660]

Mr. Page: The sales process is intended to enable British Coal to take a clear view on the best way forward for BCE, having due regard to its statutory duties and the importance of ensuring continuation of effective assistance to the coalfield communities.

Fireworks

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the role of *(a)* trading standards officers, *(b)* the fire service and *(c)* the police in enforcing the law relating to the sale of fireworks to children under the age of 16 years in metropolitan areas. [38899]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Section 31 of the Explosives Act 1875 makes it an offence to supply fireworks to children apparently under 16 years of age. The 1875 Act makes no provision for the enforcement of section 31. Accordingly, the police, in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service, have the clearest role in dealing with offenders. However, trading standards departments have a well-established responsibility for safeguarding the safety of consumers and, in our opinion, should be in a position to bring prosecutions under section 31 in cases where the police have not become involved or have decided not to proceed. My Department draws no distinction between metropolitan and other areas regarding the standing of trading standards departments with respect to this legislation. Fire authorities in metropolitan areas are designated to undertake certain functions under the 1875 Act but have no duty to enforce section 31. Nevertheless, they too may be able to bring prosecutions under this provision.

It is also an offence under the General Product Safety Regulations 1994 for a retailer to supply to any person a product which he knows, or should have presumed on the basis of information in his possession, is a dangerous product. Local authority trading standards departments have a duty to enforce the regulations and in doing so can draw on the range of powers supporting consumer safety legislation.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the board of Trade what has been the number of firework-related injuries since 1985 in total and each year, and how many of these were children under the age of 16 years. [38914]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: For the year 1985 to 1994, the total number of people receiving treatment for firework injuries at accident and emergency units in Great Britain within the four-week period around 5 November was 9,553; 5,053 of these were children under the age of 16. The figures for the individual years are set out in the table.

Year	*Total injured*	*Aged less than 16*
1985	968	593
1986	846	466
1987	960	540
1988	877	446
1989	800	414
1990	805	394
1991	723	362
1992	942	488
1993	1,058	542
1994	1,574	808

British Coal (Retirement Funds)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that British Coal distributes the coal industry industrial death and retirement funds among the people who contributed to it, or to their dependants. [37769]

Mr. Page: The operation of the industrial death and retirement scheme is a matter for British Coal. However, I understand that the scheme was not financed from a

conventional fund with separate assets. If it had been, British Coal's liabilities would have been capped in accord with the total amount of contributions paid. Instead, in return for contributions from members and notional matching contributions from British Coal itself, the corporation will continue to meet all entitlements under the scheme. British Coal confirms that all contributors who qualify for benefits will receive them. My Department will take over this responsibility when the liabilities associated with this scheme transfer at the of 1997.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards exist to protect funds and schemes similar to the coal industry industrial death and retirement fund in the privatised coal industry. [37770]

Mr. Page: The industrial death and retirement scheme did not transfer to successor coal companies on privatisation. Insurance and retirement arrangements in respect of service with the newly privatised industry are matters for the new owners.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what benefits were being paid out from the coal industry industrial death and retirement fund on 1 January; [37763]

(2) what was the value of the coal industry industrial death and retirement fund on 1 January 1993, 1 January 1994, 1 January 1995 and its projected value on 1 January 1996; [37765]

(3) what benefits are currently being paid from the coal industry industrial death and retirement fund; [37764]

(4) how many people were paying into the coal industry industrial death and retirement fund on 1 January; [37762]

(5) what was the initial payment made to the industrial death and retirement fund at its inception, and by whom. [37766]

Mr. Page: These are matters for British Coal. I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) in what circumstances the British Coal Corporation may appropriate the assets of the industrial death and retirement fund; [37767]

(2) what legal provisions govern the distribution of the assets of funds of the nature of the coal industry industrial death and disablement fund when they are wound up. [37768]

Mr. Page: I understand that the industrial death and retirement scheme ceased to accept further contributions from members on 6 January 1995, but as it was not wound up the question of distribution of funds did not arise. As the arrangements constituted a scheme, there was no fund and thus no assets.

Deputy Prime Minister

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister within the area covered by the Department of Trade and Industry. [38453]

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister has overall responsibility within Government for competitiveness, deregulation and public service issues. We work closely together on the issues of competitiveness and deregulation.

The drive for enhanced competitiveness is central to my Department's work. It underlies the Department's programmes of support and assistance to business, including export promotion, innovation and small firms initiatives.

Competitiveness and Deregulation

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what responsibility his Department has for the areas of competitiveness and deregulation. [38449]

Mr. Lang: My Department remains central to the Government's work on competitiveness and deregulation.

The drive for enhanced competitiveness underlies the Department's programmes of support and assistance to business, including export promotion, innovation and small firms support initiatives.

Following the transfer of the central deregulation unit to the Cabinet Office, my Department retains specific responsibility for ensuring that the deregulation initiative is reflected in the way DTI itself undertakes regulation which impacts on business.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what education and training schemes are currently available to miners and their families made redundant during the past decade; [38489]

(2) what plans he has to extend the current education and training schemes available to miners and their families made redundant during the last decade. [38490]

Mr. Page: In addition to its general training and education measures, a major element of the Government's £200 million regeneration package specifically directed to helping areas affected by pit closures since October 1992 was a £75 million package provided by the training and enterprise councils, which includes provision for training measures.

British Coal's job and career change scheme which is managed by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. was established to provide support to those made redundant from the corporation. JACCS includes the provision of education and training support. This can take the form of on-the-job training where this meets specific identifiable skills shortages in local economies; and in some cases vocational educational courses.

British Coal is currently proceeding with the disposal of BCE. Arrangements for JACCS beyond March 1996, when it is anticipated that the disposal of BCE will have been completed, are being considered by British Coal. However, I understand that British Coal will continue to provide outplacement assistance to its current and former employees made redundant and not in employment in line with present policy.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the costs of the refurbishment of his Department's buildings in the past two years. [38451]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Department has carried out the following refurbishments over the past two years, listed by year of project completion:

£ thousands

Financial year and project	*Cost*
1993–94	
Partial refurbishment of Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1, to enable additional staff to be accommodated following the closure of 1–19 Victoria Street, London SW1	4,532
Full refurbishment of Kinsgate House, 66–74 Victoria Street, London SW1	4,211
Refurbishment of sub-standard parts of the Eastcote site, Eastcote, Middlesex	720
Partial refurbishment of Bushy House NPL site, Teddington, Middlesex	1,077
Full refurbishment of Main administrative building, NPL site, Teddington, Middlesex	1,990
1994–95	
No projects completed in this financial year	

The refurbishment of 1 Victoria street achieved practical completion in the current financial year. For the costs of that project, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then President of the Board of Trade to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), on 21 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *311-12*.

This reply does not take account of any buildings which the Department acquires as a result of the machinery of government changes announced on 5 July.

Belvedere Waste-to-energy Plant

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to be able to make an announcement on the proposal by PowerGen and Cory for a waste-to-energy plant in Belvedere. [38566]

Mr. Eggar: The present position on the application is that pursuant to regulation 10 of the Electricity and Pipe-line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1990 my officials will be writing to PowerGen CHP Ltd. seeking further environmental information in relation to its application.

European Regional Aid

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the European Commission regarding the proposed reduction in funds for the RESIDER II steel regions aid programme in 1998–99; and if he will make a statement. [38714]

Mr. Eggar: The Commission has not proposed a reduction in the allocation to RESIDER, but on the contrary, an increase of 380 mecu for RESIDER, RECHAR, RETEX and KONVER together: of which 60 mecu is for the UK. The Government would have preferred a larger figure. The Commission's proposal will be discussed by the member states in the structural funds community initiatives management committee in due course, but no date has been set for the committee's meeting.

Iron and Steel Industry

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates his Department has made for output and employment in the United Kingdom iron and steel industries over the next five years. [38713]

Mr. Page: My Department does not forecasts of output and employment in the UK iron and steel industries.

Osprey Wave Project

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department has given to applied research and technology over *(a)* research, *(b)* production and *(c)* newsletters of the Osprey wave power project; and if he will make a statement. [38375]

Mr. Page: My Department has directly assisted applied research and technology during the early phase of research and development on the OSPREY device through funding a wave tank testing experiment during 1992–93 at a cost of approximately £50,000 and a tow-out evaluation at an additional cost of £12,000.

My Department has also assisted ART through sponsoring an assessment of OSPREY's structure, carried out by Advanced Mechanics and Engineering, an independent engineering consultancy, at a cost of £25,000, and to date has funded around £130,000 of research and development into pneumatic turbines, carried out by the Queen's university of Belfast, which will have been of indirect benefit to ART as the purpose of the work was to provide testing facilities for turbines suitable for eventual deployment in the OSPREY device. This work is scheduled for completion in 1996 at a final cost of around £200,000.

My Department has also commissioned an independent study of the OSPREY device at a cost of around £17,000, conducted with full co-operation from ART.

A short article on the OSPREY device is due to appear in the next issue of "New Review" magazine, scheduled for publication in December 1995, which is devoted to new and renewable energy and fully funded by my Department. "New Review" has a circulation in excess of 30,000. Copies are sent to the libraries of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution his Department has made to research into renewable sources of energy during each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [38370]

Mr. Page: My Department has undertaken the following expenditure on research into new and renewable sources of energy during each of the last 10 years.

Year	*Expenditure £ million*
1985–86	13.2
1986–87	12.0
1987–88	16.3

Year	Expenditure £ million
1988–89	16.0
1989–90	17.9
1990–91	20.8
1991–92	24.8
1992–93	25.6
1993–94	25.2
1994–95	19.1

Dock Workers (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have taken place with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company about the dismissal of dockers in Merseyside. [38738]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: None. The Government believe that the resolution of industrial disputes is entirely a matter for the parties concerned—enlisting, as with the case of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, the services of ACAS if both sides agree.

Inward Investment

Mr. William Powell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the inward investment to the United Kingdom in excess of £10 million made in each year since 1979. [38334]

Mr. Eggar: For the financial years 1979 to 1995, of the total number of inward investment decisions notified to my Department's Invest in Britain Bureau, in excess of £10 million were 625. In recent years these have included:

	£
Siemens	1.1 billion
Samsung	450 million
Toyota	700 million
Nissan	250 million
Goldstar	40 million
Fujitsu	400 million

These figures are based on information provided by the companies at the time of the announcement of the decision to invest, and take no account of subsequent developments.

Product Use

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what legislation requires private businesses to inform their customers how they use a product once a transaction has been completed; and if he will make a statement. [39052]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: If a consumer wishes to put a product to some unusual use he should seek advice from the trader. The trader should then indicate whether it will be reasonably fit for the purpose or make it clear if he is not confident on the point. There is no legislation which requires private businesses to inform their customers how they should use a product.

High-tech Companies

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many high-tech industrial companies have been established in the United Kingdom during each of the last five years. [38636]

Mr. Page: The information requested is not readily available.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for the four years leading up to the privatisation of the electricity industry and for the four years after *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* domestic electricity index, including all taxes at the relevant rate. [38179]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* The new electricity companies were established in March 1990 and flotation occurred at several different stages thereafter. For convenience, 1990 has been taken as the year of privatisation. The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	Retail Prices Index (all items)	[1]Domestic electricity
1986	100.0	100.0
1987	104.1	99.5
1988	109.3	104.9
1989	117.8	112.5
1990	128.9	121.7
1991	136.5	133.9
1992	141.5	140.9
1993	143.8	140.4
1994	147.4	[2]136.9

Note:
[1] The electricity component of the RPI.
[2] Excludes VAT at 8 per cent. from 1 April 1994. The figure including VAT for 1994 would be 145.0.
Source:
Retail Prices Index compiled by the Central Statistical Office.

Domestic electricity prices, excluding VAT, have fallen faster than the all items RPI since 1990. Further price falls can be expected as a result of additional reductions in electricity distribution charges which take effect on 1 April 1996.

General Pinochet

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if officials of his Department or its agencies met General Pinochet of Chile during his recent visit. [37978]

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* No.

Private Coal Mines

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences were held by private licensed mines on 31 March and in May in *(a)* south Wales, *(b)* the remainder of the United Kingdom and *(c)* the United Kingdom; and how many miners were employed at these dates. [37628]

Mr. Page *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The Coal Authority informs me that:

(a) the numbers of licensed underground mines were as follows:

	At 31 March 1995	At 31 May 1995	At 18 October 1995
Great Britain			
Licensed by British Coal under section 36(2)(a) of the Coal Industry nationalisation Act 1946	[1]140	24	24
Licensed by the Secretary of State/Coal Authority under section 26 of the Coal Industry Act 1994	18	63	71
Total	[1]158	87	95
South Wales			
Licensed by British Coal under section 36(2)(a) of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946	87	5	5
Licensed by the Secretary of State/Coal Authority under section 26 of the Coal Industry Act 1994	1	33	39
Total	88	38	44

[1] Includes 115 mines whose licences expired on that date, about half of which were not producing coal at that time.

(b) while precise figures are not available, employment at these underground mines has remained at around 10,500 for Great Britain and 700 for South Wales.

Merseyside Docks

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Merseyside docks port operation being carried out by Drake International Port Services of Southampton. [37732]

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* No. Any operation being carried out by Drake International Port Services of Southampton on the Merseyside docks is a matter for the companies involved.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has received from the Australian Government in respect of French nuclear tests in the Pacific. [38399]

Mr. David Davis: We have had a number of contacts with the Australian Government on this issue.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has received from the New Zealand Government in respect of French nuclear tests in the Pacific. [38397]

Mr. Davis: We have had a number of contacts with the New Zealand Government on this issue.

Mr. Michael Horne

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who has replaced Mr. Michael Horne in his Department; at what salary; and if he will make a statement. [38300]

Mr. Hanley: Mr. Michael Horne was replaced in his last appointment in the FCO by Mr. Shaun Cleary. Mr. Cleary is a grade 5 officer in HM Diplomatic Service and is paid on a salary range between £26,535 and £41,092.

Romania

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the state of negotiations with regard to Romania's application to join the Council of Europe; what assessment he has made of Romania's ability to accede to the European convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and if he will make a statement. [38020]

Mr. David Davis: Romania has been a member of the Council of Europe since 7 October 1993.

Romania signed the European convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on 7 October 1993 and ratified on 20 June 1994.

Reflections Group

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the reflections group; and if he will make a statement. [38574]

Mr. David Davis: I am the Foreign Secretary's representative on the study group preparing the intergovernmental conference. I have reported regularly to the House on progress in the group, which will report to the Madrid European Council in December.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extent of reporting restrictions in place in Sri Lanka at the present time. [38458]

Mr. Hanley: There are no restrictions on material produced by the international media for publication or broadcast outside Sri Lanka. Material on military issues to be published or broadcast in Sri Lanka has to be submitted to a censor.

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact the Minister of State had with representatives of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka on his recent visit there. [38459]

Mr. Hanley: I met a number of representatives of the Tamil minority during my recent visit to Sri Lanka, including Mr. Douglas Devanda and Mr. Neelan Tiruchelvam.

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the Sri Lankan Government's proposals for devolution in Sri Lanka. [38460]

Mr. Hanley: We welcome the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to achieve a lasting political settlement to the conflict by issuing proposals for devolution in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the extent to which renewed military action between Government forces and the Tamil Tigers in the north of Sri Lanka has caused civilian casualties; and if he will make a statement on the conflict. [38461]

Mr. Hanley: We do not have exact figures for civilian casualties caused in the renewed military action in the north of Sri Lanka. I raised this issue with the Sri Lankan Government during my official visit to Colombo from 8–10 October, and urged them to make every effort to avoid further civilian casualties.

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the reported bombing by Sri Lankan Government forces of a school at Nagar Kovil Makavithiya Layam in Vadamarachi on 22 September; and if he will make a statement on the incident. [38462]

Mr. Hanley: We understand that on 22 September bombs landed close to Nagar Kovil Makavithiya Layam school in Nagar Kovil, killing over 60 people, including 34 children, and injuring many more.

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been received, from *(a)* the Sri Lankan Government and *(b)* the Tamil Tiger rebels, to Britain's offer to facilitate negotiations, made by the Minister of State on his recent visit to Sri Lanka. [38463]

Mr. Hanley: We have offered to facilitate negotiations between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on several occasions, but neither side has responded. There has been no change in this position.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he has had and with whom on reports prepared by the Council of Europe on Cyprus; and if he will make a statement. [38619]

Mr. David Davis: None.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when representatives from the British high commission in Cyprus last visited the Karpas area of occupied northern Cyprus; and what report was made following that visit. [38487]

Mr. Davis: High commission staff regularly visit all areas of Cyprus. The high commissioner visited the Karpas area on 30 March this year for extensive contacts with the local community accompanied by officials from the humanitarian branch of the UN force in Cyprus, UNFICYP. The latter have the responsibility for safeguarding the welfare of the Greek Cypriots living in the Karpas, and visit them every week.

Islamic Countries (Defence and Security)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the value of the contribution of the Islamic countries to international defence and security. [36574]

Mr. Hanley: The contribution of Islamic countries to international defence and security varies from country to country.

United Nations Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the actions planned by Her Majesty's Government to mark United Nations Day. [37632]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: UN flags fly in Parliament square on UN Day.

Iran

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Iran following the parliamentary human rights group's report on the position of women in Iran. [38769]

Mr. Hanley: Our policy on Iran remains unchanged since the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 25 January 1994 at column *144*. We are concerned about the situation of women in Iran and raise this matter whenever appropriate.

Sudan

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Sudan in relation to allegations of harbouring of terrorist groups. [39270]

Mr. Hanley: We regularly express our concern to the Sudanese Government about reports that Sudan supports the activities of extremist groups. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary raised this with the Sudanese ambassador on 13 September. In particular, we regard as extremely serious allegations of official Sudanese complicity in the terrorist attack against President Mubarak in Addis Ababa on 26 June.

HEALTH

Deprivation Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the reduction of deprivation payments to General Practitioners within the Oldham family health services authority area and the resulting decision to abandon plans to extend their premises and improve their services. [37421]

Mr. Malone: Deprivation payments are based on the Jarman index and 1991 census data. The move to 1991 census data, recommended by the independent Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body in its latest report, is one agreed by the profession and my Department. A generous transitional protection scheme has been agreed with the profession to protect those affected.

Cooking Fumes (Cancer)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken by the NHS management executive or his Department into the possible occupational cancer risk for cooks from carcinogenic chemicals in cooking fumes. [37993]

Mr. Sackville: The Department has undertaken no such research.

Accident and Emergency Units

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of anaphylactic incidents dealt with at hospital accident and emergency units in recent years. [38359]

Mr. Sackville: There were nearly 12 million new attendances at accident and emergency departments in national health service hospitals in England in 1994–95. Information about the reasons for attendance is not available centrally.

NHS Management

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on how the figure of £140 million in his press release 95/473 to be transferred from administrative costs to patient care is calculated; what cash amount he intends to release from cuts in administrative costs in *(a)* NHS trusts, *(b)* health authorities, *(c)* GP fundholding practices and *(d)* other areas; and if these sums will be retained by the trusts, health authorities and general practitioner practices which make the savings, or will revert to the NHS executive or his Department. [38380]

Mr. Malone: We expect planned spending on running district health authorities and family health services authorities and estimated spending by national health service trusts on managerial and non-clinical administrative staff to be reduced by 5 per cent. nationally in 1996–97 in cash terms. This is equivalent to an 8 per cent. reduction in real terms on the basis of the latest expected gross domestic product deflator for 1996–97 and is estimated to yield savings of some £140 million. I anticipate savings on health authority costs will amount to some £40 million in real terms and savings by trusts to some £100 million. The savings will be retained locally and will be available for patient care.

UKCC

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the members of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the bodies responsible for appointing these members; and to whom they are responsible. [38390]

Mr. Sackville: The council has 60 members, of whom 40 are elected by the professions and 20 are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The council is required to submit an annual report and accounts to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Name	*Whether appointed or elected*
Dr. D. K. Bose MBBS FRCGP	Appointed
Mrs. H. D. D. Campbell RGN RM	Elected
Prof. G. Castledine MSc BA(Hons) DipSocStud(Oxon) PGCE RGN RNT FRCN.	Elected
Mr. A. J. Charnock EN(MH) EN(G) RGN BN(Hons) PGCE CMS	Elected
Mr. P. Clarke RMN RGN	Elected
Mrs. L.M. Coey EN	Elected
Mrs. L. A. Connor RGN	Elected
Miss S. H. Coull RGN DipProfStudies	Elected
Mrs. M. W. Cronk RGN RM DNCert RGN RMN	Elected
Prof P. T. Darcy MSc DipN CertEd RGN RMN	Elected
Mr. J. Evans RGN RMN RNT BEd(Hons)	Elected
Miss M. G. E. Foster RGN RM MTD	Elected
Mrs. J. A. Frost MEd BN RGN RM DipN PGCAE RNT	Elected
Ms J. Furlong EN(G) RGN	Elected
Mr. G. N. V. Green MA AHSM	Appointed
Mr. C. B. Grimes IPFA FCCA	Appointed
Mrs J. W. Halleran RGN RHV	Elected
Mrs. M. B. Hanratty MSc BA RGN RMN RCI RNT	Elected
Mrs. H. Y. Herron RGN RSCN.	Appointed
Mrs J. Hughes.	Appointed
Mrs. A. Jackson RGN.	Elected
Dr. E. Jacobs MA(London) D.Univ(Paris)	Appointed
Mrs. F. R. Jones RGN EN	Elected
Mr. J. Kelly RMN RGN DMS MIPM	Appointed
Dr. A. A. Khan MBBS FRCOG FRCS FFARCS JP	Appointed
Mr. H. O. Lewis RMN	Elected
Mrs. R. A. R. M. Lewis MSc(Econ) BA(Hons)Econ PGCE	Appointed
Prof C. A. Lowis MEd DipN(Lond) RGN OHNC PgCertTLT	Appointed
Mrs. C. S. McGilvray RGN RHV	Elected
Prof S. A. M. McLean LLB MLitt PhD	Appointed
Miss J. C. Mahoney RGN RSCN RM DNCert PWT FETC	Elected
Mrs. A. V. Males RGN ONC RCNT DipN(Lond) MIPD MIM BA.	Appointed
Miss J. T. Matthew RGN RM MTD BA Master of Nursing	Elected
Mrs. M. J. Mitchell RGN RM RHV	Elected
Ms J. Morris RGN DipNPart A(Lond)	Elected
Mrs. A. V. Morrison MSc BEd(Hons) RGN RSCN RCI RNT DipN(Part A)	Elected
Mr. S. M. Niven BSc FIMgt	Appointed
Mrs. A. Norman RGN RM RHV	Elected
Ms T. A. O'Brian EN(G) RGN	Elected
Mr. P. J. O'Reilly RGN RMN	Elected
Prof J. A. Orr BA MSc RGN RHV HVT	Elected
Ms E. O. Paden MSc RGN RM DAM CertEd(FE)	Elected
Prof. P.M. Reilly MD FTCGP	Appointed
Mrs. S. Richards MSc DipHRC RGN CertHealtEdt PNT	Elected
Prof J. A. Robinson MA PhD MIPD RGN ONC RHV HVT FRCN	Appointed
Miss S. E. G. Roch RM RGN MTD FPACert	Elected
Mrs. E. C. Rush RGN EN	Elected
Ms A. E. Scouller BA(Hons) RGN RM DAM	Elected
Dr. E. Shanley BA(Hons) MSc PhD RNMH RMN CPN RNT CPsychol	Elected
Mr. A. M. Shannon BA(Hons) RGN	Elected
Prof D. T. Sines PhD BSc(Hons) RMN RNMH PGCTHE FRCN RNT	Appointed
Mrs. J. E. Smail RGN RM DNCert CertEd(FE)	Elected
Mr. T. A. Starrs MSc RNMH RGN RCNT RNT	Elected

Name	Whether appointed or elected
Mrs. K. Touhig RGN RHV CPT DNCert	Elected
Miss M. E. Uprichard OBE RSCN RGN RM MTD	Elected
Mrs. E. Walker BEd(Hons) MA RGN RM RNT	Elected
Ms N. Watson-Druee MSc BA(Hons) PGCE DipHEd RHV RM RNT MITD	Appointed
Mrs. E. R. Williams CertED	Appointed

There are two vacancies for appointed members.

Nurse Registration

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of his Department as to the restoration of former nurses who have been struck off their professional register. [38386]

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had and with whom regarding the cases of *(a)* Dennis Thorpe-Price and *(b)* Subaschan Bunbuhn; and if he will make a statement as to their presence on the register of professional nurses. [38388]

Mr. Sackville: None. Registration is a matter for the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with the Institute of Health Services Management regarding nurses who have been struck off their professional register. [38387]

Mr. Sackville: None.

Epilepsy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide funding for the opening of centres of excellence in treating epilepsy throughout the country. [38403]

Mr. Bowis: The organisation of health services, including services for people suffering from epilepsy and the manner in which they are delivered, are matters for health authorities in their role as purchasers of services for their populations. They enter into arrangements with hospital and community trusts to ensure that the entire range of services is available, taking account of the needs of the local population and the priorities set for the use of the available resources.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the birth disorder sodium valproate syndrome and its connection with prescriptions following the misdiagnosis of epilepsy in mothers; and if he will make a statement. [38407]

Mr. Bowis: Many women with epilepsy need anti-epileptic medication in pregnancy to keep their seizures under control. When prescribing a drug in pregnancy, the doctor weighs the risks associated with no treatment against the risk of possible side effects of treatment. Without treatment, epileptics are likely to have major seizures, which could cause serious harm to both mother and unborn child.

Sodium valproate—Epilim—is a commonly used effective anti-epileptic. Like all anti-epileptic therapies, it has been associated with occasional foetal abnormalities, in particular spina bifida. Doctors are aware of this risk through the product data sheet and the British National Formulary, which recommends that women who become pregnant on sodium valproate should be offered screening and advised about the risks. A patient information leaflet is also available to inform women about these risks.

The education and training of health professionals is a matter for the relevant royal college. However, as part of the programme of co-ordinated initiatives on epilepsy which I announced on 17 January, *Official Report*, columns 576–77, we shall be seeking to raise awareness of this condition among general practitioners and primary care teams.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he intends to take to provide information about epilepsy and its treatment to doctors and the public. [38404]

Mr. Bowis: As part of the Department of Health's programme of co-ordinated initiatives on epilepsy, which I announced in the House on 17 January, we have:

Commissioned a new series of posters on epilepsy which aim to address the stigma associated with epilepsy by providing positive images of real people with epilepsy. Two of the posters were used to advertise National Epilepsy Week 1995 and two more will be issued shortly,

Provided £108,000 spread over three years to support the expansion of the British Epilepsy Association's freephone helpline and information service,

Provided £36,000 to support a nationwide programme of primary healthcare workshops on epilepsy run by the Continuing Care at Home Association, CONCAH,

Provided £40,000 over two years to support a joint Royal College of General Practitioners–National Society for Epilepsy Fellowship which will consider advice provided to general practitioners about the information and care that should be offered to people with epilepsy and those who care for them,

Provided funding for two innovative service development projects:

a. a total of £12,000 to support a project run by Doncaster health authority. This is an evaluation of a district epilepsy service involving an epilepsy clinic, guidelines for general practitioners, and a specialist epilepsy liaison nursing service.

b. a total of £83,000 to support a project run by general practitioners in Cheshire. This project is an evaluation of providing services to people with epilepsy, in the community, through a working collaboration between the general practitioners themselves and a specialist epilepsy centre, the David Lewis centre.

Awarded £90,846 to a joint Royal College of Physicians-National Hospital for Neurology project to develop national audit review criteria for the care of patients with newly diagnosed and established epilepsy,

Sponsored a major multidisciplinary conference on users of services, youth and primary care which aimed to share information between people working in the field and users of services and to encourage good practice throughout the NHS and the wider field. A report of the conference will be disseminated shortly.

Other possible activities aimed at professional and public education are under consideration.

Hospital Discharge Procedures

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that health and local authorities adhere to the general good practice on hospital discharge procedures issued by his Department in 1994. [38034]

Mr. Bowis: Performance of hospital discharge is monitored by the national health service executive.

Care for the Elderly

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the NHS's fulfilment of its responsibilities in providing in-patient care for elderly people. [38035]

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities are responsible for assessing the continuing health care needs of their local population. This includes continuing in-patient care for older people. Recent guidance set out national health service responsibilities in this area and requires health authorities to develop local policies and eligibility criteria for continuing health care. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Cemfuel

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department has commissioned into the possible health effects of burning cemfuel. [38570]

Mr. Sackville: We have commissioned no such studies.

Departmental Files

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department's file WOP/4/5 that was mislaid in Hannibal house in 1981 has yet been traced; what was the nature of its contents; and if he will make a statement. [39078]

Mr. Sackville: Yes. The file relates to radio and television licences for receivers used in national health service hospitals.

Asthma (Smoking)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is intending to take to inform *(a)* young female smokers and *(b)* the general public of the effect of maternal smoking on asthma; and if he will make a statement. [37588]

Mr. Sackville: Asthma in children is one of the many health problems associated with maternal smoking and symptoms of asthma are twice as common in the children of smokers. Information on this and the many other health problems caused by parental smoking forms an important part of the Department's anti-smoking campaign and is particularly emphasised in the smoking in pregnancy programme currently being run by the Health Education Authority.

Health Care Terms

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had expressing support for a standard thesaurus for terms used in the caring services. [38027]

Mr. Sackville: The national health service has created a standard thesaurus of health care terms used by the clinical professions. This thesaurus is available in read coded format for use in computerised clinical information systems.

Expressions of support for the read coded standard thesaurus of health care terms have been received from the following organisations:

British Medical Association
Joint Consultants Committee
Conference of Medical Royal Colleges
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
Health Visitors Association
The Spinario Federation
College of Speech and Language Therapists
British Dietetic Association
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
British Psychological Society
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

The following organisations have supported a scoping project to assess the extension of the read codes thesaurus into the personal social services arena:

Association of Directors of Social Services
Social Services Inspectorate

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received registering dissatisfaction about the misunderstanding of terms used in the caring profession. [38026]

Mr. Sackville: In 1991, the chief executive of the national health service set up a working group consisting of representatives of the Conference of Medical Royal Colleges and their Faculties in the United Kingdom, the joint consultants committee, the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association and the NHS executive. The group's function is to advise him on the medically orientated NHS executive initiatives which have an information technology element and to strengthen the medical profession's contribution to this work. The group was later expanded to include the Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Midwives, Health Visitors Association and the representative bodies of the professions allied to medicine.

The professional bodies on the working group pointed out that without a common language useful communication is impossible. It was immediately recognised as vital to establish an agreed thesaurus of clinical terms without which computerised clinical information systems in the NHS could not capture, store, compare and transfer data. It was also agreed that the professions had to take the lead in this project to ensure professional "ownership" and commitment.

The proposals to create the thesaurus of terms common to all sectors of the NHS was approved by the working group and subsequently endorsed by the clinical professions involved.

This common thesaurus of terms used by the medical profession, nursing professions and professions allied to medicine was subsequently incorporated into the read codes. The read codes are Crown copyright and are structured for use in computerised clinical information

systems. The clinical professions have formally supported the adoption of the read codes as the underlying thesaurus for all NHS clinical information systems.

A scoping project to extend this thesaurus into the personal social services arena has commenced. The scoping project has the support of the social services inspectorate of the Department of Health and the Association of Directors of Social Services. This initiative supports the care in the community programme and in the broader context of inter-agency teamwork, for example between social and health services, has shown that there are substantial areas in which there is comparable need to be able to share the use of terms, and feel secure that they are appropriately understood.

Social Terms Scoping Project

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost so far of the social terms scoping project; and what are its estimated total costs. [38028]

Mr. Sackville: The social terms scoping project is a six month project which commenced on 1 May 1995. The cost at 30 September 1995 was £17,501. The estimated total cost is £34,383.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the remuneration of the Chairman and the project researchers of the social terms scoping project. [38025]

Mr. Sackville: The social terms scoping project is a six-month project which commenced on 1 May 1995.

The chairman is employed one day per week at the standard university rate and will receive £6,760 in total.

There are two part-time research workers. One research worker—0.6 whole-time equivalent—will receive £6,943 in total, and the second research worker—0.4 whole-time equivalent—will receive £6,702 in total.

These rates of pay are also based on standard university research grades.

Unregistered Children's Homes

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names of those organisations mentioned in the national study of the social services inspectorate, published in August, on small unregistered children's homes whose homes do not achieve a satisfactory standard of care; and if he will make a statement. [38187]

Mr. Bowis: It is not social services inspectorate practice to do so in such studies and visits to a sample of homes during the course of the study were not inspections.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will provide information on the numbers of staff working in small unregistered children's homes as a proportion of the social services inspectorate study *(a)* who had no relevant training, *(b)* who had no previous experience, *(c)* who were on short-term contracts and *(d)* who had been employed for less than six months; [38189]

(2) if he will make a statement on the percentage of children who have been placed in small unregistrable children's homes as emergency placements at the time of the social services inspectorate study into children's homes; [38190]

(3) if he will make a statement on the percentage of children who were at the time of the social services inspectorate study into children's homes *(a)* were not attending a local school and *(b)* were unregistered at a local school; [38191]

(4) if he will give information on the number of children placed in unregistered children's homes at the time of the social services inspectorate study he deems *(a)* to be in suitable accommodation and *(b)* to be at risk. [38194]

Mr. Bowis: This information was not sought as part of the recent social services inspectorate study.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the numbers of children in unregistered children's homes at the time of the social services inspectorate study who were placed *(a)* more than 50 miles and *(b)* more than 100 miles outside their placing authority's area. [38192]

Mr. Bowis: Some 47 and 13 respectively.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new practice guidelines he is planning to issue to local authorities as a result of the social services inspectorate study into unregistered children's homes. [38193]

Mr. Bowis: I do not intend to issue new practice guidelines. The current regulations and guidance, when applied properly, provide adequate protection for children placed in unregistered children's homes. The report of the study, which has been issued to local authorities, indicates what is good practice.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will send the hon. Member for South Hams a revised reply to his letter of 13 September regarding Mr. S. G. Horrocks of Brixham about charges for residential accommodation. [38835]

Mr. Bowis: I wrote to the hon. Member on 2 October and sent a further reply on 23 October.

White Report

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has informed all social service departments that his Department holds the index of names of former members of Islington social services department mentioned in the White report. [38900]

Mr. Bowis: It is not necessary to do so. Every social services department has received information on the procedures of the Department of Health's consultancy index and Islington council wrote on 1 June to every social services department agreeing to check against the White report the name of any former Islington employee currently employed by any local authority or child care agency.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 16 October, *Official Report*, column *153*, if he will list the three social service departments which have made inquiries about the index of ex-employees of Islington council named in the White report. [38902]

Mr. Bowis: The Department's consultancy service index is operated on the basis of absolute confidentiality, and it is not our practice to provide information regarding which employers have sought checks against the index.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the net cost to the national health service, after taking into account reduction in income from prescription charges and savings on the overall national health service drugs budget, of allowing individual pharmacists to offer patients the option of paying the cost price where the drug costs less than the prescription charge. [37048]

Mr. Malone *[holding answer 16 October 1995]:* The current net cost to the national health service in England is estimated to be in the order of £90 million per annum.

This estimate is based on an assumption that all chargeable prescription items with a total cost of less than £5.25 would be dispensed privately. There is, however, no reliable way of estimating what proportion of patients and pharmacists might choose this option.

In appropriate cases, it is already open to pharmacists to offer patients non "prescription only" items as an alternative to using an NHS prescription and paying the prescription charge.

Public Immunity Certificates

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *1286*, if he will give details of the occasions on which the Secretary of State signed public immunity certificates in 1993 and 1994. [37414]

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 17 October 1995]:* I am answering in relation to the two certificates served on defendants in 1993 and 1994. The first was signed in relation to proceedings against the Department of Health and the second in relation to an application for preaction discovery.

WALES

Pay Negotiations

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38274]

Mr. Hague: There are two bargaining units; the Welsh Office, excluding Cadw, covering some 1,900 staff; the Welsh Historic Monuments executive agency and Cadw, covering some 220 staff.

The Welsh Office proposes to recognise the Civil and Public Services Association, the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists and the First Division Association and to have single table negotiation covering all staff. In Cadw, CPSA NUCPS and IPMS are recognised.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites of special scientific interest in Wales have been denotified since 1981 on the grounds of a decline in their scientific interest. [38357]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally in the form requested. However, since the establishment of the Countryside Council for Wales on 1 April 1991, this data has been included in their annual reports. Prior to 1991 it was collated centrally for England, Scotland and Wales by the nature Conservancy Council and was published in it's annual reports. The annual reports of both organisations are in the Library of the House.

Local Government Reorganisation

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total proposed membership of the new unitary authorities in Wales. [38023]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are currently 1,273 councillors in the 22 new unitary authorities in Wales. On 16 June 1995, following consultation with local government, my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Wales issued directions to the Local Government Boundary Commission to conduct a review of electoral arrangements in the 22 unitary authorities. At the time he indicated that he had no desire to see a cut in councillor numbers . Copies of the directions have bene placed in the Library of the House.

Tir Cymen

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure the expansion of the Tir Cymen scheme along the lines of the expansion of the countryside stewardship scheme in England. [38474]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Tir Cymen is a five-year experimental scheme which commenced in 1992. A full review of the scheme will be made towards the end of the experimental period, and decisions on its future will be made in the light of that review.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the payments made by the Welsh Office for capital works at grant-maintained schools and occasions when such payments have not been paid at the appropriate stages or on the completion of the work. [38429]

Mr. Richards: A list of all grant payments made by the Welsh Office to grant-maintained schools for capital works will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as possible. There have been no occasions where grant payments have not been made at appropriate stages or on completion of work where the Department was satisfied that grant should be released.

Mr. Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he make will a statement about the administrative processes involving grant maintained schools and the Welsh Office in paying building contractors for the work carried out at grant maintained schools. [38430]

Mr. Richards: Building contractors are paid by grant-maintained schools following the issue of an architect's certificate which states the value of work undertaken. Where the work is being funded by the school's formula-based capital grant, the school applies to the Welsh Office for the grant prior to the commencement of work. Where the building work being carried out forms part of a "named" project under the grant-maintained schools capital building programme, the Welsh Office pays grant to the school against certified claims form supported by the architect's certificate.

As a precaution against overpayment of the total grant payable, and to ensure that the work is satisfactorily completed, grant payments on named projects are stopped once the level of grant reached 97.5 per cent. of the total approved grant, pending settlement at final cost stage. As soon as possible after completion of the work, schools are required to submit final cost documentation to the Welsh Office and following scrutiny and approval of the documentation, the final instalment of grant is released to the school.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by local housing authority the amounts raised by sales of council homes to date and the amounts each local authority has available in capital receipts from these sales. [38431]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cumulative amount of receipts from the sales of council homes since 1981 is set out in the following table. The usable receipt at the spot date of 31 March 1995 is also provided.

Receipts from the sale of council houses[1]

£ million

	Receipts from the sale of council houses 1 April 1981 to 31 March 1995	*Usable receipts from the sale of council houses available at 31 March 1995*
Alyn and Deeside	18.4	0.5
Colwyn	8.9	0.6
Delyn	15.7	0.0
Glyndwr	13.1	0.5
Rhuddlan	9.5	0.4
Wrexham Maelor	42.0	1.0
Carmarthen	16.4	0.8
Ceredigion	20.7	1.2
Dinefwr	9.7	0.6
Llanelli	28.3	0.0
Preseli Pembrokeshire	27.0	2.6
South Pembrokeshire	12.6	1.2
Blaenau Gwent	26.5	2.2
Islwyn	36.9	0.4
Monmouth	31.9	3.6
Newport	53.5	7.6
Torfaen	58.4	2.7
Aberconwy	16.3	0.2
Arfon	16.5	0.0
Dwyfor	3.9	0.3
Meirionnydd	7.6	0.0
Ynys Mon	17.5	0.2
Cynon Valley	13.6	0.0
Merthyr Tydfil	20.2	0.3
Ogwr	50.3	0.6
Rhondda	5.7	0.0
Rhymney Valley	35.5	0.0
Taff Ely	36.4	0.5
Brecknock	15.9	1.2
Montgomeryshire	13.6	0.7
Radnorshire	8.0	0.4
Cardiff	101.0	7.1
Vale of Glamorgan	38.7	6.7
Port Talbot	33.4	0.0
Lliw Valley	18.2	0.0
Neath	21.7	0.0
Wales	951.2	44.4

[1] Includes receipts from the sale of dwellings and the repayment of principal from local authority mortgages.

School Meals

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the entitlement to free school meals in *(a)* West Glamorgan, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* the United Kingdom from 1979 to the latest available date expressed (i) numerically and (ii) in percentage terms indicating the figures for (1) primary school pupils and (2) secondary school pupils and (3) total pupils. [38261]

Mr. Richards: The following table shows the number of children entitled to free school meals in maintained primary and secondary schools in West Glamorgan and Wales, and the percentage they represent of the total number of children on the school rolls. No comparable information is available for the United Kingdom. Data for West Glamorgan and Wales are not available prior to 1988, as information was not collected on the number of pupils entitled to free school meals.

	Primary schools				*Secondary schools*				*Primary and secondary schools*			
	West Glamorgan		*Wales*		*West Glamorgan*		*Wales*		*West Glamorgan*		*Wales*	
At	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
September 1988	6,342	17.8	46,092	17.4	3,358	14.5	27,551	14.3	9,700	16.5	73,643	16.1
September 1989	6,315	17.4	46,124	17.1	3,284	14.5	25,190	13.5	9,599	16.3	71,314	15.6

At	Primary schools				Secondary schools				Primary and secondary schools			
	West Glamorgan		Wales		West Glamorgan		Wales		West Glamorgan		Wales	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
September 1990	6,744	18.5	48,860	17.9	3,358	14.8	24,865	13.4	10,102	17.1	73,725	16.1
September 1991	7,733	21.1	56,593	20.6	3,842	16.7	29,220	15.4	11,575	19.4	85,813	18.5
September 1992	8,305	22.6	62,973	22.7	4,338	18.6	33,320	17.2	12,643	21.1	96,293	20.5
January 1994[1]	9,342	24.6	71,675	25.1	5,003	21.0	36,526	18.8	14,345	23.2	108,201	22.5

Source:
Schools Census.
[1] From 1993–94 onwards school meal data has been collected at January not September.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 October, *Official Report*, column *114*, concerning the number of applications awaiting departmental approval under the private finance initiative, if he will give the capital value of each of the projects being examined. [39273]

Mr. Hague: The estimated capital value of each of the projects which have been announced is: M4 relief road (£330 million); A465 Heads of the Valleys road (£175 million); new general hospital, Baglan (£40 million); staff residential accommodation, district general hospital, Llantrisant (£3 million); car park, University hospital of Wales, Cardiff (£5 million); day surgery unit, Nevill Hall hospital, Abergavenny (£1.5 million); cancer treatment centre, Glan Clwyd district general hospital, Rhyl (£15 million); community hospital, Chepstow (£6 million); medium-secure unit, north Wales (£3.5 million); OSIRIS, office automation system for Welsh Office (£13 million).

National Lottery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidance note sent to the non-departmental public bodies in Wales concerning the principles and eligibility rules under which matching funding for projects offered grants from the national lottery may be received; what is his definition of public funding for this purpose; and if he will list for each non-departmental public body how many grants offers have been *(a)* made and *(b)* subsequently withdrawn. [39121]

Mr. Hague: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

WDA: Cynon Valley

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement giving a detailed response to the legal opinion of Vernon Pugh, QC on the Grant Thornton report of 7 December 1994 on the actions of the Welsh Development Agency in relation to Gadlys road and Tirfounder fields which was enclosed with the letter to him of 21 March from Landare Investments Limited. [39272]

Mr. Hague: My officials have already made clear that it is not for them to judge the merits of Mr. Pugh's opinion or to offer a view on it. I have nothing to add.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non—departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39134]

Mr. Hague: The information requested is in the following table.

	1991–92			1992–93			1993–94			1994–95		
	Number	Value £	Amount recovered £	Number	Value £	Amount recovered £	Number	Value £	Amount recovered £	Number	Value £	Amount recovered £
Welsh Office	1	3,000	Nil	—	—	—	1	24	Nil	—	—	—
Agencies	1	6	Nil	1	6	Nil	—	—	—	—	—	—
NDPBs	4	24,137	392	2	269	215	1	41,739	Nil	1	56	56

ERDF Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his meeting with the member of the European Commission responsible for regional development in Brussels on Wednesday 4 October, in relation to the application of the additionality principle of his Department's grant-in-aid to the Welsh Development Agency; and when he expects to supply the additional information on the funding of the Welsh Development Agency to the Commission. [37531]

Mr. Hague: I had a constructive meeting with the Commissioner for Regional Development, and the problem has been resolved.

TRANSPORT

M25 (Service Area)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions were reached when his Department last undertook a comprehensive survey of possible sites for a motorway service area on the western quadrant of the M25. [38437]

Mr. Watts: The last such survey was carried out in July 1984 and led, in 1988, to an announcement that the Department would promote an MSA at Iver. Uncertainties over finance and the effect on an MSA of M25 widening meant, however, that no planning application was submitted. Instead, in 1989, the Department announced a fresh search for an MSA site on the western quadrant. Shortly afterwards, the decision was taken to deregulate the provision of new MSAs and the proposed site search was abandoned. The current Iver MSA proposals are purely private applications submitted under the deregulated arrangements.

I will arrange to send my hon. Friend copies of the 1984 survey report and of the 1989 announcement of the fresh site search.

Railway Speed Restrictions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many K2 speed restrictions exist on the rail line between Paddington and Plymouth; if he will list them; and what was the date and reason for their imposition. [38836]

Mr. Watts: Railtrack inform me that the total number of speed restrictions currently in place is approximately 16. All of these restrictions have been in place for between one and 14 months and in each case the reason for the restriction is the condition of the track.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39137]

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Air Traffic Services

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reply to the Second Report of the Transport Committee on the privatisation of National Air Traffic Services (HC 36). [39275]

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State has responded to the recommendations made by the Transport Select Committee. It is for the Committee to decide when and how to publish that response.

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent the recommendations contained in the Second Report of the Transport Committee on the privatisation of National Air Traffic Services (HC 36) that the Safety Regulation Group's Air Traffic Services Standards Department should be transferred to a body separate from the Civil Aviation Authority has been accepted by his Department; what progress has been made towards the implementation of this recommendation; and if he will make a statement. [39276]

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State has responded to the Committee's report. It is for the Committee to decide when and how to publish that response. It would be inappropriate for me to comment more fully on the issues raised until the Select Committee publishes the responses to its recommendations.

Bull Bars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation banning the fitting of steel bars as bumpers to *(a)* four-wheel drives and *(b)* ordinary private vehicles; and if he will make a statement. [39018]

Mr. Norris: The Transport Research Laboratory is currently analysing police reports of accidents involving bull bars which occurred in 1994. The results will not be available until towards the end of the year. We shall then decide what legislation if any, is needed.

Newbury Bypass

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department has given to the environmental balance between the principle route alternatives in respect of Greenham Common air base and the Newbury bypass; and if he will make a statement. [39060]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency.

I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 24 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the Newbury Bypass.

The Study Team commissioned by the then Secretary of State, Dr. Brian Mawhinney, did consider whether the closure of the Greenham Common Air Base had opened new possibilities for an eastern bypass of Newbury. A copy of their report is enclosed and you will see that their conclusion was that the overall balance remained in favour of a western bypass. The conclusion was endorsed by the then Secretary of State.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the major components of his announced £7 million cost of a study of the re-equipping the west coast main line and the estimated components and total cost of its modernisation. [39320]

Mr. Watts: The overall costs of the west coast main line investment programme is estimated at some £1 billion. Nearly £7 million of European funding has been secured for 1995. This money will be used to finance the

feasibility and design works for the modernisation project and go towards work to enable Eurostar trains to run international services on the route from next year.

Road Signs (Metrication)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has for the replacement of existing road signs to include metric distances; [38876]

(2) what plans he has for the introduction of metric distances for all new road signs. [38877]

Mr. Watts: None.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Doncaster travel-to-work area the current numbers of *(a)* casual and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office; and what were the figures 12 months ago. [39055]

Mr. Norris: According to the Department's personnel information systems, the numbers of casual and fixed-term appointments in my Department in the Doncaster area at 1 October 1995 and those of 12 months ago are given in the table.

Address	*Casuals 1994*	*Casuals 1995*	*Fixed-term 1994*	*Fixed-term 1995*
Sackville street, Barnsley	1	1	0	0
Wellsyke road, Doncaster	4	1	0	0
Shaftesbury avenue, Doncaster	1	2	0	0
Doncaster road, Rotherham	2	4	0	0
St Peter's house, Sheffield	2	6	0	1
Orgreave way, Sheffield	1	0	0	0
Middlewood road, Sheffield	1	1	0	0
Richmond Park road, Sheffield	0	3	0	0

Municipal Bus Undertakings

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the management-employee buy-outs of municipal bus undertakings which have since been sold on to private operators. [38756]

Mr. Norris: Municipal bus undertakings which are bought out by management-employee teams become private sector companies. My Department does not formally monitor changes of ownership within the bus industry.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is his policy in respect of compelling local authorities to dispose of their municipal bus companies and to bring forward the necessary legislation in this Parliament. [38892]

Mr. Norris: Our policy continues to be to encourage local authorities to sell their bus companies, as many have already done. As and when a suitable legislative opportunity arises, we shall seek powers to compel authorities still owning bus companies to sell them.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations he takes into account when deciding whether or not to approve the sale of a municipal bus undertaking to a management-employee buy-out. [38891]

Mr. Norris: The decision on whether a municipal bus company is put up for sale and the conditions attaching to that sale are solely matters for the owners, but under the Transport Act 1985 the consent of the Secretary of State is needed to the arrangements made. Since 1992 it has been policy not to grant consent to a sale, whether to a management-employee buy-out or otherwise, unless it has followed a competitive tender.

Rail Fare Increases

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all cases of which his Department has received notification of increases in rail fares deliberately introduced in order to reduce demand; and if he will make a statement. [38132]

Mr. Watts: The setting of rail fares is a commercial matter for train operators. Operators are not required to notify my Department of their reasons for increases in individual fares.

From 1 January 1996 fares will be subject to the regime announced by the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising.

Motorway Lighting

Sir Michael Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in reducing the glare in the night sky caused by the lighting of motorways; what is his policy for ensuring that motorway service areas do not add to the loss of night sky caused by their illumination; and if he will make a statement. [38354]

Mr. Watts: It has been a requirement of motorway lighting schemes designed since February 1993 that the impact of lighting at night on dark landscapes should be minimised using an appropriate degree of special light control whenever lanterns are being provided or replaced. Examples of modern lanterns can be seen on M40 junctions 3 to 5.

It is for the local planning authority to assess the environmental effects of lighting at motorway service areas. My Department's role is limited to ensuring that the lighting does not have an adverse effect on road safety on the motorway.

Railway Property Sales

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whom Railtrack will have to consult after privatisation before selling or leasing its land or other property. [38307]

Mr. Watts: Although, as now, there will be no specific requirement after privatisation for Railtrack to consult before selling or leasing its land or other property, the

rigorous closure procedures set out in the Railways Act 1993 will continue to apply in respect of any proposal by Railtrack to close a part of its operational passenger network or any railway facility that it operates.

Rural Roads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to protect the safety and integrity of green roads or lanes. [38851]

Mr. Watts: The Government's position on the regulation of vehicular use of byways is most recently set out in the White Paper, "Rural England—A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside", Cm 3016, published on 17 October. A section devoted to the subject appears on page 127.

Railtrack Employees Share Offer

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many shares will be issued free or at a reduced price to Railtrack employees when the company's shares are put on the market; what he estimates the total value of employees' free shares and discounts will be; and how many employees will be eligible for these benefits; [38306]

(2) how many shares and share options will be issued free or at a reduced price to Railtrack directors when the company's shares are put on the market; what he estimates the total value of directors' free shares and discounts will be; and how many directors will be eligible for these benefits. [38305]

Mr. Watts: My right hon. Friend announced on 25 September the Railtrack employee share offers as part of the intended stock market flotation of Railtrack. The offers include:

free shares for each eligible Railtrack employee worth approximately £160 at the offer price plus a further £2 worth of shares for each year of continuous service int eh rail industry;

a matching offer of two free shares for every one purchased by eligible Railtrack employees up to a maximum value of approximately £250—that is, free shares of up to approximately £500;

discount of 20 per cent. for eligible Railtrack employees on up to approximately £1,400 worth of shares at the offer price—that is, a discount of up to £280;

priority over shares offered to the public to the value of approximately £18,000 at the offer price, including the shares purchased through the discount offer.

The priority offer, excluding the discount element, will also be offered to Railtrack pensioners.

It is too early to say how many shares will be issued or what the total value will be or how many employees and directors will be eligible. This will depend on the share price, the level of take-up and the number of eligible employees and directors at the time.

There will be no share options for Railtrack directors.

Motorway Resurfacing

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of concrete motorway have been resurfaced in black-top; and what factors caused it to be used. [38413]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Christopher Gill, dated 24 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many miles of concrete motorway have been resurfaced in black-top; and what factors caused it to be used.

Figures are not available for years prior to 1992/93. The lengths of concrete motorway in England resurfaced in black-top in recent years are as follows:

Financial Year	*Miles*
1992–93	1.8
1993–94	15.6
1994–95	9.3

Motorways with a concrete road surface can be resurfaced in black-top as part of normal maintenance operations. This would be carried out for two main reasons—as a surface treatment or as a strengthening treatment. A surface treatment is required when the skidding resistance of the road surface falls below specified levels of where the concrete surface is showing signs of distress. A strengthening treatment is required when the structural condition of the pavement has deteriorated to the point where it is no longer able to carry the predicted future traffic. Overlaying with black-top is one means of providing the additional strength and extending the pavement life. Alternatively, concrete can also be used as an overlay treatment.

Piracy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the past 12 months how many attacks by pirates on British shipping have taken place on the high seas; and if he will make a statement. [39027]

Mr. Norris: During the last 12 months there has been one report of a piracy attack on the high seas against a ship registered in the UK or the Crown dependencies. This was against the UK-registered ocean-going yacht, the Longo Barda, attacked off Somalia in April 1995.

Air UK

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Air UK in the last three years concerning the designation of civil air routes in eastern areas of the United Kingdom. [38121]

Mr. Norris: I am not aware that the Department has received any representations from Air UK on this subject in the last three years. However, I understand that the Civil Aviation Authority received a letter in December 1992.

Solent Buoys

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those buoys in the Solent for which Trinity House is responsible; and what powers he has to require Trinity House to pass them out to another competent authority. [37906]

Mr. Norris: Trinity House is responsible for the following lights in the solent area:

Prince Consort;

Gurnard;

Gurnard Ledge;

East Lepe;

Salt Mead;

West Lepe;

Hamstead Ledge; and

Sconce

The Secretary of State has no powers to require Trinity House to transfer buoys to another authority. Under section 33 of the Ports Act 1991, it is for the appropriate general lighthouse authority to determine, with the consent of the Secretary of State, whether or not to transfer buoys to a harbour authority.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the gross cost to the public purse of British railways in the years 1998 to 2001 if the privatisation plans are implemented. [38460]

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* The privatisation process has irresistible momentum. The Government remain committed to continuing to provide financial support to the railways. We believe that privatisation will bring efficiency improvements, competition and innovation, from which passengers and taxpayers will benefit, and which will become increasingly evident over time. The major area of cost will be for the provision of passenger services. The level of this cost will be determined by market competition through the process of franchising the passenger train operating companies. No estimate of the cost of public sector support has been made beyond 1995–96.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

12. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning problems of low flying. [36570]

Mr. Soames: My Department has received a number of representations from hon. Members and the general public about military low flying.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, numbers, types and nationalities of aircraft, nature of breach, disciplinary actions taken against aircrew and lessons learned from each of the confirmed breaches of low flying regulations during 1994. [38140]

Mr. Soames: Details of breaches of military low flying regulations during 1994 confirmed by RAF police investigations are as follows. Unless stated otherwise, a lateral breach of the avoidance area listed occurred in each case.

Date	*Location*	*Numbers and type of A/C*	*Nationality*	*Nature of breach*
7 January	Lockerbie Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Tornado	RAF	Lockerbie avoidance area
17 January	Eshott Northumberland	1 x Tornado	RAF	Eshott Microlight Site avoidance area
17 January	Ruabon, Clwyd	1 x Hercules	RAF	Monsanto Chemical Works avoidance area
20 January	Beverley Humberside	1 x Harrier	RAF	Hull Aero Club avoidance area
25 January	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Gazelle	AAC	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
9 February	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Sea King	RN	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
28 March	Lockerbie Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Gazelle	AAC	Lockerbie avoidance area
6 April	Market Rasen Lincolnshire	1 x Tornado	TTTE	Hill House Riding School avoidance area
11 April	Bude, Cornwall	2 x F15	USAF	Seasonal avoidance area in Little Youlstone
12 April	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Jaguar	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
12 April	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Tornado	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
12 April	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Jaguar	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
13 April	St. Mary's Lock Selkirk	2 x Jaguar	RAF	Failed to observe uni-directional flow while flying in the Moffat Valley
15 April	Beverley North Humberside	1 x Tornado 4 x A7	RAF Portuguese Airforce	Hull Aero Club avoidance area
25 April	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Jaguar	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area

Date	*Location*	*Numbers and type of A/C*	*Nationality*	*Nature of breach*
26 April	Bude, Cornwall	1 x Hunter	RN	Seasonal avoidance area in Little Youlstone
28 April	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Chinook	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
17 May	Near Hay on Wye Powys	1 x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
17 May	Shobdon Hereford and Worcester	1 x Hawk	RAF	Shobdon Airfield avoidance area
1 June	Near Hay on Wye Powys	2 x F15	USAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
1 June	Near Hay on Wye Powys	2 x F15	USAF	Flying in UKLFS outside of allocated times
15 June	Salisbury Wiltshire	1 x Gazelle	AAC	Dean Hill RN Armaments Depot
23 June	Near Hay on Wye Powys	1 x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
20 July	Ruabon, Clywd	1 x Tornado	TTTE	Monsanto Chemical Works avoidance area
27 July	Carlisle, Cumbria	1 x Tornado	TTTE	Overflew Carlisle, a town listed for avoidance
28 July	Near Hay on Wye Powys	1 x F15	USAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
28 July	Near Hay on Wye Powys	1 x Hercules	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
29 July	Keswick, Cumbria	2 x F15	USAF	Bewaldeth Hang Gliding site avoidance area
4 August	Glyn-Neath, Dyfed	2 x F15	USAF	Royal National Eisteddfod temporary avoidance area
4 August	Near Plymouth Devon	1 x Sea King	RN	Dartmoor Wildlife Park avoidance area
5 August	Penrith, Cumbria	2 x Jaguar	RAF	Lowther Event temporary avoidance area
9 August	Near Hay on Wye	2 x Hawk	RAF	Hay Bluff Hang Gliding site avoidance area
17 August	Church Stretton Shropshire	1 x Hawk	RAF	Midlands Gliding Club avoidance area
1 September	Caerlaverlock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Tornado	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
5 September	Haltwhistle Northumbria	1 x Tornado	TTTE	CANP avoidance area
6 September	Caerlaverlock Dumfries and Galloway	2 x Tornado	TTTE	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
11 September	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Hercules	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
13 September	Caerlaverlock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Hawk	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
13 September	Dolgellau/Tewkesbury/ Gwynedd/Gloucestershire	2 x F15	USAF	Unauthorised flight within UK night low flying system
22 September	Ambleside, Cumbria	1 x F15	USAF	Flew below authorised Minimum Separation Distance
28 September	Beverley North Humberside	1 x Tornado	RAF	Hull Aero Club avoidance area
6 October	Near Plymouth, Devon	1 x Tornado	RAF	Dartmoor Wildlife Park avoidance area

Date	Location	Numbers and type of A/C	Nationality	Nature of breach
12 October	Peebles, Borders	1 x Tucano	RAF	Overflew Peebles, a town listed for avoidance
17 October	Haltwhistle Northumberland	1 x F15	USAF	CANP avoidance area
16 November	Dumfries Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Jaguar	RAF	Crichton Royal Hospital avoidance area
18 November	Slimbridge Gloucestershire	3 x B105	Royal Netherlands Air Force	Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust seasonal avoidance area
18 November	Hawick, Borders	1 x Harrier	RAF	Minto Hills Hang Gliding Site avoidance area
28 November	Hawick, Borders	1 x Tornado	RAF	Minto Hills Hang Gliding Site avoidance area
9 December	Sywell Northamptonshire	1 x F15	USAF	Sywell Aerodome Avoidance area
12 December	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	2 x Tornado	TTTE	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area
14 December	Carlisle, Cumbria	1 x F15	USAF	Overflew Carlisle, a town listed for avoidance
15 December	Market Rasen Lincolnshire	2 x F15	USAF	Hill House Riding School avoidance area
22 December	Caerlaverlock Dumfries and Galloway	1 x Tornado	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area

In cases where the nationality of the aircraft is shown as TTTE, the aircraft came from the Tri-national Training Establishment at RAF Cottesmore which trains aircrew of the Royal Air Force, German air force and Italian air force using aircraft provided by all three nations.

Formal disciplinary action under the service discipline Acts was taken against the pilot of the Royal Navy Hunter responsible for the breaches at Langar airfield on 10 February 1994, who pleaded guilty to one charge of conduct to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline and one charge of annoyance by flying under the naval discipline Act for which he was severely reprimanded and fined. In cases involving UK aircrew where formal disciplinary action is not appropriate, aircrew who have breached regulations may be interviewed by their station commander or other appropriate senior officer. Such action could be recorded on individual's career records and affect flying status and promotion prospects. It is not our policy to release details of such action. It is the responsibility of senior officers to ascertain what lessons there are to be learnt from such incidents; central records are not maintained.

Reports on breaches by foreign aircrew are passed to their relevant national authorities, which whom responsibility for any further action rests.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties carried out over the United Kingdom by each aircraft type in each month from January 1994 to the latest available date. [38120]

Mr. Soames: The number of sorties by aircraft type booked in the United Kingdom low flying system in each month from January 1994 to August 1995, the most recent month for which figures are available, were as follows:

1994

Aircraft type	January	February	March	April
Buccaneer	36	70	94	21
Harrier	574	442	498	466
Hawk	892	887	1,104	1,168
Jaguar	409	375	276	566
Tornado	1,615	1,433	1,847	1,567
Tucano	653	594	855	631
F15	241	300	252	204
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	3,857	3,838	5,744	3,689
Total	8,277	7,939	10,670	8,312

1994

Aircraft type	May	June	July	August
Buccaneer	0	4	0	1
Harrier	549	574	472	365
Hawk	1,364	1,496	1,474	1,398
Jaguar	318	293	522	405
Tornado	1,554	1,738	1,554	1,844
Tucano	693	778	720	712
F15	292	284	278	292
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	4,401	6,081	4,604	4,000
Total	9,171	11,248	9,624	9,017

1994

Aircraft type	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
Buccaneer	5	0	3	0
Harrier	682	502	648	394
Hawk	1,180	790	764	530
Jaguar	498	608	377	420
Tornado	1,788	1,598	1,716	1,358
Tucano	722	669	468	534
F15	194	278	319	211
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	5,477	4,709	4,500	2,808
Total	10,546	9,154	8,795	6,255

1995

Aircraft type	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*
Buccaneer	0	0	0	0
Harrier	528	676	861	409
Hawk	711	635	1,079	853
Jaguar	469	504	504	393
Tornado	1,769	1,676	1,765	1,568
Tucano	404	636	637	429
F15	346	260	397	373
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	4,197	4,406	5,602	3,889
Total	8,424	8,793	10,845	7,914

1995

Aircraft type	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
Buccaneer	0	0	0	0
Harrier	994	608	701	426
Hawk	1,213	1,223	620	926
Jaguar	571	710	457	297
Tornado	1,693	2,025	1,594	1,571
Tucano	352	693	612	643
F15	274	325	188	232
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	5,607	6,379	5,022	3,919
Total	10,704	11,963	9,194	8,014

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the minimum authorised altitude for flights over the United Kingdom by the Italian air force Tornados deployed to RAF Cottesmore from 3 to 7 July; and if the aircraft were permitted to descend below that height when within *(a)* low flying area 13 and *(b)* the Spadeadam range danger area; [38128]

(2) what was the minimum authorised altitude for flights over the United Kingdom by the Italian air force AMX aircraft deployed to RAF Leeming from 19 to 23 June; and if the aircraft were permitted to descend below that height when within *(a)* low flying area 13 and *(b)* the Spadeadam range danger area; [38126]

(3) what was the minimum authorised altitude for flights over the United Kingdom by the Italian air force AMX aircraft deployed to RAF Leeming from 3 to 7 July; and if the aircraft were permitted to descend below that height when within *(a)* low flying area 13 and *(b)* the Spadeadam range danger area; [38125]

(4) what was the minimum authorised altitude for flights over the United Kingdom by the Italian air force Tornados deployed to RAF Cottesmore from 24 to 28 July; and if the aircraft were permitted to descend below that height when within *(a)* low flying area 13 and *(b)* the Spadeadam range danger area. [38127]

Mr. Soames: In each case, the authorised minimum separation distance for the Italian aircraft within the United Kingdom low flying system, including low flying area 13, was 500ft. Within the Spadeadam range danger area the aircraft were permitted to descend to 250ft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what responsibilities are held by authorising officers concerning the pre-flight checking of low-level flight profiles for *(a)* safety and *(b)* conformity with low flying regulations. [38136]

Mr. Soames: Authorising officers are responsible for ensuring that low-level sortie plans comply with the regulations and procedures in the United Kingdom military low flying handbook, and that aircrew are suitably qualified to execute the planned sortie safely.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, columns *272–74*, at what altitude and speed the aircraft were found to have been flying at the time of the two sonic boom incidents; and if either of the aircraft was carrying out a simulated attack or interception at the time of the incident. [38320]

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Date	*Estimated height*	*Estimated speed*
21 July 1993	12,800	Mach 1.01
11 August 1993	25,000	Mach 1.02

The aircraft involved in the incident on 21 July was engaged in air combat manoeuvring and the aircraft involved in the incident on 11 August was running in to commence a simulated attack.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the RAF police are tasked to investigate breaches of low flying regulations in cases where the breach also leads to an air miss report being filed. [38138]

Mr. Soames: It is not our usual practice to initiate an RAF police investigation if, in the course of an investigation of an air miss report, it appears that a breach of low flying regulations may have occurred, but it is open to the chain of command of the aircrew concerned to request such an investigation if they believe there may be grounds for subsequent disciplinary action.

If the alleged breach of low flying regulations is reported separately, an RAF police investigation may be started, but this will normally be terminated when it becomes apparent that an air miss investigation into the same incident is in progress.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties are required for *(a)* pilots and *(b)* navigators to qualify in use of the thermal imaging

airborne laser designation pod; and how many of these sorties are required to be at low level. [38129]

Mr. Soames: To become qualified in the use of the TIALD pod, RAF Tornado pilots and navigators are required to fly four medium-level and six low-level sorties, and RAF Jaguar pilots five medium-level sorties.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of flying hours' experience held by the aircrew involved in each of the RAF fast jet low-level accidents listed in his Department's evidence to the Defence Committee, HC 120 (1989–90) pp.144–153, and HC 314 (1993–94), pp.29–30. [38137]

Mr. Soames: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *105*, if he will list the dates, numbers, types and nationalities of aircraft, for the four alleged breaches of the Eshott avoidance area which were subsequently not confirmed. [38321]

Mr. Soames: Details of the four alleged breaches of Eshott microlight site in 1992 where a breach was suspected but could not be confirmed by RAF police investigations are as follows:

Date	*Number and type of aircraft*	*Nationality*
3 August	1 x Tornado	Italian Air Force
6 August	1 x Tornado	RAF
6 August	1 x Tornado	RAF
14 September	1 x F111	USAF

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes were made to the boundaries of low flying area 1 in April 1993; and what notification of any such changes was made to *(a)* the media, *(b)* hon. Members, *(c)* the local authorities in the area concerned and *(d)* civil aviation interests. [38123]

Mr. Soames: The boundary between low flying area 1 and low flying area 18 was moved eastwards by approximately 15 miles. It is not our practice to notify hon. Members and the local media of all changes to the United Kingdom low flying system, and none of the individuals or bodies listed was notified at the time. Details of the change were, however, passed to the Defence Committee and published on page 25 of the House of Commons Defence Committee report, HC 314 of Session 1993–94, on low flying.

Complaints from the Public

13. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received by his Department from Welsh members of the public in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1994. [36571]

Mr. Soames: We have no way of knowing how many members of the public who complain to our Department are Welsh. We deal with all complaints as quickly and sympathetically as possible.

Trafalgar Class Submarines

14. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to award the contract for the construction of batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines. [36572]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I hope to be in a position to place a prime contract for the construction of batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines next year.

UNPROFOR

15. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future role of UNPROFOR. [36573]

Mr. Portillo: Subject to the outcome of peace negotiations, we would expect UNPROFOR to be replaced by a NATO-led implementation force. The Government welcome the progress so far, but much remains to be done and UNPROFOR will continue to have a vital role to perform while the peace talks continue and until the implementation force is in place.

Overseas Wars

16. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy on involvement in wars overseas. [36576]

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom is committed to the defence of its dependent territories and, under article 5 of the Washington treaty, to assist a NATO ally should its territory come under attack. In addition, we shall continue to play an appropriate role—political, diplomatic or military—in international efforts to promote peace and stability.

Reserve Armed Forces

17. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he proposes to enhance the role and status of the reserve armed forces over the next 12 months. [36577]

Mr. Soames: We aim to introduce a Reserve Forces Bill as soon as possible. I announced to the House on 30 March the publication of the Bill in draft for consultation. More than 500 written responses have been received, the great majority supportive of our proposals. Many useful detailed observations were made and the draft Bill is being revised to take account of them.

Intelligence-gathering Satellites

18. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with which countries the United Kingdom is collaborating or discussing collaboration on intelligence-gathering satellites. [36578]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Western European Union is currently studying the possibilities of co-operation on a European satellite observation system. The United Kingdom is contributing fully to that work.

Hydrographic Service

19. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of ships available to the hydrographic service. [36579]

Mr. Soames: There are currently six RN vessels available to the hydrographic service. There are three coastal survey vessels, HMS Bulldog, Beagle and Roebuck, the ocean survey vessels HMS Hecla and Herald and an inshore survey launcher, HMS Gleaner. HMS Scott, the replacement for HMS Hecla, is under construction as part of the ongoing programme to upgrade the capability of the hydrographic service. The hydrographic service also charters suitable commercial survey vessels which are used by RN survey teams in support of the civil hydrographic requirement.

Anti-missile Defence

20. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of progress on the feasibility study on anti—missile defence. [36580]

Mr. Arbuthnot: A contract was awarded in October 1994 to a consortium led by British Aerospace to carry out a pre-feasibility study to identify ballistic missile defence systems to counter potential threats to the United Kingdom, the dependent territories and our forces deployed overseas. The study, which is scheduled to run for some 18 months and is proceeding according to schedule, will identify practical defensive architectures against a range of scenarios taking account of performance criteria, costs, timescales and technical risk. This advice will inform subsequent policy consideration, including whether the UK has a requirement for ballistic missile defence.

Official Hospitality

21. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95 and in 1995 to date. [36581]

Mr. Soames: During financial year 1994–95 my Department spent £4.867 million on official hospitality, and as at 1 October 1995 £2.14 million has been spent during the current financial year. These figures include expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence itself, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

RAF Northolt

22. **Sir Michael Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the number of military air traffic movements at RAF Northolt for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available. [36582]

Mr. Soames: There were 7,750 military air traffic movements at RAF Northolt during the period 1 October 1994 to 30 September 1995. Additionally, there were 2,085 civil movements on Ministry of Defence business during the same period.

Western European Union

23. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his counterparts in the WEU to discuss the further development of a common defence policy; and if he will make a statement. [36583]

Mr. Soames: WEU Foreign and Defence Ministers last met in Lisbon in May this year. The outcome was published in a communiqué of the meeting, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. They will meet again in November.

Bosnia

24. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the situation in Bosnia. [36584]

28. **Mr. Sutcliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Bosnia. [36588]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer given to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops are currently serving in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement. [36847]

Mr. Soames: Following the relocation of 24 Airmobile Brigade to the UK as part of the reconfiguration of United Nations forces requested by the UN Secretary General, almost 5,000 UK ground troops will remain in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, there are some 3,000 Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel deployed in the Adriatic theatre in support of UN and NATO operations.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many humanitarian aid convoys to Sarajevo were escorted over Mount Igman by United Nations forces during August and September 1995; and approximately what tonnage of relief supplies was delivered by that route. [38328]

Mr. Soames: No United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees humanitarian aid convoys were escorted over Mount Igman by UNPROFOR during August and September. Aid convoys from non-governmental organisations were escorted over this route during the same period, but the UN has been unable to provide statistics on the numbers or tonnage involved.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average minimum temperature at the British Army positions on Mount Igman during the last two weeks of September; and when the soldiers serving at these positions were issued with cold weather clothing. [38045]

Mr. Soames: The average minimum temperature at the British positions on Mount Igman during the last two weeks of September was minus 1 deg C. Winter clothing was issued in the first half of September to personnel in exposed positions such as observation posts; the balance was issued over the period 23 to 27 September.

Helicopters

25. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Britain's requirements for attack and support helicopters now meet the United Kingdom's needs into the next century. [36585]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The orders which were announced during the 1995—for 67 Apache attack helicopters for the Army and 14 Chinook MkII and 22 utility EH101 support

helicopters for the Royal Air Force—will ensure that the United Kingdom's requirements for these capabilities will be satisfied for the foreseeable future.

Land Mines

26. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ban the export of self-destruct anti-personnel land mines. [36586]

Mr. Arbuthnot: No. It would not be right to ban completely the export of a weapon which we may in future need to import for our own armed forces.

New Office Accommodation

27. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff have been or are planned to be accommodated in new office accommodation. [36587]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Detailed information relating to all the new-build office accommodation is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Four new office accommodation projects in excess of £10 million in value have been approved centrally since 1991 to accommodate some 8,800 staff in total. All of these are part of wider strategies which result in significant savings to the taxpayer. They are the new Procurement Executive headquarters at Abbey Wood near Bristol, an additional office block at Andover for HQ Quarter Master General's staff, a new personnel and training command headquarters at RAF Innsworth and a new logistic command headquarters at RAF Wyton.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with his French counterpart on nuclear testing since July. [36751]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Nuclear testing was one of a wide range of defence issues discussed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during his meeting with the French Defence Minister in Paris on 27 September.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what access the United Kingdom will have to information or data resulting from the current French nuclear testing programme. [38457]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The UK has neither asked for, nor been offered, information or data resulting from the current French nuclear test programme.

Nuclear Weapons (France)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each of the memoranda of understanding which currently exist between Britain and France with regard to all aspects of nuclear weapons, outlining the purpose of each, the date on which each one was signed and whether its text is classified; on what dates each one has been amended; and if any other countries are party to these memoranda. [38455]

Mr. Arbuthnot: It is not our practice to reveal details on contacts with France on defence nuclear matters.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will define the current status of the technical discussions between Britain and France, referred to in para. 25 of the Commons report of the Defence Committee, "Progress of the Trident Programme", HC 350, on issues related to nuclear weapons stewardship, hydrodynamic experiments and computer simulations; which Ministers and officials have taken part in these discussions; and what subjects were covered. [38456]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column 37.

Helicopter Accident, Wales

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the report of the inquiry into the cause of the accident on 12 August 1993 at Padarn Lake, Llanberis, involving an RAF Wessex helicopter. [38097]

Mr. Soames: The RAF board of inquiry into this accident has been protracted by the complex technical investigation. It is planned to release the findings shortly.

Royal Naval College (Irradiation Facilities)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the extent to which the Royal Naval College at Greenwich irradiation facilities have been used for commercial purposes. [39260]

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency, under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of the NRTA to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from A. D. Ferguson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 24 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Defence has asked the Chief Executive of the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency (NRTA) to reply to your Parliamentary Question, about the extent to which the irradiation facilities at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich have been used for commercial purposes. I am replying on behalf of the Chief Executive who is away.

Whilst it is Ministry of Defence policy to make use of any irreducible and temporarily unallocated training capacity wherever it is possible to do so, it is not the case that RNC Greenwich has provided irradiation facilities for commercial purposes. RNC Greenwich is part of the recently created NRTA and the Agency operates in accordance with the MOD policy and HM Treasury guidelines to market spare training capacity at its shore training facilities and thereby generate income.

The Navy's Department of Nuclear Science and Technology (DNST), together with its low power nuclear reactor (known as JASON) are located at RNC Greenwich and are also part of the NRTA. Whilst DNST has a number of irradiation facilities other than JASON (including X-radiation and Gamma radiation facilities), in the context of your Parliamentary Question you will wish to be aware that DNST has provided only two training courses on a commercial basis during the past 12 months. The first being a one day training session for university students where the students observed JASON, but did not use it as an irradiation facility. The second was a three week course on instrument calibration. During this course, one practical session made use of JASON, but, again, not as an irradiation facility.

I hope that you will find the foregoing to be helpful.

Next Steps Agencies

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about possible defence agency status for the Director General Naval

Bases and Supply and Director General Ships organisations. [39420]

Mr. Soames: I have decided that the Director General Naval Bases and Supply and Director General Ships organisations, within the Naval Support Command, should be considered as candidates for defence agency status under the next steps initiative. Prior options studies will be undertaken to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. Comments and ideas would be welcome from any interested parties. These should be sent by 15 December 1995 to D. G. Jones Esq, Director General Naval Bases and Supply, Management suite, Room 13, Block C, Ensleigh, Bath BA1 5AB or R. V. Babington Esq, Director General Ships, Spur 12, Block B, Foxhill, Bath BA1 5AB as appropriate.

Air Defence Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has with the United States authorities concerning the leasing of F-16C aircraft for use as air defence fighters by the Royal Air Force. [38130]

Mr. Arbuthnot: My Department is currently examining proposals to upgrade the weapon systems of the Tornado F3 air defence fighter. A routine part of our evaluation procedure is to examine the comparative costs of alternative options. We have, in this context, contacted the United States Department of Defence for information concerning F-16 aircraft.

Dodman Point Naval Firing Range

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many days firing practice has taken place since the naval firing range opened at Dodman Point in Cornwall; and on how many of those days safety boats have been present. [38479]

Mr. Soames: There have been 16 naval gunfire support training serials in the exercise areas off Dodman Point since the Operational Sea Training organisation moved to Plymouth this summer. Firing has taken place during five of these, at each of which a range safety craft was present.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when firing practice is taking place at Dodman Point naval firing range in Cornwall; on which occasions safety boats have been present throughout the firing; and for what period of time they have been absent. [38480]

Mr. Soames: Naval gunfire support training will be carried out in the sea exercise areas off Dodman Point on up to 72 occasions per year. Details of the specific timings of the individual firing serials are being published in advance in the local press and are also being broadcast through the Gunfacts system. A range safety craft has been present throughout all the firings which have been completed to date.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regulations are in force regarding the use of safety boats during firing practice at Dodman Point naval firing range in Cornwall. [38478]

Mr. Soames: There are no specific regulations governing the use of safety boats during firing practice off Dodman Point. The requirement for such a boat is decided on a case by case basis by the Royal Navy, taking account of the particular conditions and circumstances of the firing. The main methods of ensuring that the range is clear are through visual and radar observation from the firing ship, and observation from the helicopter which is present.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans has he for allowing the use of MoD airfields to export livestock from the United Kingdom or for the sale of MoD airfields to exporters of livestock; and if he will make a statement on this point. [38704]

Mr. Soames: We have no plans to allow the use of operational MoD airfields for the export of livestock from the United Kingdom. I am not aware of any specific offer from companies to purchase any redundant airfield for this purpose at this time.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will commission a study of the cost savings that would be made from linking British defence expenditure to the average level of out western European partners. [39250]

Mr. Soames: No. United Kingdom defence expenditure is determined by the Government's assessment of the UK's defence needs and spending priorities. It would be wrong to link defence spending to the average of other countries' defence spending.

RAF 100 Squadron

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the specification used under the market-testing initiative in respect of contracts involving RAF 100 Squadron; how many firms bid for these contracts; and which firms were successful. [38378]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The statement of requirement used in respect of the strategic contractorisation of target towing facilities at RAF 100 Squadron is an integral part of the contract which has been placed and is, therefore, considered to be contracts in confidence. As such, it cannot be made available in the Library of the House. Six contractors bid for the contract, which was won by Hunting Aviation.

Regimental and Military Museums

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money will be provided out of MOD funds to pay for staff in each regimental or military museum in the United Kingdom in 1995–96. [38382]

Mr. Soames: Seventy regimental museums will receive a total of around £1.6 million funding from MOD towards staff costs in 1995–96. Separately, MOD provides a grant in aid of £3.2 million to the National Army Museum which is applied to the museum's operating costs and purchase grant.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if we will ensure that his Department's funding for the museum of the Royal Dragon Guards and Prince of Wales, Own Regiment in York will be maintained in future years at a sufficient level to keep this joint regimental museum open; [38384]

(2) what are the terms of reference of his Department's review of funding for regimental museums; and when the conclusions of the review will be made public. [38383]

Mr. Soames: An internal MOD study earlier this year suggested, that savings might be possible in MOD funding for regimental and corps museums. Work is continuing on how savings could be achieved and the impact this would have on the continued existence of these museums, but no decisions have yet been made.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the location of the Tornado event to be held in 1996. [38124]

Mr. Soames: We are not aware of any substantial Tornado event in 1996.

Navigator Flying Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to privatise Royal Air Force navigator flying training. [38142]

Mr. Soames: There are no plans to privatise Royal Air Force navigator flying training.

Air Miss, Humberside

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the US air force F15 aircraft involved in an air miss incident with an Icelandair Boeing 737 off Humberside on 19 August 1994 were found to have penetrated controlled airspace; and if he will make a statement. [38141]

Mr. Soames: The United States air force aircraft was operating legitimately within controlled airspace under air traffic control instruction at the time of the alleged incident. The pilot of the civil airliner has now withdrawn his report of an air miss, based on air traffic control evidence.

Army Careers Information Office, York

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to close the Army careers information office in Micklegate, York. [38385]

Mr. Soames: No decision has yet been taken on when the Army careers information office in Micklegate, York should close.

Jaguar Aircraft (Stress Corrosion)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the damage to Jaguar T.2A, serial number XX839; and what is the current status of the aircraft. [38119]

Mr. Soames: During a routine major servicing of Jaguar T.2A, serial number XX839, some relatively small stress corrosion cracks were identified in part of the fuselage structure. The aircraft is being held temporarily at St. Athan awaiting delivery of repair parts from the manufacturer.

RAF Waddington

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what hydrazine incident response capability exists at RAF Waddington; and how many hydrazine incidents have occurred at RAF Waddington in each of the last three years. [38143]

Mr. Soames: All RAF Waddington's fire crash and rescue personnel are fully trained—and continue to receive refresher training—in hydrazine emergency handling procedures. Apart from a minor incident on 17 October 1995, which was successfully handled in accordance with standard procedures, there have been no other incidents involving hydrazine at RAF Waddington in the past three years.

Flying Regulation Breaches

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, numbers, types and nationalities of aircraft, nature of the breach, disciplinary actions taken against aircrew and lessons learned from each of the confirmed breaches of flying regulations other than low flying regulations during 1994. [38139]

Mr. Soames: Unlike breaches of low flying regulations, no cental record is maintained of breaches of general flying regulations which are much more wide ranging and varied. As a result, the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, details of incidents with flight safety implications are notified to the appropriate authority.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the methods of BSE transmission since the ban on certain forms of offal in animal feed. [36422]

Mrs. Browning: This Department has an extensive programme of research on BSE. Results are published in scientific journals. Details are also contained in the latest report of the Spongiform Encephalopathies Advisory Committee—"Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies—A Summary of Present Knowledge and Research", published in February this year. In addition, they are detailed in the regular reports on BSE which MAFF makes to the House. Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases have been discovered of prohibited forms of offal being put into animal feeds since the ban was introduced, and if he will make a statement. [36426]

Mrs. Browning: We are not aware of any cases of Specified Bovine Offals being put directly into animal feeds since the ban was introduced. However, the fact that we are continuing to see cases of BSE in animals born after the introduction of the feed ban in July 1988 suggests that there has been some continued leakage of BSE infective material into feed. The results of recent

surveillance at slaughterhouses and head boning plants, announced in the House on 19 July, *Official Report*, 19 July 1995, columns *1467–68*, also suggested that this was a possibility.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the rate of enforcement of the ban on the use of certain forms of offal in animals feeds, with particular reference to restricting BSE transmission; and if he will make a statement. [36424]

Mrs. Browning: The state veterinary service regularly monitors the enforcement of the controls in slaughterhouse and elsewhere, on specified bovine offals, which are required to be separated and disposed of by incineration or burial. The results of recent surveillance of slaughterhouses and head boning plants were announced in the House on 19 July, *Official Report*, 19 July 1995, columns *1467–48*.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of maternally transmitted BSE have been recorded in the United Kingdom herd, for each of the last seven years; and how many cases of BSE have been recorded for each of the last seven years. [36421]

Mrs. Browning: There is no experimental or epidemiological evidence available to confirm that maternal transmission of BSE occurs. Results of research to test the hypothesis that the disease might be transmitted maternally will not be available until 1997, when a definitive cohort study will be completed. It is already clear, however, that if maternal transmission does occur, it does so too infrequently to be detected with current statistical techniques or to sustain the epidemic.

The following list of the number of confirmed cases of BSE in United Kingdom up to 13 October 1995. The cases prior to 21 June 1988 are recorded by date of clinical onset of disease and the cases thereafter are recorded by date of restriction.

1986: 7
1987: 435
1988: 2,469
1989: 7,137
1990: 14,181
1991: 25,032
1992: 36,681
1993: 34,371
1994: 23,943
1995: 9,602

It is not possible to identify routes of transmission for each individual suspect given the long incubation period BSE, and considerable potential for exposure via feed. Evidence gathered when individual cases are investigated forms the basis of a statistical analysis on a population basis.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the budget of his Department to ensure regulations relating to BSE and the use of offal in feeds have been enforced, and if he will make a statement. [36425]

Mrs. Browning: The BSE manpower budget for this Department, excluding agencies, for the current financial year is £4.2 million. It is not possible, without disproportionate costs, to identify enforcement costs separately.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the budget and how many staff are involved in monitoring the prohibited forms of bovine offal entering human food. [36727]

Mrs. Browning: Enforcement of the controls on specified bovine offal in slaughterhouses and head boning plants is the responsibility of the Meat Hygiene Service. The MHS currently employs 778 red meat inspectors in day to day enforcement work at red meat plants—pig, sheep and cattle—which includes the enforcement of the SBO controls. The cost of this work is not recoverable from the industry.

The total budget for these staff for the current financial year is £12,180,000. It is not possible, without disproportionate costs, to identify from among the non-recoverable costs the enforcement costs from the SBO controls alone.

Mr. Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in how many cases in the last five years prohibited forms of offal have been found entering human food; and what fines have been imposed. [36728]

Mrs. Browning: No such cases have been notified to this Department. However, until 1 April 1995 local authorities were responsible for enforcement of the controls on specified bovine offal in slaughterhouses and head boning plants. Information on enforcement before that date is not therefore held centrally. It is not possible, without disproportionate costs, to collect and collate this information from local authorities.

Since 1 April 1995 the Meat Hygiene Service has been responsible for enforcement of the controls. We know of no instances where SBOs have entered the human food chain. We are aware of four cases where small amounts of SBO had been left attached to carcases after dressing but these were properly removed before the carcases left the premises.

Codex Alimentarius Agreement

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans his Department has to establish maximum residue limits for hormones in meats following the recent codex alimentarius agreement. [36423]

Mrs. Browning: Decisions by the Codex Alimentarius Commission to adopt maximum residue limits are not binding on codex member countries. They are taken into account when the Community establishes MRLs under regulation (EEC) 2377/90 which are then applicable in all member states. Before MRLs can be considered, applications must be submitted by pharmaceutical companies.

The use of hormonal growth promoters in food producing animals has been banned throughout the Community since 1988. It also applies to meat and meat products imported from third countries. As a result of the ban, Community MRLs have not been set for growth-promoting hormones and residues surveillance is

based on analysis to the minimum level of quantification. It is for the European Commission to consider whether or not the Codex decisions will have any effect on the current prohibition.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what subsidies were paid out for environmentally sensitive areas in England in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94, *(c)* 1994–95 and *(d)* 1995–96; and how many individuals were recipients of these payments in these years. [37130]

Mr. Boswell: The Ministry paid the following sums to ESA agreement holders in England:

	Amount paid (£000s)	*Number of recipients*
1992–93	10,461	3,265
1993–94	16,235	4,514
1994–95	19,367	6,141

The above figures relate to United Kingdom financial years (i.e. 1 April to 31 March).

It is estimated that £30 million will be paid in 1995–96 to about 7,000 recipients.

Game Rearing Industry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had from the game rearing industry regarding the ban on Emtryl. [37430]

Mrs. Browning: We have received a number of representations from the game rearing industry, including the Game Conservancy Trust and the Game Farmers Association.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence Ministers received from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate about the ban on dimetridazole. [37428]

Mrs. Browning: We are aware of the concerns over this ban, and a number of options to overcome the consequential problems of the game rearing industry are under active consideration.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of Emtryl on the economies of those areas of rural Britain where game birds are bred. [37432]

Mrs. Browning: To official assessment has been made. We are aware however, that the banning of dimetridazole could lead to flock losses as high as 50 per cent. or more. This is why we are working with game bird organisations to try to find a solution.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the recent European Union ban on the chemical dimetridazole sold under the trade name Emtryl. [37422]

Mrs. Browning: The Government opposed the proposal to prohibit the therapeutic use of dimetridazole—Emtryl—by its inclusion in annex IV of Council regulation (EEC) 2377/90, on the grounds that the scientific data could enable a maximum residue limit to be set to protect consumers and because of the animal welfare problems which would result from a ban.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what weighting was given to the United Kingdom position on the European Union decision to ban Emtryl. [37431]

Mrs. Browning: The position of the UK was accorded its due weight under the normal procedures of the Community. Decisions on entries in the annexes of Council regulation (EEC) 2377/90 are taken at regulatory committee by qualified majority voting. If referred to the Council of Agriculture Ministers, the contre filet procedure applies.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what alternative drugs are available to breeders of game birds to control hexamitiasis and trichomoniasis in larger flocks. [37429]

Mrs. Browning: We are not aware that there are any satisfactory alternative medicinal products available to the game rearing industry for the treatment of these conditions.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government will now take steps to suspend the European Union ban on Emtryl pending further investigations on alternative disease control agents. [37433]

Mrs. Browning: We are considering a number of options to try to assist the game rearing industry as a result of this prohibition.

Pesticides

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring is carried out by or for his Department to ensure *(a)* that pesticide residues on horticultural produce remain below recommended levels and *(b)* that the amount of pesticides sprayed on to horticultural crops remains below recommended levels. [37747]

Mrs. Browning: Monitoring of both home-produced and imported food for pesticide residues is carried out for the Government's working party on pesticide residues. Some 3,000 to 4,000 samples are analysed each year at a cost of over £2 million.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been carried out by or on behalf of his Department into the effects on humans of pesticide levels which exceed recommended levels, with special reference to the long-term low-level effects of pesticides on humans. [37745]

Mrs. Browning: The Department does not carry out or directly commission any such research. However, before any pesticide is permitted for use, a thorough assessment of its potential impact on humans, including long-term effects, is carried out based on research carried out by the applicant company on that specific pesticide. This assessment will identify the level at which no adverse effects will be seen and use is only permitted if it is expected to lead to human exposure substantially less than that level. The assessment also identifies the effects that may begin to be seen at high levels.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines there are to control *(a)* the amount of pesticides sprayed on to horticultural crops and *(b)* the levels of pesticide residues on fresh fruit and vegetables. [37748]

Mrs. Browning: For each approved pesticide the maximum permitted usage rate, which may vary from crop to crop, will be set out on the product label. In some cases, a minimum interval between application of a pesticide and harvesting a crop will also be specified. It is an offence for a pesticide user to breach these statutory conditions of use. The conditions are set so as to ensure that, when observed, they do not give rise to unacceptable levels of residue on and in crops.

For many pesticides, statutory maximum residue levels have been set which reflect the greatest amount of pesticide that should be found in a crop which has not been treated according to the approved conditions of use. The statutory code of practice for the safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings provides general guidance on the application of pesticides.

Mr. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what pesticide products have been licensed for use in horticultural production since 1972; and what is the proprietary name, the manufacturing company, the exact ingredients and the date of the licence in each case. [37746]

Mrs. Browning: Pesticides approved as of 31 October 1994 are listed in the HMSO publication "Pesticides 1995". However, the detailed information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Ministers only approve the marketing or use of a pesticide if thorough evaluation establishes that it is effective and poses no unacceptable risk to human beings, non-target species or the wider environment.

Pigs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his plans with regard to the welfare of pigs. [38004]

Mrs. Browning: The Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1994, S.I 2126 implemented EU directive 91/630 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs, including minimum space requirements for weaners and rearing pigs which will fully come into force on 1 January 1998. The regulations also maintained the requirement that the use of sow stalls and tethers should be phased out by the end of 1988 and banned the use of sweat box systems from 1 July this year.

We await with interest the outcome of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's review of the welfare of outdoor pigs.

The EU directive is due for review in 1997 and we have reminded the Commission of the importance of keeping to this timetable. We remain committed to securing harmonisation of EU legislation on the basis of our own high standards.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to repeal or amend the prohibition on sow stalls and tethers provided for by the Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1994; and if he will make a statement. [38007]

Mrs. Browning: We have no such plans.

Milk and Dairy Inspections

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to bring milk and dairy inspection charges into line with those in Scotland. [38150]

Mr. Baldry: None. Inspections in England and Wales are carried out by ADAS and the costs recovered from producers. In Scotland, inspections are carried out by environmental health officers and the costs met by the local food authorities.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects the Intervention Board to release for distribution stocks of *(a)* butter, *(b)* cheese and *(c)* wine; and if he will make a statement. [38295]

Mr. Baldry: I have no such plans for release of stocks of butter from intervention for distribution under the surplus food scheme. Neither cheese nor wine is held in intervention in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department possesses as to the quantities of nuclear wastes dumped *(a)* in Hurd deep off Alderney and *(b)* the Beaufort dyke off Scotland and Northern Ireland by the United Kingdom; and if he will place in the Library copies of all reports on the disposal of radioactive waste in these two locations held by his Department. [39254]

Mr. Baldry: No nuclear waste has been disposed of in the Beaufort dyke. Very low-level radioactive waste was disposed of in the Hurd deep from 1950 to 1963. Full details are contained in "Report of the Independent Review of Disposal of Radioactive Waste in there Northeast Atlantic" by Professor F. G. T. Holliday. This report was placed in the Library of the House on publication in 1984.

Orange Juice

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the price of orange juice; what assessment he has made of future trends in prices; and which authorities influence the price charged in the United Kingdom. [39279]

Mrs. Browning: There is a wide variety of types of orange juice, including premium juice made from freshly squeezed oranges, long-life juice made from imported concentrate, and mixtures with other fruit juices. The retail price depends on the type of juice, the cost of manufacture and packaging, the pricing and promotional policy of the retailer and other factors. I see no way of predicting future price trends with confidence, given the number of variables involved.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of the import levy on non-EC orange juice being imposed in the present month; what will be the impact on retail prices; what is

the object of the levy; and what assessment he has made of whether the levy conforms to the EU's general agreement on tariffs and trade obligations. [37630]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* Imports of orange juice into the European Union from non-preferential sources are at present subject to an ad valorem duty of either 18.4 per cent., or 40.6 per cent., depending on the nature of the product, and in most cases a specific duty of 24.8 ecu—currently about £20—per 100 kg. Preferential arrangements apply to imports from a range of countries, for example imports from Israel within a quota are subject only to any specific duty payable.

Given the range of duty rates and variety of product lines concerned, the impact on retail prices cannot readily be assessed.

These duties form part of a system of Community preference that has existed for many years: on 1 July 1995, the variable levy that existed before that date was replaced by a specific duty required under the GATT settlement. I am satisfied that these duties conform to the EU's obligations under that settlement.

Live Animal Transport

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the average journey distance of a quadraped livestock animal to its place of slaughter for each of the last 15 years. [38422]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* The Department does not collect such information and has no plans to do so.

Abattoirs

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of abattoirs in the UK by convenient capacity categories for each of the last 15 years. [38445]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* The Department does not hold figures on the individual or total capacity of slaughterhouses in Great Britain and has no plans to collect this information centrally. The Meat and Livestock Commission's annual publication entitled "The Abattoir Industry in Great Britain"—available from the MLC—ISBN 0904650.33.2—contains information on the numbers of British abattoirs for the period requested, and discusses the changes in capacity that have occurred since 1982.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Short-time Working

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what estimates her Department has made of the number of companies currently on short-time working; and how many employees are affected by such short-time working. [37513]

Mr. Forth: In August 1995—provisional—8,000 operatives were affected by short-time working. Further information can be obtained from table 1.11 of the *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Figures for the number of companies on short-time working are not available.

Pupil Costs

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much was spent per *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school pupil in each of the local education authorities in England in the most recent year for which figures are available at constant prices. [37665]

Mr. Robin Squire: The following table sets out for each LEA in England the net institutional expenditure per pupil in LEA maintained pre-primary/primary schools and secondary schools.

Cost per pupil—net institutional expenditure 1993–94	*Nursery/primary* £	*Secondary* £
Corporation of London	3,587	0
Camden	2,047	2,716
Greenwich	2,009	2,583
Hackney	1,958	2,617
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,534	3,329
Islington	2,719	3,005
Kensington and Chelsea	2,394	3,266
Lambeth	2,666	3,296
Lewisham	2,058	2,614
Southwark	1,806	2,421
Tower Hamlets	2,656	3,157
Wandsworth	2,139	2,795
City of Westminster	2,592	2,739
Barking	1,790	2,355
Barnet	2,006	2,952
Bexley	1,573	2,341
Brent	1,633	1,835
Bromley	1,525	2,280
Croydon	1,793	2,309
Ealing	1,915	2,575
Enfield	1,768	2,531
Haringey	2,236	3,041
Harrow	1,913	2,439
Havering	1,636	2,290
Hillingdon	1,804	2,670
Hounslow	1,935	2,282
Kingston upon Thames	1,728	2,284
Merton	1,853	2,463
Newham	1,708	2,563
Redbridge	1,640	2,526
Richmond upon Thames	1,794	2,280
Sutton	1,639	1,978
Waltham Forest	1,821	2,526
Birmingham	1,572	2,330
Coventry	1,684	2,469
Dudley	1,490	2,098
Sandwell	1,681	2,349
Solihull	1,574	2,217
Walsall	1,672	2,281
Wolverhampton	1,357	2,300
Knowsley	1,485	2,243
Liverpool	1,586	2,613
St. Helens	1,605	2,315
Sefton	1,448	2,204
Wirral	1,552	2,299
Bolton	1,581	2,119
Bury	1,432	1,979
Manchester	1,547	2,328
Oldham	1,645	2,278
Rochdale	1,307	1,974
Salford	1,505	2,215
Stockport	1,466	2,310
Tameside	1,442	2,095

Cost per pupil—net institutional expenditure 1993–94	*Nursery/primary* £	*Secondary* £
Trafford	1,428	2,156
Wigan	1,437	2,141
Barnsley	1,539	2,101
Doncaster	1,425	2,022
Rotherham	1,723	2,271
Sheffield	1,573	2,119
Bradford	1,654	1,969
Calderdale	1,607	2,162
Kirklees	1,579	2,207
Leeds	1,647	2,164
Wakefield	1,577	2,150
Gateshead	1,664	2,252
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1,697	2,187
North Tyneside	1,469	1,995
South Tyneside	1,463	1,948
Sunderland	1,509	2,114
Isles of Scilly	2,401	4,415
Avon	1,571	2,288
Bedfordshire	1,639	2,103
Berkshire	1,592	2,214
Buckinghamshire	1,735	2,286
Cambridgeshire	1,534	1,956
Cheshire	1,483	2,106
Cleveland	1,461	2,129
Cornwall	1,535	2,160
Cumbria	1,667	2,216
Derbyshire	1,600	2,214
Devon	1,503	2,157
Dorset	1,485	2,065
Durham	1,664	2,114
East Sussex	1,643	2,270
Essex	1,724	2,286
Gloucestershire	1,523	2,084
Hampshire	1,583	2,180
Hereford and Worcester	1,617	2,038
Hertfordshire	1,664	2,245
Humberside	1,621	2,257
Isle of Wight	1,598	2,027
Kent	1,397	2,079
Lancashire	1,669	2,347
Leicestershire	1,629	2,263
Lincolnshire	1,496	2,322
Norfolk	1,585	2,309
North Yorkshire	1,555	2,187
Northamptonshire	1,522	2,125
Northumberland	1,686	2,083
Nottinghamshire	1,653	2,381
Oxfordshire	1,765	2,191
Shropshire	1,577	2,354
Somerset	1,583	2,138
Staffordshire	1,534	2,078
Suffolk	1,673	2,190
Surrey	1,701	2,215
Warwickshire	1,555	2,420
West Sussex	1,579	2,467
Wiltshire	1,521	2,379
All England	1,630	2,245

Education Expenditure, Staffordshire

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much was spent in total on education in Staffordshire in each of the past 25 years, at constant prices. [37667]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows expenditure by Staffordshire local education authority from 1970–71 to 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available. The figures have not been adjusted for any changes of function.

Gross expenditure (1993–94 prices)

Staffordshire county council	*£ million*
1970–71	264.12
1971–72	279.46
1972–73	297.28
1973–74	320.22
1974–75	451.10
1975–76	463.65
1976–77	469.50
1977–78	450.99
1978–79	461.05
1979–80	451.17
1980–81	459.07
1981–82	466.49
1982–83	456.00
1983–84	461.19
1984–85	449.32
1985–86	440.32
1986–87	460.01
1987–88	472.42
1988–89	481.56
1989–90	457.29
1990–91	465.41
1991–92	470.05
1992–93	512.69
1993–94	405.15

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much was spent per pupil in Staffordshire *(a)* in primary schools and *(b)* in secondary schools in each of the past 25 years, at constant prices. [37671]

Mr. Squire: The table shows expenditure by Staffordshire local education authority on *(a)* pre-primary and primary pupils combined, and on *(b)* secondary pupils from 1974–75 and 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available. Equivalent figures prior to 1974–75 are not readily available centrally. The figures differ from those in my answer of 28 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *536*, because firm figures are now available for 1993–94, and because a revised GDP deflator has been applied.

Unit costs (1994–95 prices)

£

	Pre-primary/ primary	*Secondary*
Staffordshire county council		
1974–75	1,195	1,938
1975–76	1,201	2,001
1976–77	1,220	1,944
1977–78	1,164	1,824
1978–79	1,178	1,817
1979–80	1,192	1,778
1980–81	1,183	1,636
1981–82	1,250	1,707
1982–83	1,276	1,705
1983–84	1,320	1,759
1984–85	1,285	1,761
1985–86	1,278	1,817

Unit costs (1994–95 prices)

£

	Pre-primary/ primary	Secondary
1986–87	1,340	1,968
1987–88	1,414	2,108
1988–89	1,438	2,219
1989–90	1,448	2,242
1990–91	1,460	2,173
1991–92	1,524	2,231
1992–93	1,533	2,189
1993–94	1,561	2,114

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much was spent in total on school education in Staffordshire in each of the past 25 years, at constant prices. [37663]

Mr. Squire: The table shows expenditure on per-primary, and primary and secondary education by Staffordshire local education authority from 1970–71 and 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available. These figures have not been adjusted for any changes of function.

Expenditure on school education (1993–94 prices)

	£ million
Staffordshire county council	
1970–71	156.23
1971–72	165.64
1972–73	175.95
1973–74	191.14
1974–75	283.80
1975–76	289.81
1976–77	292.80
1977–78	278.39
1978–79	281.47
1979–80	276.93
1980–81	288.04
1981–82	292.34
1982–83	285.42
1983–84	287.83
1984–85	277.12
1985–86	274.36
1986–87	282.80
1987–88	291.86
1988–89	293.64
1989–90	301.35
1990–91	304.63
1991–92	295.94
1992–93	353.99
1993–94	290.65

Teachers' Salaries

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage of the total schools' budget was spent on teachers' salaries in each of the local education authorities in England in the most recent year for which figures are available. [37668]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table sets out for each LEA in England the expenditure on teaching staff in LEA maintained pre–primary/primary schools and secondary schools as a percentage of the net institutional expenditure in those schools for 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available.

Teaching staff cost as a percentage of net institutional expenditure 1993–94

LEA	A Teaching staff £000	B Net institutional expenditure £000	C A as a percentage of B Percentage
Corporation of London	378	733	52
Camden	35,194	46,302	76
Greenwich	50,130	77,061	65
Hackney	38,459	51,207	75
Hammersmith and Fulham	22,873	39,040	59
Islington	33,662	63,274	53
Kensington and Chelsea	15,156	23,362	65
Lambeth	34,363	59,898	57
Lewisham	41,099	68,108	60
Southwark	35,338	54,945	64
Tower Hamlets	54,948	91,306	60
Wandsworth	26,905	43,474	62
City of Westminster	29,294	43,757	67
Barking	33,546	49,756	67
Barnet	53,545	79,721	67
Bexley	39,690	57,976	68
Brent	35,940	46,275	78
Bromley	32,864	45,870	72
Croydon	48,644	73,977	66
Ealing	43,194	64,023	67
Enfield	49,634	75,390	66
Haringey	45,935	69,825	66
Harrow	37,489	55,040	68
Havering	40,556	59,589	68
Hillingdon	24,566	38,121	64
Hounslow	44,736	66,548	67
Kingston upon Thames	20,811	29,733	70
Merton	31,906	43,984	73
Newham	50,705	75,469	67
Redbridge	46,535	67,518	69
Richmond upon Thames	24,903	35,540	70
Sutton	21,402	30,401	70
Waltham Forest	40,535	58,999	69
Birmingham	196,471	289,888	68
Coventry	64,075	95,385	67
Dudley	53,025	71,564	74
Sandwell	62,564	92,154	68
Solihull	40,771	58,845	69
Walsall	52,830	78,333	67
Wolverhampton	51,527	64,736	80
Knowsley	31,389	45,255	69
Liverpool	96,545	151,860	64
St. Helens	37,063	54,132	68
Sefton	55,666	79,781	70
Wirral	66,090	92,781	71
Bolton	52,422	72,778	72
Bury	31,913	43,809	73
Manchester	82,441	121,410	68
Oldham	53,602	76,242	70
Rochdale	37,191	51,176	73
Salford	43,307	60,293	72
Stockport	51,810	73,397	71
Tameside	37,618	55,878	67
Trafford	34,606	48,526	71
Wigan	62,581	83,150	75
Barnsley	40,554	57,556	70
Doncaster	60,089	83,367	72
Rotherham	55,960	81,735	68
Sheffield	87,358	120,122	73
Bradford	104,376	146,676	71
Calderdale	36,813	51,534	71
Kirklees	78,290	108,218	72
Leeds	141,119	198,082	71
Wakefield	60,282	88,219	68
Gateshead	38,847	55,499	70
Newcastle upon Tyne	49,545	74,609	66
North Tyneside	38,582	51,418	75
South Tyneside	30,202	40,908	74
Sunderland	62,686	85,118	74
Isles of Scilly	582	915	64
Avon	167,577	245,926	68
Bedfordshire	100,576	146,717	69

Teaching staff cost as a percentage of net institutional expenditure 1993–94

LEA	A Teaching staff £000	B Net institutional expenditure £000	C A as a percentage of B Percentage
Berkshire	128,112	181,262	71
Buckinghamshire	105,449	168,270	63
Cambridgeshire	98,564	143,360	69
Cheshire	178,169	258,947	69
Cleveland	116,869	165,533	71
Cornwall	85,273	122,213	70
Cumbria	87,360	121,321	72
Derbyshire	161,265	229,278	70
Devon	169,425	238,869	72
Dorset	93,728	131,513	71
Durham	116,556	171,186	68
East Sussex	109,940	158,657	69
Essex	199,831	297,785	67
Gloucestershire	68,882	95,940	72
Hampshire	243,811	350,002	70
Hereford and Worcester	123,108	169,327	73
Hertfordshire	176,401	254,881	69
Humberside	165,106	258,537	64
Isle of Wight	23,356	32,533	72
Kent	216,360	299,603	72
Lancashire	277,811	398,358	70
Leicestershire	178,468	256,746	70
Lincolnshire	83,627	118,238	71
Norfolk	121,095	170,158	71
North Yorkshire	133,453	184,672	72
Northamptonshire	104,657	148,318	71
Northumberland	60,487	94,228	64
Nottinghamshire	194,118	290,292	67
Oxfordshire	100,658	147,651	68
Shropshire	75,902	107,487	71
Somerset	82,420	115,127	72
Staffordshire	185,020	279,249	66
Suffolk	126,513	175,794	72
Surrey	135,672	195,024	70
Warwickshire	85,464	121,532	70
West Sussex	122,783	181,070	68
Wiltshire	92,673	132,678	70
	8,462,266	12,243,402	69

Teacher Numbers

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many teachers were employed and how many of them were employed in grant-maintained schools in each local education authority in England in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the figures in the previous five years. [37664]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Full-time equivalent teachers employed by local education authorities and grant-maintained schools in the nursery, primary and secondary sector 1991–95

Position in January each year

Local education authority area	1991 All schools	1991 GM only	1992 All schools	1992 GM only	1993 All schools	1993 GM only	1994 All schools	1994 GM only	1995 All schools	1995 GM only
Corporation of London	14	—	11	—	15	—	14	—	16	—
Camden	1,196	—	1,299	—	1,273	—	1,321	160	1,346	165
Greenwich	2,196	—	2,234	—	2,033	—	1,984	—	1,939	11
Hackney	1,715	—	1,604	—	1,550	—	1,459	—	1,429	7
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,045	79	1,033	83	1,024	88	977	86	941	82
Islington	1,310	—	1,338	—	1,533	—	1,627	—	1,360	—
Kensington and Chelsea	689	41	795	42	696	45	670	65	674	78
Lambeth	1,453	—	1,541	39	1,549	55	1,575	303	1,680	390
Lewisham	1,818	—	1,411	—	1,777	19	1,809	23	1,863	21
Southwark	1,714	31	1,695	34	1,705	33	1,739	236	1,687	237
Tower Hamlets	2,115	—	2,118	56	2,232	59	2,309	57	2,250	59
Wandsworth	1,725	—	1,730	186	1,754	314	1,625	478	1,561	485
Westminster	1,154	—	1,147	—	1,188	—	1,160	—	1,121	—
Barking and Dagenham	1,267	—	1,322	—	1,353	—	1,375	—	1,446	—
Barnet	2,415	131	2,595	139	2,597	224	2,596	649	2,638	720
Bexley	1,745	—	1,711	—	1,753	20	1,781	202	1,836	261
Brent	2,023	63	2,032	64	2,030	147	1,962	595	1,971	803
Bromley	1,958	58	1,938	383	2,080	720	2,179	745	2,181	871
Croydon	2,548	—	2,486	50	2,397	57	2,326	266	2,409	544
Ealing	2,202	—	2,143	—	2,130	349	2,077	444	2,097	460
Enfield	2,264	—	2,292	—	2,324	—	2,273	362	2,358	371
Haringey	1,553	—	1,605	—	1,589	—	1,719	—	1,730	—
Harrow	1,450	—	1,570	—	1,581	—	1,566	33	1,576	37
Havering	2,011	—	2,049	—	2,009	—	1,907	236	1,891	249
Hillingdon	1,754	60	1,770	422	1,843	609	1,814	875	1,870	911
Hounslow	1,928	—	1,891	—	1,869	—	1,880	128	1,890	134
Kingston upon Thames	1,035	—	988	—	1,051	60	1,066	202	1,057	208
Merton	1,311	—	1,268	—	1,297	—	1,255	—	1,269	51
Newham	2,070	—	2,039	45	1,972	43	1,916	43	1,968	44
Redbridge	1,698	—	1,796	—	1,858	—	1,927	72	1,937	74
Richmond upon Thames	1,016	—	1,135	—	1,029	—	1,040	—	1,052	—
Sutton	1,345	50	1,299	152	1,266	254	1,292	443	1,354	452
Waltham Forest	1,917	—	1,976	67	1,903	71	1,718	127	1,706	140

Full-time equivalent teachers employed by local education authorities and grant-maintained schools in the nursery, primary and secondary sector 1991–95

Position in January each year

Local education authority area	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995	
	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only
Birmingham	9,125	165	9,343	311	9,548	335	9,452	922	9,366	1,087
Coventry	2,745	—	2,795	—	2,752	—	2,747	—	2,651	—
Dudley	2,727	43	2,781	43	2,670	45	2,534	303	2,576	318
Sandwell	2,949	—	2,921	50	2,959	53	2,828	48	2,689	109
Solihull	1,860	—	1,795	—	1,857	27	1,836	26	1,845	25
Walsall	2,744	—	2,619	—	2,575	154	2,668	390	2,560	465
Wolverhampton	2,582	40	2,636	122	2,467	120	2,447	164	2,377	166
Knowsley	1,481	—	1,398	—	1,351	—	1,354	44	1,446	46
Liverpool	4,470	65	4,221	69	4,185	69	4,191	147	4,194	204
St. Helens	1,713	—	1,656	—	1,679	—	1,637	—	1,635	—
Sefton	2,433	—	2,479	—	2,515	—	2,484	—	2,546	—
Wirral	3,099	—	2,924	—	2,963	—	2,885	129	2,927	132
Bolton	2,550	47	2,496	50	2,517	71	2,445	202	2,467	202
Bury	1,484	—	1,461	—	1,467	—	1,395	10	1,420	10
Manchester	4,254	—	3,974	—	4,044	—	3,631	—	3,587	—
Oldham	2,196	—	2,253	—	2,256	—	2,215	—	2,202	—
Rochdale	1,934	—	1,987	—	1,851	10	1,789	101	1,819	189
Salford	2,147	—	2,052	—	2,000	—	1,802	27	1,821	30
Stockport	2,340	—	2,332	—	2,362	—	2,170	—	2,185	—
Tameside	2,042	47	2,085	49	2,036	49	1,791	137	1,842	139
Trafford	1,763	—	1,611	—	1,616	—	1,621	192	1,694	205
Wigan	2,972	—	3,015	—	3,096	—	2,728	—	2,754	—
Barnsley	1,760	—	1,714	—	1,696	—	1,721	—	1,704	—
Doncaster	2,753	—	2,691	—	2,760	—	2,732	—	2,703	—
Rotherham	2,522	—	2,464	—	2,335	—	2,403	—	2,440	—
Sheffield	4,043	—	3,937	—	3,866	4	3,797	136	3,719	182
Bradford	5,012	—	5,093	66	5,004	66	5,103	342	4,779	400
Calderdale	1,791	—	1,806	89	1,827	96	1,814	298	1,769	530
Kirklees	3,701	62	3,590	70	3,632	71	3,443	77	3,373	79
Leeds	6,320	—	6,300	—	6,010	—	5,839	75	5,759	71
Wakefield	2,909	—	2,748	—	2,741	—	2,630	—	2,704	—
Gateshead	1,750	—	1,731	—	1,707	—	1,759	—	1,715	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,346	—	2,285	—	2,212	—	2,112	—	2,104	—
North Tyneside	1,826	—	1,768	—	1,765	—	1,649	—	1,639	11
South Tyneside	1,410	—	1,385	—	1,325	—	1,342	—	1,340	—
Sunderland	2,681	—	2,692	—	2,651	—	2,744	—	2,728	—
Isles of Scilly	29	—	27	—	28	—	27	—	26	—
Avon	7,401	51	7,996	96	7,612	99	7,504	107	7,677	118
Bedfordshire	4,909	44	4,959	51	4,983	194	4,808	586	5,008	629
Berkshire	5,892	41	5,892	360	6,080	540	6,149	614	6,171	729
Buckinghamshire	5,136	150	4,973	217	5,215	299	5,236	689	5,310	770
Cambridge	5,377	—	5,419	10	5,667	367	5,501	1,005	5,573	1,029
Cheshire	7,956	30	7,968	34	8,072	42	7,922	177	8,013	185
Cleveland	5,536	—	5,546	—	5,560	—	5,243	—	5,189	—
Cornwall	3,751	—	3,697	—	3,647	—	3,561	—	3,675	—
Cumbria	4,191		4,154	102	4,211	341	4,078	612	4,016	849
Derbyshire	8,490	127	7,910	139	8,098	285	7,861	1,069	7,555	1,185
Devon	7,133	31	7,076	33	7,229	90	7,358	304	7,437	319
Dorset	4,476	56	4,512	168	4,389	374	4,330	587	4,393	651
Durham	4,845	—	5,007	—	5,239	—	5,105	—	5,117	—
East Sussex	4,524	—	4,673	—	4,908	—	4,779	—	4,899	—
Essex	12,274	—	12,251	205	12,033	1,665	11,616	4,407	11,771	5,165
Gloucestershire	4,349	187	4,042	186	4,090	828	4,195	1,234	4,258	1,616
Hampshire	11,415	44	11,593	190	12,037	394	11,394	1,147	11,871	1,348
Hereford and Worcester	5,413	—	5,451	—	5,441	—	5,256	202	5,329	207
Hertfordshire	8,248	165	8,155	305	8,280	411	8,510	1,256	8,725	1,719
Humberside	7,722	—	7,680	4	7,740	5	7,229	13	7,394	19
Isle of Wight	1,008	—	1,021	—	997	—	1,013	—	999	—
Kent	11,674	30	11,724	828	11,980	1,709	12,224	3,110	12,552	3,724
Lancashire	11,761	106	11,733	225	11,922	281	12,051	455	12,088	485
Leicestershire	7,764	21	7,830	24	7,570	25	7,832	193	7,810	194
Lincolnshire	4,869	185	4,748	479	4,808	935	4,876	1,344	4,877	1,507
Norfolk	5,564	65	5,687	102	5,791	474	5,808	706	5,898	763
North Yorkshire	5,656	—	5,803	—	5,954	—	5,844		5,774	2
Northamptonshire	5,337	39	5,458	222	5,466	602	5,376	767	5,624	796
Northumberland	2,736	—	2,791	—	2,677	—	2,644	42	2,672	45
Nottinghamshire	8,383	—	8,530	—	8,508	20	8,376	120	8,354	121
Oxfordshire	4,042	—	4,150	—	4,206	—	4,363	5	4,426	5

Full-time equivalent teachers employed by local education authorities and grant-maintained schools in the nursery, primary and secondary sector 1991–95

Position in January each year

Local education authority area	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995	
	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only	All schools	GM only
Shropshire	3,634	30	3,712	31	3,563	31	3,352	243	3,384	330
Somerset	3,585	—	3,558	34	3,595	46	3,653	49	3,665	76
Staffordshire	8,862	—	8,798	—	8,357	—	8,263	267	8,245	279
Suffolk	4,949	—	5,277	—	5,276	—	5,391	—	5,466	—
Surrey	6,625	—	6,511	276	6,677	590	6,206	816	6,529	1,218
Warwickshire	3,984	—	3,904	88	3,961	206	4,017	311	4,027	327
West Sussex	4,855	—	5,210	—	5,319	—	5,208	—	5,230	17
Wiltshire	4,513	—	4,559	34	4,596	112	4,604	759	4,698	1,053
England	394,945	2,430	394,874	7,121	396,332	15,353	390,430	33,794	392,910	39,941

1. Figures for 1994 onwards exclude sixth form colleges which transferred to the new FE sector on 1 April 1993.

Surplus School Places

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many surplus school places there were and what was their cost in each local education authority in England in the most recent year for which figures are available. [37666]

Mrs. Gillan: For the numbers of surplus school places in each local education authority I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 9 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *410–14*. At a national level, the average premises-related cost of maintaining a surplus place is estimated to be £182 a year for a primary school and £303 a year for a secondary school at 1995–96 prices. The actual cost and the scope for realising savings from removal of surplus places in practice in each local education authority will depend on local circumstances.

Barnsley and Doncaster TEC

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many of the directors of Barnsley and Doncaster TEC have received payments from TEC funds for services provided by the TEC; what these were and when; and if such payments will continue in the current financial year, and in 1996–97. [38293]

Mr. Paice: The activities of Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council are governed by the TEC licensing agreement, which provides that no director, except where he holds office as managing director or chief executive of the TEC, shall receive any remuneration from the TEC or a subsidiary of the TEC from payments made to the TEC by the Secretary of State. All directors give their time freely for TEC and TEC partnership activities. The chief executive's remuneration is reported in the TEC's annual report, a copy of which is placed in the Library.

Careers Service Inspectorate

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when the policy of publishing the inspectors' reports following careers service inspections, mentioned in the answer of 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *518*, was changed and when it was reported to the House. [38318]

Mr. Paice: The policy of publishing inspection reports has not changed. Inspections of aspects of careers service work will start later this year and reports will be published. The Chief Inspector of Careers Service has published two annual reports on the work of the Careers Service since the enactment of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will the public reports by the inspectorate of careers services since the enactment of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993. [38155]

Mr. Paice: The public reports by the inspectorate of careers services since the enactment of the TURER Act 1993 are as follows:

The Careers Service annual report 1994–95

The Careers Service annual report 1993–94

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will provide in respect of her plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in Headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for the trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38275]

Mr. Robin Squire: The pay delegation plan for the Department for Education and Employment bargaining unit, excluding the Employment Service, includes the following staff, covered by the union agreement described:

Grade	Union agreement	Staff in post
Administrative Officer	CPSA	1,348
Personal Secretary	CPSA	156
Support Grade Band 1	NUCPS	77
Support Manager 3	NUCPS	12
Economic Assistant	FDA	11
Senior Economic Assistant	FDA	9
Management Trainee	NUCPS	11
Senior Executive Officer (inc.)	NUCPS	422

Grade	Union agreement	Staff in post
Auditors and Accountants	FDA	8
Admin Trainee	FDA	26
HEO (D)		
Administrative Assistant	CPSA	410
Chief Typing Manager	CPSA	1
Typist	CPSA	98
Higher Executive Officer (inc.	NUCPS	1,098
Auditors and Accountants)	NUCPS	5
Senior Instructional Officer	NUCPS	205
Support Grade Band 2	NUCPS	1
Support Manager 1		
Senior Personal Secretary	CPSA	43
Typing Manager	CPSA	6
Executive Officers (inc.		
Accountants)	NUCPS	1,203
Support Manager 2	NUCPS	4
Assistant Statistician	FDA	14
Senior Assistant Statistician	FDA	8
Higher Instructional Officer	NUCPS	12
Senior Information Officer	IPMS	23
Scientific Officer	IPMS	3
Higher Scientific Officer	IPMS	7
Senior Scientific Officer	IPMS	2
Senior Professional and Technology		
Officer (SPTO)	IPMS	18
Information Officer	IPMS	38
Graphics Officer	IPMS	1
Higher Graphics Officer	IPMS	1
Assistant Information Officer	IPMS	14
Research Officer	IPMS	2
Senior Psychologist	IPMS	7
Senior Research Officer	IPMS	27
Grade 6	IPMS,	66
Grade 7	NUCPS and	518
Super Spec Inspector Band C	FDA	1
Assistant Librarian	IPMS	16
Librarian	IPMS	5
Senior Librarian	IPMS	2
Senior Training Adviser	IPMS	24
Total		5,963

For collective bargaining purposes the DFEE intends to recognise four unions—the Civil and Public Services Association, the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists and the Association of First Division Civil Servants.

The Department will pursue single table bargaining arrangements.

Indigenous Populations

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what plans the Government have to ratify ILO convention 169 on indigenous and tribal populations. [38317]

Mr. Forth: ILO convention 169 has no practical application in the UK. The Government do not propose to ratify it.

School Internet Links

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, how many schools and what percentage of the total are currently linked to the Internet; what is the cost of linking those schools not hitherto connected; and if she will make a statement. [38584]

Mr. Robin Squire: Estimates of the number of schools currently connected to the Internet, and other relevant issues, will be covered in a paper to be published next month by the UK Education Departments outlining the way forward for superhighways in education.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what progress has been made on the introduction of the formulation of a national policy on the provision of special education. [38790]

Mr. Forth: The Education Act 1993 requires the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. The code, which was issued in May 1994 and came into effect from September that year, gives practical guidance to local education authorities, schools and other agencies on identifying, assessing and monitoring all children with SEN. The Department is monitoring carefully the implementation of the code.

Unemployment Benefit Fraud

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total amount saved by unemployment benefit fraud investigators in the last financial year; what evidence is required for each individual signing off unemployment benefit to be counted in the total figure for unemployed fraud figures; what is the assumed number of weeks that a unemployed fraudulent claim would have on average continued if not investigated; what research is the basis for the assumed number of weeks that an unemployed fraudulent claim would have on average continued if not investigated and what consideration has been given to the continued accuracy of this research; and what safeguards exist against Department of Social Security inspectors exaggerating the benefit savings for investigations into fraudulent benefit claims in an attempt to meet Department targets. [37592]

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 24 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about benefit fraud investigation.

In 1994/95 78,231 clients withdrew their claim to benefit after being investigated by Employment Service (ES) Inspectors. This resulted in gross benefit savings of £92,061,095. After deducting the cost of the benefit fraud organisation, the net savings were £64,556,652.

Safeguard exist through the checking and validation process performed by fraud staff, their managers and Audit. ES Inspectors authorise each saving/sign off, provided there is a link between the saving/sign-off and the last recorded action of the investigation and the claim is closed or modified within 10 working days of that action.

Inspector Manager, who manage 10–15 ES Inspectors, check a minimum of 10% of all cases where a saving/sign-off is claimed to ensure that they are valid. All client prosecutions are authorised by Senior Inspector Managers who also arrange for an annual audit of savings/sign-off cases, where a proportion of cases are checked for validity. The cases checked include some which have not previously been validated.

Benefit savings are calculated by multiplying the weekly amount of benefit in payment, at the time the client signs-off/modifies their claim, by 22. This 22 week figure was identified by Department of Social Security research in 1982 and represents the number of weeks clients would have remained on the register if they had not been investigated by ES Inspectors.

Since 1982 there have been several similar studies undertaken by Benefits Agency and the ES, the last such study was in 1994. This is an ongoing process and has confirmed that the 22 week multiplier is still valid.

I hope this is helpful.

Social Affairs Council

Ms Quinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EU Social Affairs Council of 5 October. [37709]

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) on 19 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *379*.

Employment Service Agency

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many persons unemployed for over *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years were placed in employment by the Employment Service agency in 1994–95. [38526]

Mr. Forth: In Great Britain during the financial year 1994–95 the Employment Service placed into jobs 556,600 people who had been claimant unemployed for six months or more. This represents an increase of 20 per cent. over the previous year. This is the extent of the readily available information.

School Premises Regulations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what estimate she has made of the cost of ensuring that all schools meet the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. [38765]

Mrs. Gillan: The information about school premises that is available to the Department is not sufficient to allow such an estimate to be made.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many responses she has had to the consultation on the Education (School Premises) Regulations; and how many were in favour of proposed changes. [38767]

Mrs. Gillan: A total of 111 responses were received by the Department before the consultation period formally came to an end on 18 October. They are still being analysed. We shall make available a summary of the responses in the usual way.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many schools meet the requirements in the Education (School Premises) Regulations in respect of *(a)* space allocation, *(b)* washrooms and *(c)* staff rooms. [38768]

Mrs. Gillan: The information requested is not held centrally.

Education Authority Capital Spending

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what amounts have been requested by way of capital spending in 1996–97 by each local education authority; and what has been the total amount requested in England. [38766]

Mrs. Gillan: The closing date for the submission of capital bids by local education authorities was 13 October. The bids are therefore still being analysed by the Department.

Nursery Education

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what method of funding the Government envisage for the new nursery classes under the consultation for removing the requirements to publish statutory proposals to establish nursery classes in the maintained, grant-maintained, voluntary and county school sector. [39148]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently consulting interested parties on removing the requirement for the maintained sector to publish statutory proposals to establish new nursery classes. The consultation letter discusses a number of options and their funding implications. These will be considered in light of the responses to the consultation letter.

Student Union Membership

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many students have chosen to exercise their right not to be a member of a students union following the enactment on 21 September 1994 of the Education Act 1994, section 22, subsection 2(c) relating to the rights of students; and from which institutions unions students have exercised this right. [39147]

Mr. Forth: This information is not available as it is not collected centrally.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what factors led her not to intervene in the case of Mr. Michael Johnson's appearance before the industrial tribunal on 23 May; what factors underlay her delay in intervening in the case under the terms of the Education Act 1944 and the Education Reform Act 1988; when she expects to intervene in this case; and what factors allowed her to intervene in the case of Jennifer Watson under this legislation. [39146]

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not my right hon. Friend's practice to seek to usurp the functions of industrial tribunals through the exercise of her powers under

sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944. My right hon. Friend is still considering certain points of law in the case of Mr. Johnson and hopes to conclude her consideration in the near future. In the case of Mrs. Watson, my right hon. Friend concluded that the appointment of a particular governor to the disciplinary panel constituted a breach of natural justice of a kind that no sensible governing body acting with due appreciation of its statutory duties could have decided to adopt.

School Leavers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many school leavers there were in each of the past five years from maintained and independent sectors; and what percentage in each category were intending to enter degree or teacher training courses. [38901]

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on school leavers is no longer collected by the Department. The numbers of school leavers in maintained and independent sector schools in England for the latest two years for which information was available are as follows:

Number of school leavers of which intended to enter degree or teacher training courses

	1990–91	*1991–92*
Maintained schools	494,130 11 per cent.	474,450 13 per cent.
Independent schools	47,740 46 per cent.	44,750 54 per cent.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of her *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39140]

Mr. Forth: The number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by Department for Education and Employment staff for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95 and the sums involved and subsequently recovered are as follows:

	Number of cases	*Amount involved £*	*Amount recovered £*
1991–92			
DFEE	1	24,417.92	24,417.92
Agencies	30	141,753.97	846.58
NDPBs	1	3,700.00	Nil
1992–93			
DFEE	2	1,675.00	1,675.00
Agencies	18	12,749.41	861.65
NDPBs	2	3,657.00	Nil
1993–94			
DFEE	4	204,493.05	Nil
Agencies	24	89,570.79	277.54
NDPBs	6	3,588.90	642.00
1994–95			
DFEE	6	8,329.55	3,000.00
Agencies	12	78,562.01	3,190.81
NDPBs	3	3,727.54	556.54

Notes:

1. The figures for DFEE have been produced from the annual Treasury returns submitted by the Employment Department and the Department for Education.
2. Where thefts have occurred but no perpetrator identified these cases have been excluded.
3. The figures represent the year in which the frauds were reported to Treasury, not necessarily when they were committed.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many pupils attended each school taking part in the assisted places scheme in the last academic year; how many in each case were on an assisted place; and what was the percentage on the assisted places scheme. [37933]

Mrs. Gillan *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The information requested, which relates to England only and to the academic year 1994–95, is given in the following table.

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	*Number of pupils on roll*[1]	*Number of APs*	*Percentage of APs*
Abbey School, Reading	991	47	4.74
Abingdon	761	96	12.61
Ackworth	470	26	5.53
Aldenham	350	29	8.29
Alice Ottley	700	89	12.71
Alleyn's, Dulwich	1,101	207	18.80
Ardingly College	668	31	4.64
Arnold School, Blackpool	1,145	80	6.99
Ashford	556	42	7.55
Ashville College	725	15	2.07
Austin Friars	298	15	5.03
Bancroft's	943	80	8.48
Barnard Castle	624	23	3.69
Bath High GPDST	632	100	15.82
Batley Grammar	582	270	46.39
Bedales	646	3	.46
Bedford	1,119	104	9.29
Bedford High	916	113	12.34
Bedford Modern	1,171	144	12.30
Belvedere GPDST	653	177	27.11
Berkhamstead Girls	529	21	3.97
Berkhamsted	694	28	4.03
Birkenhead	1,086	179	16.48
Birkenhead High GPDST	973	251	25.80
Bishop's Stortford College	564	50	8.87
Blackheath High GPDST	596	96	16.11
Bloxham, Banbury	339	26	7.67
Bolton School Boys	1,008	253	25.10
Bolton School Girls	1,162	240	20.65
Bootham, York	334	30	8.98
Bradfield College	592	6	1.01

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	Number of pupils on roll[1]	Number of APs	Percentage of APs
Bradford Girls Grammar	911	65	7.14
Bradford Grammar School	1,107	231	20.87
Brentwood School	1,259	113	8.98
Brighton College	472	114	24.15
Brighton and Hove High School GPDST	750	155	20.67
Bristol Cathedral	471	132	28.03
Bristol Grammar	1,225	280	22.86
Bromley High GPDST	792	102	12.88
Bromsgrove	1,156	27	2.34
Bruton Girls	538	137	25.46
Burgess High Girls	610	30	4.92
Bury Grammar Boys	820	209	25.49
Bury Grammar Girls	1,092	253	23.17
Canford	467	31	6.64
Carmel College	213	76	35.68
Casterton	359	56	15.60
Caterham	470	133	28.30
Central Newcastle High School GPDST	887	123	13.87
Charterhouse	700	9	1.29
Cheadle Humle	958	136	14.20
Cheltenham Ladies' College	853	23	2.70
Chigwell	668	72	10.78
Christ's Hospital	818	31	3.79
Churcher's College	697	131	18.79
City of London	877	139	15.85
City of London Freemans	716	15	2.09
City of London Girls	640	125	19.53
Clifton College, Bristol	1,063	66	6.21
Clifton High, Bristol	715	54	7.55
Colfe's	971	204	21.01
Colston's Girls	499	178	35.67
Colston's Bristol	632	98	15.51
Coventry, Bablake	859	188	21.89
Cranleigh	691	35	5.07
Croham Hurst	496	27	5.44
Croydon High GPDST	1,029	96	9.33
Culford	612	51	8.33
Dame Alice Harpur	943	144	15.27
Dame Allans Boys	458	113	24.67
Dame Allans Girls	443	140	31.60
Dauntseys	620	60	9.68
Denstone College	296	119	40.20
Derby High	530	25	4.72
Douai, Reading	197	28	14.21
Dover College	221	25	11.31
Downe House, Newbury	553	16	2.89
Dulwich College	1,406	275	19.56
Durham	429	44	10.26
Edgbaston College Girls	319	27	8.46
Edgehill College	470	141	30.00
Ellesmere College	352	17	4.83
Eltham College, London SE9	769	121	15.73
Emanuel, London SW11	702	280	39.89
Epsom College	657	[illegible]	3.50

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	Number of pupils on roll[1]	Number of APs	Percentage of APs
Exeter	828	169	20.41
Farnborough Hill	536	151	28.17
Felsted, Dunmow	598	54	9.03
Forest School	1,229	139	11.31
Framlingham College	728	13	1.79
Francis Holland	376	30	7.98
Friends, Saffron Walden	341	101	29.62
Giggleswick, Settle	438	21	4.79
Godolphin and Latymer	706	172	24.36
Godolphin, Salisbury	434	29	6.68
Gresham's	743	12	1.62
Guildford High Girls	730	30	4.11
Haberdashers' Aske's Boys	1,301	235	18.06
Haberdashers' Aske Girls	1,138	117	10.28
Haileybury	585	28	4.79
Hampton	947	204	21.54
Harrogate College	342	22	6.43
Headington	768	27	3.52
Hereford Cathedral	634	240	37.85
Highgate	1,077	41	3.81
Hipperholme Grammar	353	18	5.10
Holy Child	295	25	8.47
Hulme Grammar Boys	807	212	26.27
Hulme Grammar Girls	620	189	30.48
Hurstpierpoint College	331	26	7.85
Hymers College	920	155	16.85
Ipswich	731	75	10.26
Ipswich High GPDST	671	112	16.69
James Allens Girls	1,004	172	17.13
John Lyon's	503	115	22.86
Kent College	684	88	12.87
Kimbolton Schools	730	32	4.38
King Edward VI High	541	131	24.21
King Edward VI Norwich	762	112	14.70
King Edward VI Southampton	937	233	24.87
King Edward VII Lytham	530	219	41.32
King Edward's at Bath	869	102	11.74
King Edward's Birmingham	869	239	27.50
King Edward's Witley	515	58	11.26
King Henry VIII	1,049	93	8.87
King's College Wimbledon	1,181	54	4.57
King's High Girls, Wark	564	135	23.94
King's Bruton	312	27	8.65
King's, Chester	671	89	13.26
King's Macclesfield	1,255	179	14.26
King's, Rochester	653	66	10.11
King's Tynemouth	894	26	2.91
King's, Worcester	921	178	19.33
Kinglsey	566	24	4.24
Kingston Grammar	597	171	28.64

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	Number of pupils on roll[1]	Number of APs	Percentage of APs
Kingswood School, Bath	437	44	10.07
Kirkham Grammar	742	80	10.78
La Sagesse Convent	466	170	36.48
Lady Eleanor Holles	867	42	4.84
Latymer Upper	1,065	264	24.79
Laxton	197	9	4.57
Leeds Girls High	959	81	8.45
Leeds Grammar	1,178	172	14.60
Leicester Grammar	584	45	7.71
Leighton Park	377	27	7.16
Leys, Cambridge	411	38	925
Liverpool College	997	186	18.66
Lord Wandsworth College	455	81	17.80
Loreto Convent Grammar	683	41	6.00
Loughborough Grammar	940	130	13.83
Loughborough High	534	95	17.79
Magdalen College	513	125	24.37
Malvern College	834	101	12.11
Manchester Grammar	1,414	264	18.67
Manchester High	934	181	19.38
Marist Convent Senior	372	19	5.11
Maynard	540	168	31.11
Merchant Taylors' Girls	914	197	21.55
Merchant Taylors', L'pool	823	223	27.10
Merchant Taylors', N'wood	748	83	11.10
Mill Hill	527	75	14.23
Monkton Combe	311	41	13.18
Mount Carmel, Cheshire	545	30	5.50
Mount St. Mary's College	297	70	23.57
Mount, York	274	30	10.95
Newcastle under Lyme	1,293	383	29.62
Newcastle upon Tyne Church High	651	30	4.61
North London Collegiate	971	89	9.17
Northampton High	831	167	20.10
Norwich High GPDST	894	176	19.69
Notting Hill and Ealing High GPDST	840	117	13.93
Nottingham Girls High GPDST	1,091	204	18.70
Nottingham High	841	171	20.33
Oakham	1,005	28	2.79
Old Palace, Croydon	817	226	27.66
Oxford High GPDST	650	57	8.77
Pangbourne College	392	25	6.38
Perse School for Boys	643	40	6.22
Perse School for Girls	710	78	10.99
Plymouth College	824	202	24.51
Pocklington	735	152	20.68
Polam Hall	409	40	9.78
Portsmouth Grammar	1,173	178	15.17
Portsmouth High GPDST	743	138	18.57
Prior Park College	491	30	6.11
Putney High School GPDST	849	97	11.43
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Bristol	501	179	35.73
Queen Elizabeth's, Blackburn	1,132	267	23.59
Queen Elizabeth, Wakefield	749	133	17.76
Queen Mary, Lytham	638	231	36.21
Queen's College, London	367	79	21.53
Queen's College, Taunton	675	67	9.93
Queen's School, Chester	634	58	9.15
Ratcliffe College	479	74	15.45
Red Maids', Bristol	581	178	30.64
Redland High, Bristol	638	102	15.99
Reed's School, Cobham	351	26	7.41
Reigate Grammar	775	99	12.77
Rendcomb College	247	29	11.74
Repton	570	58	10.18
Rossall	657	43	6.54
Royal Grammar, Guildford	834	124	14.87
Royal Grammar, Newcastle upon Tyne	1,098	218	19.85
Royal Grammar, Worcester	795	287	36.10
Ryde School	689	17	2.47
Salesian College	490	75	15.31
Scarborough College	381	30	7.87
Sedbergh	376	45	11.97
Sevenoaks, Kent	931	26	2.79
Sheffield High GPDST	780	96	12.31
Shrewsbury High GPDST	582	91	15.64
Silcoates	595	15	2.52
Sir William Perkin's	591	89	15.06
Solihull	994	36	3.62
South Hampstead High GPDST	883	77	8.72
St. Albans	635	139	21.89
St. Albans High Girls	697	56	8.03
St. Ambrose College	908	54	5.95
St. Anselm's College	839	193	23.00
St. Bede's College	1,169	220	18.82
St. Bees	287	74	25.78
St. Benedict's	544	74	13.60
St. Catherine's	603	34	5.64
St. Dunstan's College	837	163	19.47
St. Edmund's College	535	80	14.95
St. Edward's College	1,047	396	37.82
St. Felix, Southwold	308	32	10.39

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	Number of pupils on roll[1]	Number of APs	Percentage of APs
St. George's College	499	36	7.21
St. Helen and St. Katharine, Abingdon	530	84	15.85
St. Helen's, Northwood	939	52	5.54
St. John's College, Southsea	777	203	26.13
St. John's, Leatherhead	383	17	4.44
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	714	77	10.78
St. Joseph's College, Stoke on Trent	470	25	5.32
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	372	130	34.95
St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate	357	32	8.96
St. Margaret's, Bushey	419	27	6.44
St. Margaret's, Exeter	429	31	7.23
St. Mary and St. Anne	281	25	8.90
St. Mary's College, Crosby	870	271	31.15
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	571	124	21.72
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	422	72	17.06
St. Maur's Convent, Weybridge	607	64	10.54
St. Paul's Girls, Hammersmith	604	69	11.42
St. Paul's, Barnes	1,213	76	6.27
St. Peter's, York	756	107	14.15
St. Swithun's, Winchester	628	2	.32
Stafford Grammar	288	25	8.68
Stamford	922	102	11.06
Stamford High	956	113	11.82
Stockport Grammar	1,285	243	18.91
Stonyhurst College	391	37	9.46
Stowe	544	6	1.10
Streatham Hill and Clapham High GPDST	611	164	26.84
Surbiton High	885	27	3.05
Sutton High GPDST	755	70	9.27
Sutton Valence	349	69	19.77
Sydenham High GPDST	699	124	17.74
Talbot Heath	525	137	26.10
Taunton	944	52	5.51
Teeside High	553	24	4.34
Tonbridge	658	3	.46
Tormead	610	28	4.59
Trent College	688	132	19.19
Trinity School of John Whitgift	854	149	17.45
Truro	793	115	14.50
Truro High	392	69	17.60
University College School	816	70	8.58
Upton Hall Convent	601	169	28.12
Ursuline Convent, Kent	216	30	13.89
Ursuline High, Ilford	368	142	38.59
Wakefield High	1,061	144	13.57
Walthamstow Hall	528	46	8.71
Warwick	993	145	14.60
Wellingborough	766	67	8.75
Wellington College	810	39	4.81
Wellington, Somerset	778	230	29.56
Wells Cathedral	806	73	9.06
West Buckland	548	82	14.96
Westholme	1,009	30	2.97
Westminster	664	61	9.19
Whitgift, Croydon	1,063	113	10.63
William Hulme Grammar	789	221	28.01
Wimbledon High GPDST	810	78	9.63
Winchester College	667	23	3.45
Wisbech Grammar	638	336	52.66
Withington Girls	593	78	13.15
Wolverhampton Grammar	696	267	38.36
Woodbridge	744	128	17.20
Woodhouse Grove	774	127	16.41
Worksop	326	25	7.67
Wrekin College	248	15	6.05
Wycliffe College	607	43	7.08
Yarm	473	44	9.30

[1] As at January 1995.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what were the fees charged by each school taking part in the assisted places scheme in the last academic year. [37931]

Mrs. Gillan *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The information requested, which relates to England only and to the academic year 1994–95, is given in the following table:

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	Annual fees charged for assisted pupils £
Abbey School, Reading	3,615
Abingdon	4,472
Ackworth	4,093
Aldenham	7,742
Alice Ottley	4,092
Alleyn's Dulwich	5,461
Ardingly College	7,379
Arnold School, Blackpool	3,405
Ashford	4,790
Ashville College	4,520
Austin Friars	3,966
Bancroft's	4,440
Barnard Castle	4,230
Bath High GPDST	3,405
Batley Grammar	3,189
Bedales	8,158
Bedford	5,866
Bedford High	4,401
Bedford Modern	4,056
Belvedere GPDST	3,405
Berkhamstead Girls	4,903
Berkhamsted	5,926

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	*Annual fees charged for assisted pupils* £
Birkenhead	3,249
Birkenhead High GPDST	3,405
Bishop's Stortford College	6,861
Blackheath High GPDST	3,825
Bloxham, Banbury	6,846
Bolton School Boys	4,071
Bolton School Girls	4,071
Bootham, York	5,426
Bradfield College	8,612
Bradford Girls Grmmar	3,720
Bradford Grammar School	3,619
Brentwood School	4,633
Brighton College	6,326
Brighton and Hove High School GPDST	3,405
Bristol Cathedral	3,813
Bristol Grammar	3,613
Bromley High GPDST	3,825
Bromsgrove	5,140
Bruton Girls	3,315
Burgess Hill Girls	4,896
Bury Grammar Boys	3,216
Bury Grammar Girls	3,216
Canford	8,250
Carmel College	7,344
Casterton	5,011
Caterham	4,910
Central Newcastle High School GPDST	3,405
Charterhouse	9,459
Cheadle Hulme	3,786
Cheltenham Ladies' College	6,875
Chigwell	6,029
Christ's Hospital	6,480
Churcher's College	4,656
City of London	5,365
City of London Freeman's	5,431
City of London Girls	4,633
Clifton College, Bristol	7,049
Clifton High, Bristol	3,962
Colfe's	4,220
Colston's Girls	3,384
Colston's, Bristol	4,978
Coventry, Bablake	3,315
Cranleigh	7,068
Croham Hurst	3,925
Croydon High GPDST	3,825
Culford	5,512
Dame Alice Harpur	3,807
Dame Allan's Boys	3,300
Dame Allan's Girls	3,300
Dauntsey's	5,841
Denstone College	6,037
Derby High	4,137
Douai, Reading	4,987
Dover College	5,488
Downe House, Newbury	7,032
Dulwich College	5,954
Durham	6,191
Edgbaston College GIrls	4,309
Edgehill College	4,706
Ellesmere College	5,999
Eltham College, London SE9	4,791
Emanuel, London SW11	4,352
Epsom College	6,675
Exeter	3,789
Farnborough Hill	4,022
Felsted, Dunmow	7,758
Forest School	4,396
Framlingham College	5,718
Francis Holland	4,417
Friends, Saffron Walden	5,657
Giggleswick, Settle	5,067

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	*Annual fees charged for assisted pupils* £
Godolphin & Latymer	5,166
Godolphin Salisbury	5,821
Gresham's	7,568
Guildford High Girls	4,530
Haberdashers' Aske's Boys	5,010
Haberdashers' Aske's Girls	3.505
Haileybury	6,735
Hampton	4,237
Harrogate College	5,400
Headington	4,079
Hereford Cathedral	4,185
Highgate	5,939
Hipperholme Grammar	2,951
Holy Child	4,476
Hulme Grammar Boys	3,426
Hulme Grammar Girls	3,426
Hurstpierpoint College	7,711
Hymers College	3,259
Ipswich	4,534
Ipswich High GPDST	3,405
James Allen's Girls	5,216
John Lyon's	4,721
Kent College	4,932
Kimbolton Schools	4,572
King Edward VI High	3,756
King Edward VI Norwich	3,976
King Edward VI Southampton	4,116
King Edward VII Lytham	3,135
King Edward's at Bath	3,765
King Edward's Birmingham	4,134
King Edward's Witley	5,423
King Henry VIII	3,302
King's College Wimbledon	5,802
King's High Girls, Wark	3,530
King's Bruton	6,450
King's Chester	3,684
King's Macclesfield	3,942
King's Rochester	5,652
King's Tynemouth	3,312
King's Worcester	4,797
Kingsley	3,845
Kingston Grammar	4,491
Kingswood School, Bath	4,919
Kirkham Grammar	3,229
La Sagesse Convent	3,515
Lady Eleanor Holles	4,281
Latymer Upper	4,476
Laxton	4,506
Leeds Girls High	3,814
Leeds Grammar	3,729
Leicester Grammar	3,378
Leighton Park	7,720
Leys, Cambridge	7,537
Liverpool College	3,984
Lord Wandsworth College	6,468
Loreto Convent Grammar	2,671
Loughborough Grammar	3,762
Loughborough High	3,399
Magdalen College	4,288
Malvern College	7,297
Manchester Grammar	3,704
Manchester High	3,589
Marist Convent Senior	3,650
Maynard	3,637
Merchant Taylors' Girls	3,420
Merchant Taylors', Liverpool	3,418
Merchant Taylors', Norwood	5,972
Mill Hill	6,509
Monkton Combe	6,970
Mount Carmel, Cheshire	3,056
Mount St Mary's College	5,020

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	*Annual fees charged for assisted pupils* £
Mount, York	5,608
Newcastle Under Lyme	3,190
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Church High	3,426
North London Collegiate	4,302
Northampton High	3,858
Norwich High GPDST	3,405
Notting Hill and Ealing High GPDST	3,825
Nottingham Girls High GPDST	3,405
Nottingham High	3,865
Oakham	5,833
Old Palace, Croydon	3,681
Oxford High GPDST	3,405
Pangbourne College	6,878
Perse School for Boys	4,150
Perse School for Girls	3,672
Plymouth College	3,958
Pocklington	4,377
Polam Hall	3,887
Portsmouth Grammar	3,701
Portsmouth High GPDST	3,420
Prior Park College	4,378
Putney High School GPDST	3,825
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Bristol	3,758
Queen Elizabeth's, Blackburn	3,588
Queen Elizabeth, Wakefield	3,615
Queen Mary, Lytham	3,135
Queen's College, London	4,920
Queen's College, Taunton	5,245
Queen's School, Chester	3,291
Ratcliffe College	4,864
Red Maids', Bristol	3,665
Redland High, Bristol	3,602
Reed's School, Cobham	6,131
Reigate Grammar	4,170
Rendcomb College	6,361
Repton	7,640
Rossall	5,588
Royal Grammar, Guildford	5,467
Royal Grammar, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3,330
Royal Grammar, Worcester	4,146
Ryde School	3,966
Salesian College	2,662
Scarborough College	4,694
Sedbergh	7,369
Sevenoaks, Kent	6,033
Sheffield High GPDST	3,405
Shrewsbury High GPDST	3,405
Silcoates	4,997
Sir William Perkins's	3,517
Solihull	3,978
South Hampstead High GPDST	3,825
St Albans	4,521
St Albans High Girls	4,182
St Ambrose College	3,094
St Anselm's College	3,003
St Bede's College	3,654
St Bees	6,202
St Benedict's	4,484
St Catherine's	5,297
St Dunstan's College	4,231
St Edmund's College	5,106
St Edward's College	3,297
St Felix, Southwold	5,537
St George's College	5,953
St Helen and St Katherine, Abingdon	3,603
St Helen's, Northwood	4,401
St John's College, Southsea	3,340
St John's, Leatherhead	6,402
St Joseph's College, Ipswich	3,798
St Joseph's College, Stoke-on Trent	3,051
St Joseph's Convent, Reading	3,527

Assisted places scheme 1994–95 academic year

School name	*Annual fees charged for assisted pupils* £
St Lawrence College, Ramsgate	5,999
St Margaret's, Bushey	4,763
St Margaret's, Exeter	3,489
St Mary and St Anne	6,423
St Mary's College, Crosby	3,413
St Mary's Convent, Cambridge	3,515
St Mary's Hall, Brighton	5,349
St Maur's Convent, Weybridge	4,077
St Paul's Girls, Hammersmith	5,521
St Paul's, Barnes	6,452
St Peter's, York	5,533
St Swithun's, Winchester	5,964
Stafford Grammar	3,843
Stamford	3,762
Stamford High	3,765
Stockport Grammar	3,695
Stonyhurst College	6,729
Stowe	7,743
Streatham Hill and Clapham High GPDST	3,825
Surbiton High	4,296
Sutton High GPDST	3,825
Sutton Valence	6,620
Sydenham High GPDST	3,825
Talbot Heath	4,101
Taunton	5,978
Teesside High	3,259
Tonbridge	7,761
Tormead	4,315
Trent College	5,418
Trinity School of John Whitgift	4,786
Truro	4,074
Truro High	3,630
University College School	5,895
Upton Hall Convent	2,652
Ursuline Convent, Kent	4,616
Ursuline High, Ilford	3,915
Wakefield High	3,615
Walthamstow Hall	5,062
Warwick	4,048
Wellingborough	5,020
Wellington College	7,757
Wellington, Somerset	4,019
Wells Cathedral	4,886
West Buckland	4,392
Westholme	3,282
Westminster	6,933
Whitgift, Croydon	4,928
William Hulme Grammar	3,828
Wimbledon High GPDST	3,825
Winchester College	8,545
Wisbech Grammar	4,270
Withington Girls	3,357
Wolverhampton Grammar	4,130
Woodbridge	5,127
Woodhouse Grove	4,458
Worksop	5,434
Wrekin College	5,757
Wycliffe College	7,350
Yarm	4,318

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will state for each year in which the assisted places scheme has been operating the number of places available and the number actually taken up, the amount budgeted each year for the scheme and the amount actually spent. [37932]

Mrs. Gillan *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The information requested is given in the following table:

Year	Places [1] available	Places [1] taken up	Budget [2] estimate £ million	Actual [2] outturn £ million
1981–82	5,446	4,185	3.3	3.0
1982–83	11,058	8,616	9.3	8.7
1983–84	15,866	13,102	16.5	15.0
1984–85	20,699	17,386	22.5	22.2
1985–86	25,210	21,412	31.1	29.6
1986–87	29,295	24,478	37.4	37.9
1987–88	33,228	26,899	47.8	46.0
1988–89	33,217	27,083	55.1	50.9
1989–90	33,280	27,008	57.0	56.5
1990–91	33,302	26,740	60.4	63.4
1991–92	33,312	27,641	64.9	75.7
1992–93	33,479	28,674	87.1	[3]92.8
1993–94	33,883	29,291	94.9	92.3
1994–95	33,139	29,747	101.5	101.5

The figures are for England only.
[1] Academic year.
[2] Financial year.
[3] includes £4.9 million brought forward from financial year 1993–94.

Careers Service

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the total spending on the Careers Service by local authorities in England and Wales in each financial year since 1990–91; and what is the expected expenditure in 1995–96. [38256]

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* From 1 April 1994, the duty of providing the Careers Services became the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Employment. Prior to that date, services were funded via local education authorities through the rate support grant and these figures are unhypothecated.

The estimated outturn of spend by the Employment Department for 1994–95 for the Careers Service in England was £187.4 million. In 1995–96, the Department for Education and Employment plans to spend £211.2 million on the Careers Service.

Responsibility for the Careers Service in Wales rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was their spending on the Careers Service through each of the five West Yorkshire metropolitan district councils in each financial year since 1990–91; and what is the expected expenditure in 1995–96 for each of the individual councils. [38257]

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* From 1 April 1994, the duty of providing the Careers Service became the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Employment. Prior to that date, services were funded via Local education authorities through the rate support grant which is unhypothecated.

Spend under Careers Service instruments of direction issued by the Secretary of State for Employment to the five West Yorkshire metropolitan district councils in 1994–95 was:

Bradford: £1,598,302
Calderdale: £546,000
Kirklees: £1,103,000
Leeds: £1,849,991
Wakefield: £985,000

In 1995–96 only Leeds and Wakefield remain under direction from the Secretary of State. Their budget allocations are:

Leeds: £2,041,000
Wakefield: £1,126,000

Since 1 April 1995, careers services in Bradford have been delivered by Careers Bradford Ltd. and in Calderdale and Kirklees by Calderdale and Kirklees Careers Service Partnership Ltd. These are both private limited companies and details of their income and expenditure will be available in their annual reports next year.

Residual payments to local authorities for 1994–95 activities have been made in 1995–96 as follows:

Bradford: £144,700
Calderdale: £45,977
Kirklees: £100,001

Additional expenditure relating to careers libraries and careers guidance has been made available through the training and enterprise councils in West Yorkshire. In 1994–95 this amounted to: £1,622,725. In 1995–96 the allocation is £894,721. For 1995–96 the careers guidance element has been included in the Careers Service contracts for two TEC areas.

Cooking Fumes (Cancer)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what research is being undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive into the possible occupational cancer risk for cooks from carcinogenic chemicals in cooking fumes. [37992]

Sir Paul Beresford: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive is undertaking a review of the published literature on a number of potential health problems which might affect those occupationally engaged in food handling and preparation. The incidence of cancer is one area under scrutiny. Once that review is completed, the HSE will consider whether there is cause for particular concern and, if so, whether further research could contribute to the control of risks to those working in this area.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of medical examinations for the all-work test of incapacity which have been scheduled but have not yet taken place. [38508]

Mr. Burt: The administration of incapacity benefit is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ursula Brennan to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked Peter Mathison, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the latest estimate of the number of medical examinations for the all-work test of incapacity which have been scheduled but have not yet taken place. Mr. Mathison is away from Leeds on Benefits Agency business and he has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The number of medical examinations scheduled but not yet carried out as at 1 October 1995 was 64,247. This figure is made up of four weeks appointments scheduled from 1 October 1995 and includes an extra 33 per cent, which our experience has shown, fail to attend their appointment. The figure is provisional and subject to change.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people *(a)* passed and *(b)* failed the new incapacity benefits all work test in the Greater Manchester areas. [38587]

Mr. Burt: The administration of incapacity benefit is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Ursula Brennan to Mr. Robert Litherland, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked Peter Mathison, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of people that a) passed and b) failed the new Incapacity Benefit All Work Test in the Greater Manchester area. Mr. Mathison is away from Leeds on Benefits Agency business and he has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Information is not available in the form that you requested for the Greater Manchester area. However, I can tell you that, for the period from 13 April to 30 September 1995, 16,984 people passed the all work test and 1,556 failed the all work test in the Manchester Lead Site. The Lead Site includes the Manchester Disability Benefits Centre and the following Benefits Agency District Offices, many of which are located within the Greater Manchester area:

South Cheshire
Manchester Central
Manchester Trinity
Manchester South
Oldham
Sale/East Cheshire
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Blackburn/Accrington
Bolton/Farnworth
Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale
West Pennine
Wigan/Leigh

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many medical reports in respect of incapacity benefit have been carried out in each region; what is the average delay in producing a report; and how many are outstanding at the latest date. [37090]

Mr. Burt: The administration of incapacity benefit is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Jeff Rooker, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about how many medical reports in respect of Incapacity Benefit have been carried out in each region; what is the average delay in producing a report; and how many are outstanding at the latest date.

Figures for the Benefits Agency's Medical Services (BAMS) operations are not available by region, they are however, available for each of the 11 major medical services centres. The BAMS computer system records the number of medical examinations carried out rather than the number of reports. A medical report is produced following each medical examination and reports are normally written on the day the examination is carried out.

Figures for the number of medical examinations carried out this year, in the period ending 31 August, are at Annex A.

However, figures are not available for the average delay in producing a report, nor for the number of reports outstanding.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Number of medical examinations carried out in respect of incapacity benefit

Management unit	*May 1995*	*June 1995*	*July 1995*	*August 1995*	*Total*
Birmingham	31	740	1,775	2,816	5,362
Bootle	37	1,271	2,521	3,352	7,181
Bristol	15	465	1,385	2,383	4,248
Cardiff	0	899	2,724	3,921	7,544
Edinburgh	112	809	1,666	1,819	4,406
Glasgow	435	1,909	2,241	3,614	8,199
Leeds	62	1,670	2,491	4,046	8,269
Manchester	96	1,338	2,029	3,820	7,283
Newcastle	42	913	1,518	2,724	5,197
Sutton	32	1,099	2,864	3,487	7,482
Wembley	43	741	2,204	4,190	7,178
Total	905	11,854	23,418	36,172	72,349

This data is provisional and is subject to change.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if leaflet 1B214 describing the new all work test is available in all DSS/Benefits Agency offices, including those in Birmingham; and from what date. [36616]

Mr. Burt: IB 214 is a detailed leaflet on the incapacity benefit all-work medical test, produced primarily for advisers. The leaflet has been available since May to anyone who rings the freeline number—0800 868868—and it has been available from DSS local offices since mid-August 1995.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the new incapacity benefit will affect those suffering from asthma. [38312]

Mr. Burt: The new medical test of incapacity takes account of the effect of all medical conditions. The basis of the test is the effect of a medical condition on the ability to work and not he medical condition itself. The symptoms of conditions such as asthma may vary in intensity across time from mild to severe. The new test is designed to take account of the variability of symptoms and is not a snapshot of the claimant's capacity to work at a point in time.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to receive the report from the advisory body on the review of the Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema Regulations; and if he will make a statement. [36740]

Mr. Roger Evans: I understand that the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council expects to complete its review and submit a report to Ministers in the new year. The Government will consider carefully any recommendations that the council makes.

Lone Parent Premium

Mr. John Marshall : To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received the single parent's premium in each since its inception; and what has been the cost of the premium in each of these years. [37159]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information available is set out in the table.

The lone parent premium forms part of the calculation of the total potential amount of benefit in income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit. It is not possible to apportion costs between the various allowances and premiums that make up the total potential benefit in those cases where the amount paid is less than the total.

Income support/housing benefit/council tax benefit cases with the lone parent premium

Year	*Number of income support cases*	*Number of housing benefit/council tax benefit cases*
1988	690,000	—
1989	760,000	—
1990	790,000	110,000
1991	870,000	110,000
1992	960,000	110,000
1993	1,010,000	120,000
1994	1,040,000	140,000

Notes:

1. Sample size 1 in 100.
2. Council tax benefit replaced community charge benefit from April 1993. Above figures include community charge benefit.
3. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10,000.
4. Housing benefit/council tax benefit/community charge benefit figures include estimates due to the data collection procedure in Scotland.
5. The housing benefit/council tax benefit/community charge benefit analysis excludes recipients of housing benefit/council tax benefit with income support and the overlap between housing benefit/council tax benefit/community charge benefit.
6. Housing benefit/community charge benefit figures are not provided for 1988–89 as it is not possible to accurately estimate the overlap between housing benefit and community charge benefit, at that time community charge benefit applied only in Scotland.

Source:

Income Support Statistics Quarterly and Annual Enquiries 1988–1994.

Housing Benefit Management Information System, annual 1 per cent. sample inquiry without Income Support, taken at the end of May in each year shown.

Share Option Schemes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated current cost to the Exchequer in *(a)* lost income tax and *(b)* lost national insurance contributions of companies paying low-paid employees earning below tax and national insurance thresholds via share options. [37074]

Mr. Heald: The Inland Revenue does not hold centrally collated information regarding tax revenue forgone under relieved share option schemes. However, a sample of such schemes available to the Inland Revenue indicates that very few employees currently earning below income tax and national insurance thresholds realise gains under share option schemes which would otherwise have brought them into income tax. Information regarding national insurance contribution revenue forgone is not available.

Student Benefits

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many full-time higher education students suspended their courses due to sickness or personal circumstances and then claimed for social security benefits, for each year from 1985; and what is the total estimated annual cost of such claims. [38405]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38280]

Mr. Burt: In line with the Government's Civil Service White Papers, "Continuity and Change" and "Carrying Forward Continuity and Change", at April 1996 DSS will have six bargaining units; Benefits Agency, Child Support Agency, Contributions Agency, Information Technology Services Agency, War Pensions Agency and DSS headquarters. Each bargaining unit will have responsibility for all staff up to and including unified grade 6, including professional equivalents.

DSS headquarters will also have responsibility for the pay of staff in the five non-departmental public bodies related to the Department Central Adjudication Service, Independent Review Service for the Social Fund, Independent Tribunal Service, Pensions Ombudsman's office and the Executive Office of the Occupational Pensions Board.

All six units have recognised the Civil and Public Servants Association and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants for collective bargaining purposes. Additionally, BA, ITSA and headquarters have recognised the Association of First Division Civil Servants and BA and headquarters have recognised the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists. The War Pensions Agency has a small number of staff represented by the Transport and General Workers Union whose pay will follow the settlement reached between the Ministry of Defence and the TGWU.

Those bargaining units which took delegation in 1994—BA, CA and ITSA—and in 1995—CSA and WPA—agreed bargaining mechanisms with unions for past negotiations and these have been either single-table or multi-table. Arrangements for 1996 will be agreed in due course.

Council Tax Benefit

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of recipients and cost

to the public of council tax benefit; and what are the figures for each of the last five years. [38332]

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table.

Number of recipients and benefit expenditure on council tax benefit

Year[1]	Number of recipients (000s)[2]	Financial year	Benefit expenditure £ million[3]
1993[4]	5,290	1993–94	1,901
1994	5,549	1994–95	2,005
1995	5,674	1995–96	2,039

Notes:
[1] Number of recipients obtained from quarterly aggregate counts taken on last working day of May of each given year.
[2] Figures for recipients refer to the number of benefit units. These may be a single person or a couple.
[3] Figures given for benefit expenditure for 1993–94 are outturn, those for 1994–95 estimated outturn and 1995–96 planned outturn.
[4] Council tax benefit was introduced in April 1993.

Housing Benefit

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people in receipt of housing benefit in *(a)* local authority, *(b)* housing association and *(c)* private rented accommodation; and what were the figures for each of the last five years. [38333]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

Housing benefit recipients by tenancy in Great Britain

Thousands

Year	Total housing benefit cases	Rent Rebate Local authority tenants	Total housing associations tenants and private tenants	Rent Allowance Housing association tenants	Private rented excluding housing association tenants
1991	4,030	2,945	1,085	n/a	n/a
1992	4,325	3,034	1,292	340	952
1993	4,533	3,053	1,481	412	1,068
1994	4,650	3,016	1,634	509	1,125
1995	4,734	2,967	1,766	610	1,156

Notes:
1. Number of recipients obtained from quarterly aggregate counts taken on last working day of May for each given year.
2. Figures refer to the number of benefit units. These maybe a single person or a couple.
3. Separate figures for housing association and private rented accommodation tenants excluding housing association tenants are not available for 1991.
4. Totals may not sum due to rounding of figures to the nearest thousand.

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parents with dependent children claiming income support were receiving maintenance in each year since 1989; and in the case of Child Support Agency assessments, how many of these were minimum assessments of £2.30 or less. [37589]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Maintenance Payments

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average amount of maintenance received by parents with dependent children claiming income support in each year since 1989. [37590]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The information is in the following list:

1989: £18.99

1990: £19.60

1991: £20.73

1992: £22.19

1993: £22.64

1994: £23.71

Method of Payment Fraud

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the savings made by his Department in tackling organised method of payment fraud in 1993–94 and 1994–95; what were the reasons for any change in savings; and what new policies his Department intends to take to substantially increase the savings by tackling organised method of payment fraud. [37591]

Mr. Heald: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current cost of the social security budget per working person per day. [38081]

Mr. Burt: The current cost of the social security budget is equivalent to £15.00 per working person per working day.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total

monetary sum (1) misappropriated in such frauds and (2) subsequently recovered. [39131]

Mr. Heald: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Government Publications

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which institutions in the USA are designated depositories for United Kingdom Government publications produced through HMSO. [38329]

Mr. Horam: Her Majesty's Stationery Office has no deposit arrangements with designated institutions in the USA or elsewhere overseas.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide, in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury, *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38281]

Mr. Horam: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's responsibilities cover several Departments\agencies which are classed as separate bargaining units for the purpose of pay delegation:

Cabinet Office/Office of Public Service has 1,283 staff covering support, clerical, executive, specialist and open structure grades based in London, Norwich and Basingstoke. Meeting planned with the Association of First Division Civil Servants, the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists, the National Union of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Services Association to discuss negotiating machinery.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office already has pay delegation for its clerical, executive and managerial staff which now number about 2,000 and for its printing, technical and maintenance staff which now number about 900. These staff are based in Norwich and in outlets nationwide. Single-table bargaining exists for white-collar staff with its trade union side comprising CPSA, NUCPS and IPMS and separately with the Graphical, Paper and Media Union, the General Municipal and Boilermakers Union, the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union and the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians for its blue-collar staff.

Central Office of Information has 480 staff covering support, clerical, executive, specialist and open structure grades based in London and a number of regions. About to discuss negotiating machinery with IPMS, NUCPS and CPSA.

Civil Service College has 274 staff covering a range of clerical, executive and Open Structure grades based at both Sunningdale and London. About to meet FDA, NUCPS, IPMS and CPSA to discuss negotiating machinery.

Chessington Computer Centre has 417 clerical, executive and Open Structure staff on one site. Negotiating machinery to be discussed with representatives of NUCPS and CPSA.

Recruitment and Assessment Services covers a mix of support, clerical and executive grades together with Open Structure staff and some psychologists based in Basingstoke and London. Discussing negotiating machinery with NUCPS and CPSA.

Occupational Health and Safety Agency covers 95 administrative, executive, specialist and Open Structure staff with HQ functions in Edinburgh and a number of offices in London and the regions. Principal discussions on negotiating machinery are currently with IPMS.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 25 October 1995

HOME DEPARTMENT

Victims Charter

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to update the victims charter. [38916]

Mr. Maclean: We hope to publish a new victims charter later this year.

Private Security Industry

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to respond to the first report from the Home Affairs Select Committee on the private security industry (HC, 1994–95, 17). [33915]

Mr. Maclean: The Government are studying in detail the recommendations of the Select Committee and will issue a substantive response as soon as possible.

Mr. Stephen Laudat

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the transfer directives and any subsequent order made under the Mental Health Act 1983 section 47(1) in March 1992 in respect of Mr. Stephen Laudat, together with any relevant medical correspondence. [39342]

Miss Widdecombe: Medical reports recommending the transfer of a prisoner to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 are confidential and may not be placed in the Library. Information concerning the circumstances of Mr. Laudat's transfer to hospital is given in the report of the independent inquiry into the circumstances of the killing of Mr. Brian Bennett by Mr. Laudat. A transfer and restriction direction authorising Mr. Laudat's removal from HMP Wandsworth to the interim secure unit at Hackney hospital under sections 47 and 49 of the 1983 Act was issued on 19 March 1992.

Automatic Fingerprinting Recognition System

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police authorities which are currently contracted to the computer firm Cambridge Neurodynamics Ltd. for its automatic fingerprinting recognition system; and if he will make a statement. [39036]

Mr. Maclean: I know of no police authority which has entered into a direct contractual relationship with Cambridge Neurodynamics Ltd. for automatic fingerprint recognition facilities; but I understand that CNL does provide such facilities to South Yorkshire police under the terms of a sub-contract.

Closed Circuit Television (Sale of Tapes)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that tapes from CCTVs installed in public places and which show members of the public in embarrassing or compromising positions are not sold on to commercial organisations for use in films or videos. [38906]

Mr. Maclean: Access to, and control of, images recorded by closed circuit television is a matter for the operator's of such systems to regulate. The Government strongly recommend that all CCTV operators adopt codes of practice suitable to their systems covering such matters as tape access and the use to which the images are put. Advice on developing such codes of practice is contained in the Home Office guidance booklet "CCTV—Looking Out For You", a copy of which is in the Library. Approximately 20,000 copies of the booklet have now been distributed.

Life Sentenced Prisoners

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many life sentenced prisoners released on licence in the period 1990 to 1994 were subsequently recalled. [38632]

Miss Widdecombe: Provisional data show that there were 485 life sentence prisoners released on licence between 1990 and 1994 inclusive; of whom 35 had their licence revoked and were subsequently returned to prison.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made by his Department of the match between the numbers of women's refuges and trends in the levels of domestic violence. [38468]

Mr Maclean: The official and ministerial groups on domestic violence are currently examining the extent of refuge provision. The underlying trends in domestic violence are particularly hard to ascertain due to the hidden nature of the crime. For this reason, measures are also being considered to improve the quality of the statistical information available on the level of domestic violence.

Mr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many interpreters are offered at women's refuges; in what regions they are offered; and what languages they speak. [38473]

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of interpreters at women's refuges is not recorded centrally, and is a matter for individual refuges.

Mr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what *(a)* medical facilities and *(b)* advice facilities are available at women's refuges. [38465]

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

Occupants of women's refuges are entitled to the same range of medical facilities as any other member of the public who registers with a general practitioner. The range of advice facilities available varies considerably, depending to a large extent on the particular problems of the users of the refuge.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the nationality of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were being held in each prison in England and Wales as at 15 October for immigration offences; [38377]

(2) if he will list the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were held in each prison in England and Wales as of 15 October, for immigration offences. [38389]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the temporary director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Cox, dated 25 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the nationality and number of (a) men and (b) women who were held in each prison in England and Wales as of 15 October, for immigration offences.

The latest available provisional information is for 30 September 1995 and is given in the attached table, a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House.

Population of immigration detainees in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 September 1995, by nationality[1]

Nationality	*Number*
Males	
Belmarsh	14
Cyprus	1
Jamaica	3
Nigeria	3
Not known	1
Pakistan	1
Sierre Leone	1
Turkey	4
Birmingham	64
Algeria	1
Bangladesh	3
China	5
Dominica	1
Gambia	1
India	34
Iran	1
Jamaica	3
Nigeria	2
Pakistan	9
South Africa	1
Turkey	1
Uganda	1
USSR	1
Blakenhurst	2
Jamaica	1
Morocco	1
Bristol	6
Bangladesh	1
Algeria	1
Jamaica	2
Nigeria	1
Tajikistan	1
Brixton	9
Bulgaria	1
Gambia	2
India	1
Pakistan	1
USSR	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Uganda	1
United States of America	1
Canterbury	4
Libya	1
Nigeria	2
Turkey	1
Cardiff	2
Nigeria	2
Dorchester	1
Jamaica	1
Doncaster	3
Columbia	1
Jamaica	1
Not known	1
Elmley	2
Algeria	2
Exeter	2
Benin	1
Sierre Leone	1
Feltham	1
Jamaica	1
Haslar	106
Albania	1
Algeria	4
Angola	1
Bangladesh	3
China	17
Ecuador	2
Egypt	1
Ethiopia	1
Ghana	10
Guyana	1
India	17
Iraq	3
Jamaica	1
Kenya	2
Lebanon	1
Liberia	5
Morocco	2
Niger	1
Nigeria	18
Romania	3
Sierra Leone	2
Sri Lanka	1
Sudan	1
Turkey	1
Uganda	2
USSR	2
Yugoslavia	2
Zaire	1
Highdown	8
Barbados	1
Ghana	1
Grenada	1
Jamaica	1
Nigeria	4

Population of immigration detainees in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 September 1995, by nationality[1]

Nationality	*Number*
Hindley	1
Bangladesh	1
Holme House	2
Algeria	1
Nigeria	1
Leeds	7
Bangladesh	1
India	2
Pakistan	3
Turkey	1
Lincoln	1
Nigeria	1
Liverpool	7
Albania	1
Algeria	1
Israel	1
Liberia	1
Morocco	2
Not known	1
Manchester	1
United States of America	1
Pentonville	3
Algeria	1
Jamaica	1
Malaysia	1
Preston	1
Not known	1
Rochester	189
Algeria	43
Angola	1
Bangladesh	2
China	10
Ghana	12
India	35
Iran	1
Iraq	1
Jamaica	4
Kenya	2
Lebanon	2
Liberia	3
Libya	2
Mauritius	1
Morocco	3
Nigeria	16
Not known	3
Pakistan	6
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Romania	11
Serbia	1
Sierra Leone	1
South Africa	1
Sri Lanka	2
Switzerland	2
Tanzania	2
Tunisia	1
Turkey	7
Uganda	1
Yugoslavia	2
Zaire	9
Wandsworth	10
Jamaica	1
Chile	1
Kenya	1
Algeria	2
India	3
Nigeria	1
Ghana	1
The Wolds	3
Algeria	3
Wormwood Scrubs	3
Columbia	1
Ethiopia	1
Nigeria	1
Females	
Holloway	3
Nigeria	1
Not known	1
India	1
Total	455

[1] Provisional figures.

Confiscation Orders

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects agreement to be reached between Government Departments on the commitment to produce a confiscation order for the proceeds of crimes from counterfeit goods; and if he will make a statement. [34663]

Mr. Maclean: Such agreement has now been reached and I shall be bringing forward an order shortly which will add a number of counterfeiting and copyright offences to schedule 4 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 thereby enabling a confiscation order to be made by magistrates courts.

2001 Census

Mr. Calcum Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to extending throughout the United Kingdom in the 2001 census the questions on Gaelic previously asked in Scotland in earlier censuses. [38310]

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The case for including questions in the 2001 census will be considered in 1998 on grounds of usefulness and acceptability to the public. Consultations with major users of census data are already underway. The Government's proposals will be published in a White Paper and the final selection will be subject to parliamentary approval. Far more questions are proposed than can be included. The burden on the public needs to be kept to a minimum.

Child Victims of Domestic Violence

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures are in place to look after child victims of domestic violence and keep them away from their violent parents. [38467]

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

The Government attach a high priority to the safety and welfare of children. The Children Act 1989 makes provision for the temporary or permanent removal of a child from its home if it is in the child's best interest to do so, and provides powers for local authorities to assist a person who is, or is likely, to cause a child to suffer ill treatment, to find alternative accommodation.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement setting out the legal aid funds which have been made available to Mr. Peter Clowes at each stage of the legal proceedings leading to his conviction for matters relating to the collapse of the Barlow Clowes companies and his subsequent attempts to obtain parole; if he will specify at each of those stages the sums paid or liable to become payable to Ms Cherie Booth QC, or practices in which she has an interest; if he will identify those specific steps which have been taken by the Legal Aid Board to verify Mr. Clowes' claims to have insufficient financial resources to finance his own legal advice; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that public funds are not in future used to finance parole applications for convicted fraudsters. [39324]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Details of legal aid paid to lawyers acting on behalf of Mr. Peter Clowes at each stage of the legal proceedings leading to his conviction for matters relating to the collapse of the Barlow Clowes companies are shown in the table. No payments have yet been made in support of the judicial review proceedings taken out against the Parole Board's decision not to grant parole to Mr. Clowes. Our records indicate that none of these payments were made, or are liable to be made, to Ms Cherie Booth QC or practices in which she has an interest. The Legal Aid Board has had inquiries made into Mr. Clowes' statement of means and has granted civil legal aid on the basis of the information provided. Further investigations are being carried out by the Benefits Agency. Because of the confidentiality provisions of the Legal Aid Act 1988 I cannot disclose any details of the application. Nor can I comment on whether or not legal aid should be used to support similar applications in future as every application for legal aid has to be judged on its individual merits.

	Legal Aid including VAT £
Magistrates' court	47,521
Crown Court	2,527,663
Court of Appeal	35,843

Mr. Derek Laffey

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when Mr. Derek Campion Laffey, WPD reference M2/1124557, will be called to his appeal tribunal, date of appeal, 14 December 1993. [38517]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mr. Laffey's appeal was received by the pensions appeal tribunals on 19 July 1995 and has been ready to be listed since 11 August. The appeal is expected to be heard at Leeds in March 1996.

Legal Education and Conduct

Mr. Nick Hawkins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct intends to publish its fourth annual report. [39994]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct will publish its fourth annual report on Friday 27 October. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Salaries

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about the salaries covered by the Ministerial and other Salaries Order. [39781]

Mr. Newton: During the debate on Members' salaries in November 1993, *Official Report*, 3 November 1993, column *457* I announced that, henceforth, the level of ministerial salaries should normally be increased by the same proportion as those of hon. Members, and that Ministers in the other place would receive the same increase, in cash terms, as their counterparts in this House receive from their combined ministerial and reduced parliamentary salaries.

That arrangement will be applied this year, giving Ministers in this House an increase of 2.7 per cent. and Ministers in the other place the corresponding cash increase.

The draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order to implement these changes from 1 January 1996 was laid in the House on Monday 23 October. The details are set out in the tables.

In accordance with the resolution of 3 November 1993, the same percentage increase will be applied to the reduced parliamentary salary paid to Commons Ministers and paid office holders, increasing it from the current rate of 24,985 to £25,660 on 1 January 1996.

Ministers Salaries

	Current salary £	*New salary* £
Commons Ministers		
Prime Minister	57,018	58,557
Cabinet Minister	42,834	43,991
Minister of State	30,307	31,125
Parliamentary Under Secretary	23,002	23,623
Attorney General	45,516	46,745
Solicitor General	37,321	38,329
Government Chief Whip	35,650	36,613
Government Deputy Chief Whip	30,307	31,125
Government Whip	19,502	20,029
Assistant Government Whip	19,502	20,029
Leader of the Opposition (actual)	37,495	38,507
Leader of the Opposition (nominal)	39,272	40,332
Opposition Chief Whip	30,307	31,125
Assistant Opposition Whip	19,502	20,029

Ministers Salaries

	Current salary £	*New salary £*
Speaker (actual)	42,834	43,991
Speaker (nominal)	44,943	46,156
Chairman of Ways and Means	30,307	31,125
First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means	26,636	27,355
Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means	26,636	27,355
Lord Ministers		
Cabinet Minister	55,329	57,161
Minister of State	48,835	50,328
Parliamentary Under Secretary	41,065	42,361
Lord Chancellor	April 96	April 96
Lord Advocate	55,409	57,241
Government Chief Whip	48,835	50,328
Government Deputy Chief Whip	41,065	42,361
Government Whip	37,111	38,313
Leader of the Opposition	41,065	42,361
Opposition Chief Whip	37,111	38,313
Chairman of Committees	48,835	50,328
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees	44,856	46,349
Minister in neither House		
Solicitor General (Scotland)	47,697	48,985
Parliamentary Salaries		
Member of Parliament	33,189	34,085
Reduced Parliamentary Salary	24,985	25,660

1. The Speaker has opted to take the salary of a Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons.
2. The Lord Chancellor's Salary is set separately by Section 3 of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.
3. Mr. Blair declined the 4.7 per cent. increase on 1 January 1995.

Norman Shaw Buildings

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many bicycle racks are provided in the Norman Shaw South building for hon. Members and people working in the Norman Shaw North and Norman Shaw South buildings. [39225]

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Fifteen.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many hon. Members and members of the staff of the House work in the Norman Shaw North and Norman Shaw South buildings. [39224]

Mr. Michael J. Martin: One hundred and thirty-eight hon. Members and 37 staff of the House work in these two buildings.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Pay Delegation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38283]

Mr. Tony Newton: The Privy Council Office pay delegation plan submitted to the Treasury covers all staff of the Department, which is a single bargaining unit. All staff are employed in the discharge of headquarters functions; there are no agencies, agency candidates or other identifiable business units. The plan does not envisage trade union recognition for pay bargaining purposes. The Department, which has only 38 staff, is predominantly non-unionised. In these circumstances, given the numbers involved, trade union recognition would be inappropriate. It is, however, proposed to arrange for the election of staff representatives.

TREASURY

Loss of Employment (Compensation)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the tax-free limit of £30,000 as termination payment for loss of office compensation by employees remains in force; and what plans he has to alter these arrangements. [37069]

Mr. Jack: The exemption from tax for the first £30,000 of payments made to an individual as compensation for loss of employment, remains in force where the conditions laid down in sections 148 and 188 of the Taxes Act are met.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the ratios which determine the division of public expenditure on health care, education and housing between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and how these have changed in the last five years. [37998]

Mr. Waldegrave: The division of public expenditure provision on health care, education and housing in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is determined by the respective Secretaries of State. An analysis of general government expenditure on these and other services can be found in the "Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96".

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was United Kingdom taxation as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1994; and what was the figure for other European Union countries; [38819]

(2) what was United Kingdom public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product in 1994; and what was the figure in other OECD countries; [38825]

(3) what was United Kingdom taxation as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1994; and what was the figure in other OECD countries; [38827]

(4) what was United Kingdom public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1994; and what was the figure for other European Union countries. [38818]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Figures for UK public expenditure and taxation are available in "CSO Financial Statistics", and GDP figures are available in "Economic Trends". Figures for other EU and OECD countries can be found in the OECD "Economic Outlook" of June 1995. All publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Business Loans

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average interest rate for loans to business; and what are the comparable figures for the Group of Seven leading industrial nations. [38828]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Specific data on average interest rates for loans to businesses are not generally available. However, a Bank of England report, in the February 1993 "Quarterly Bulletin", showed that lending to small firms was largely related to money market rates. It is likely that lending to larger firms is also predominantly money market rate-related, although fixed rate finance has become more popular in recent years. Money market rates will therefore provide a broad guide to the general trend in interest rates on loans to businesses.

Data on comparable money market rates for the G7 countries can be found in "International Financial Statistics" published by the IMF.

Tax and Prices Index

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations led his Department to cease publishing the monthly tax and prices index; and if he will make a statement. [39042]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Publication of the tax and prices index has not been discontinued. Data can be found in tables 5 and 6 of "Retail Prices Index", CSO monthly Business Monitor MM23. There are also available from the Central Statistical Office on request.

Structural Funds

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the entitlements for 1995–96 resulting from the carry forward of underspends allowed under the new end-year flexibility scheme for structural funds relating to the 1994 to 1999 programme period. [39964]

Mr. Waldegrave: A new end-year flexibility scheme has been introduced to allow Departments to match the level of public expenditure provision in their own programmes to the flow of EU receipts in any particular year. For the new structural funds programme period which started in 1994 and runs until 1999, the eligible Departments will be able to carry forward into the following year underspends on all their expenditure relating to the European regional development fund, the European social fund, and the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund—objective 5b. A list of entitlements for 1995–96, totalling £191,594,000, is shown in the following table.

Entitlements for 1995–96 resulting from the carryforward of underspends relating to the 1994–99 Structural Funds Programme Period

Department	*£ Thousands*
Department of Trade and Industry	1,500
Department of the Environment	16,328
Department for Education and Employment	139,887
Welsh Office	10,000
Scottish Office	23,879
Total structural funds	191,594

Subject to parliamentary approval of any necessary supplementary estimates, individual cash limits will be increased as appropriate when entitlement is taken up.

Take-up of end-year flexibility under the new scheme will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Scot Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report,* column *1256,* on what date Customs and Excise delivered the public interest immunity certificates in the Ordtec case to the Scott inquiry. [38260]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* Copies of the public interest immunity certificates were sent to the inquiry on 18 July 1995 and the associated bundle of documents, as prepared for the Court of Appeal, was provided to the inquiry by the 20 July 1995.

Sanitary Products

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reduce the rate of VAT on women's necessary hygienic products. [38771]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget statement.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the application of VAT to sanitary towels and tampons. [38770]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* Treasury Ministers receive a small number of representations from hon. Members and the public on this subject from time to time.

Alcoholic Drinks (Taxation)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the present duty levels on spirits to equalise the tax treatment of spirits and the tax treatment of other alcoholic drinks. [39144]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* Each year prior to making his Budget decisions the Chancellor of the Exchequer reviews the levels of taxation on alcoholic beverages including spirits. Consideration is given to a wide range of social, economic and health factors as well as the revenue effect.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what strategy the ODA has for combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in developing countries. [37750]

Mr. Hanley: ODA's strategy for combating the spread of HIV/AIDS was set out in a speech by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, on 26 April 1994; copies of her speech will be placed in the Libraries of the House. In summary, our goal is to

help people in developing countries avoid HIV infection and, if they are infected, better cope with the miseries it causes, in a way that is sustainable and makes use of all available resources. Since 1987, we have learnt about the need for a multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS and the need to provide better care for people with HIV, as well as prevent their infection.

We provide assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels. We involve NGOs as well as Governments, often incorporating lessons learnt through pilot projects and research. We support the establishment of the new joint and co-sponsored UN programme on HIV/AIDS.

Fay Report

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken following the Fay report to recover money lost by the Crown Agents as a result of their association with companies controlled by the Barclay brothers; and if he will make a statement. [38372]

Mr. Hanley: As noted in annexe IV to the statement by the Government on the report of the Fay committee of inquiry on the Crown Agents on 1 December 1977, House of Commons paper 49 of Session 1977–78, the Crown Agents, acting in accordance with a general directive from the then Minister of Overseas Development and on advice from professional advisers, sold the relevant debts for £3 million.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what losses were made at *(a)* actual and *(b)* 1995 prices by the Crown Agents as a result of their investments with Barclay Hotels. [38373]

Mr. Hanley: As set out in annexe IV to the statement by the Government on the report of the Fay committee of inquiry on 1 December 1977, House of Commons paper 49 of Session 1977–78, the Crown Agents realised a loss on disposal of their interest in 1976 of £6.5 million—in 1995 prices, £24.7 million.

China

Miss Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *110*, if he will outline the details of the reports his Department has received on alleged abuses of reproductive rights in China. [37615]

Mr. Hanley: We have received reports from organisations and observers outside China of practices in some parts of China relating to forced abortion, punishment for evasion of family planning regulations and coercion to accept particular forms of contraception, including sterilisation. We continue to take every appropriate opportunity to express our deep concerns about these reports in our discussions with the Chinese Government.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on aid to Indonesia. [36884]

Mr. Hanley: Our policy on aid to Indonesia remains as set out by my hon. Friend, the then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in answer to the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr.Wicks) on 16 January, *Official Report*, column *296*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Repairs (Expenditure)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on road repairs in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years; and what is the projected expenditure for this year. [37969]

Mr. Moss: The relevant expenditure figures are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1992–93	40.8
1993–94	42.1
1994–95	44.5
1995–96	[1]43.6

[1] Estimated

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will itemise payments made in each NHS trust to *(a)* chairs, *(b)* non-executive directors, *(c)* chief executives and *(d)* board directors for 1993–94 and 1994–95, by region. [37944]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is set out on tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Chairman and chief executive's remuneration—1994–95

£ Thousands

Health and Social Services Trust	*Basic salary*	*Benefits*	*Chairman Performance related pay*	*Pensions contributions*	*Total*
Eastern Board Area					
Belfast City Hospital	19	0	0	0	19
Down and Lisburn	19	0	0	0	19
Eastern Ambulance	16	0	0	0	16
Greenpark	17	0	0	1	18
Mater Infirmorum Hospital	15	0	0	0	15
North Down and Ards Community	15	0	0	0	15
North and West Belfast Community	19	0	0	0	19
Royal Group of Hospitals	19	0	0	0	19

Table 1: Chairman and chief executive's remuneration—1994–95

£ Thousands

Health and Social Services Trust	*Basic salary*	*Benefits*	*Chairman Performance related pay*	*Pensions contributions*	*Total*
South and East Belfast Community	19	0	0	0	19
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals	11	0	0	0	11
Southern Board Area					
Craigavon Area Hospital	17	0	0	0	17
Craigavon and Banbridge Community	17	0	0	0	17
Newry and Mourne	17	0	0	0	17
Total	220	0	0	1	221

Health and Social Services Trust	*Basic salary*	*Benefits*	*Chief Executives Performance related pay*	*Pensions contributions*	*Total*
Eastern Board Area					
Belfast City Hospital	61	0	2	2	65
Down and Lisburn	77	0	4	3	84
Eastern Ambulance	46	3	0	2	51
Greenpark	54	4	5	2	65
Mater Infirmorum Hospital	98	0	0	4	102
North Down and Ards Community	58	0	0	2	60
North and West Belfast Community	62	4	7	2	75
Royal Group of Hospitals	60	6	12	2	80
South and East Belfast Community	62	0	0	3	65
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals	57	3	0	2	62
Southern Board Area					
Craigavon Area Hospital	55	3	0	2	60
Craigavon and Banbridge Community	54	0	0	2	56
Newry and Mourne	52	0	0	2	54
Total	796	23	30	30	879

Table 1.1: Board members' remuneration—trusts—1994–95

£ thousands

Health and Social Services Trust	*Non-executive directors*	*Executive Directors Basic salary*	*Performance related pay*	*Employers pension contributions*	*Benefits in kind*	*Compensation for loss of office*	*Pensions paid to former directors*	*Total*
Eastern Board Area								
Belfast City Hospital	44	285	4	11	3	0	0	347
Down and Lisburn	44	276	11	11	5	0	0	347
Eastern Ambulance	31	118	0	5	6	0	0	160
Greenpark	44	235	16	10	7	0	0	312
Mater Infirmorum Hospital	40	237	0	9	0	0	0	286
North Down and Ards Community	40	197	0	6	0	0	0	243
North and West Belfast Community	44	279	17	10	5	0	0	355
Royal Group of Hospitals	44	222	20	8	9	0	0	303
South and East Belfast Community	44	216	0	9	0	0	0	269
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals	31	273	0	11	6	0	0	321
Southern Board Area								
Craigavon Area Hospital	38	191	5	8	3	0	0	245
Craigavon and Banbridge Community	40	237	0	9	0	0	0	286
Newry and Mourne	42	186	0	7	0	0	0	235
Total	526	2,952	73	114	44	0	0	3,709

Table 2: chairman and chief executive's remuneration—1993–94

£ thousands

Health and social services trust	*Basic salary*	*Benefits*	*Chairman Performance related pay*	*Pensions contributions*	*Total*
Eastern board area					
Belfast City Hospital	19	0	0	0	19
Eastern Ambulance	16	0	0	0	16
Greenpark	17	0	0	1	18
Royal Group of Hospitals	19	0	0	0	19
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospital	0	0	0	0	0
Southern Board Area					
Craigavon Area Hospital	17	0	0	0	17
Total	88	0	0	1	89

Health and social services trust	*Basic salary*	*Benefits*	*Chief Executive Performance related pay*	*Pensions contributions*	*Total*
Eastern board area					
Belfast City Hospital	63	0	1	3	67
Eastern Ambulance	41	3	0	2	46
Greenpark	52	4	5	2	63
Royal Group of Hospitals	55	4	11	2	72
Ulster, North Down & Ards Hospitals	50	2	0	2	54
Southern board area					
Craigavon Area Hospital	52	3	0	2	57
Total	313	16	17	13	359

Table 2.1: board members remuneration—1993–94

£ thousand

Health and social services trust	*Non-executive directors*	*Executive directors Basic salary*	*Performance related pay*	*Employers pension contributions*	*Benefits in kind*	*Compensation for loss of office*	*Pensions paid to former directors*	*Total*
Eastern Board Area								
Belfast City Hospital	44	294	3	10	2	0	0	353
Eastern Ambulance	30	101	0	5	6	0	0	142
Greenpark	44	225	15	8	6	0	0	298
Royal Group of Hospitals	44	211	19	8	5	0	0	287
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals	20	256	0	10	3	0	0	289
Southern Board Area								
Craigavon Area Hospital	42	146	2	3	3	0	0	196
Total	224	1,233	39	44	25	0	0	1,565

1. The Chairman's remuneration is included within the total remuneration of Non-Executive Directors.
2. The Chief Executive's remuneration is included within the remuneration of Executive Directors.

Road Casualties

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road accidents in the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [37967]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Persons killed	*Persons injured*	*Serious*	*Slight*
1990			
185	11,576	1,993	9,583
1991			
185	10,129	1,648	8,481

Persons killed	Persons injured	Serious	Slight
1992			
150	11,114	1,841	9,273
1993			
143	10,957	1,725	9,232
1994			
157	11,937	1,648	10,289

The Government's target to reduce the total number of people killed and seriously injured on Northern Ireland's roads by one third by the year 2000 compared with the baseline 1981–85 average[1] is identified in the recently published road safety plan for Northern Ireland, to which the RUC is a signatory. This target has been universally accepted and is a focus for organisations and individuals involved in road safety.

The current trend in deaths and serious injuries would indicate that this target is in line to be accomplished through a continuance of the multi-agency approach to road safety education and with the full support and determination of the community.

The RUC will continue to provide a substantial, sustained and co-ordinated effort, involving road safety education and enforcement of more serious road traffic offences, to address accident causes and trends. Resources will be deployed towards a number of identified priority areas: speed, reckless/careless driving, drinking and driving, young drivers, pedestrians and child safety.

Note:

[1] The baseline 1981–1985 average for fatal and serious casualties is 2362. The target, to be reached by the year 2000, is 1575.

Public Inquiry (Carrickfergus Harbour)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total costs incurred by the Department of the Environment (NI) in respect of public inquiries regarding Carrickfergus harbour, Country Antrim, to date; and if he will make a statement on the future development of Carrickfergus harbour, and adjacent land. [38721]

Mr. Moss: Information on the cost to the Department of the Environment (NI) of public inquiries regarding Carrickfergus harbour is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Carrickfergus harbour is in the ownership of Carrickfergus borough council, which is responsible for its future development.

The Department of the Environment (NI) and the borough council have formed a partnership to re-develop land adjacent to Carrickfergus harbour for housing, retail, commercial and other uses and are currently negotiating with a potential developer for the site.

George Finbar Ross

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations have led to the interval between the issue of prosecution directions by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in respect of George Finbar Ross and the decision regarding his extradition; and if he will make a statement. [38046]

Sir John Wheeler: Directions to prosecute George Finbar Ross were issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland on 3 May 1995.

Since that time, the question of seeking the extradition of Mr. Ross has been under active consideration. Crown Counsel has been requested to advise on a number of relevant matters. That advice is awaited.

It is the practice of the relevant authorities not to give details of the actions being taken to secure the apprehension of wanted persons or the progress thereof. To do so could undermine the effectiveness of those actions.

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what circumstances planning applications for new shopping developments will be referred to local public inquiries. [38351]

Mr. Moss: Where a planning application for a new shopping development is classified as of major importance, as defined in article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland may call a public inquiry to consider valid planning representations about, and objections to, the proposal. The principal matters which the Department takes into account in forming a judgement as to whether to call an inquiry are:

(i) the provisions of the development plan and relevant planning policies;

(ii) decisions on previous planning applications relevant to the site in question;

(iii) the nature and validity of the representations and objections; and

(iv) the views of the district council as to whether an inquiry would be appropriate.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaty Ratification

5. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to reform the procedures for the ratification of treaties. [36856]

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to change our procedures.

Turkey

21. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European partners regarding Turkey's relationship with the European Union. [36875]

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has regular and frequent discussions with our European partners on this subject, most recently at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 2 October.

22. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's Government's relations with Turkey. [36876]

Mr. David Davis: Turkey is an important friend and NATO ally. During his visit to Ankara on 6 September, my right hon. and learned Friend underlined the importance we attach to reinforcing bilateral links and to developing further Turkey's relationship with western and European institutions. He also referred to the importance of Turkey respecting international norms on human rights. A copy of a speech he gave in Ankara has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Former Yugoslavia

23. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his American and European counterparts to discuss developments in the former Yugoslavia. [36877]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

25. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the prosecution of persons charged with war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. [36879]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The tribunal has issued eight indictments against 46 individuals so far. All these have been Serbs but non-Serbs are currently being investigated. Judge Goldstone has indicated that indictments will be issued within two months. The first trial, against Dusko Tadic, a guard in the Omarska POW camp, has already heard preliminary motions and is currently receiving witnesses.

29. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to prevent further human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. [36885]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: During recent visits to the former Yugoslavia, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I made clear to all parties our condemnation of human rights abuses and atrocities.

We fully support the work of the war crimes tribunal and believe those who have committed atrocities should answer in court for their actions.

Subsidiarity

24. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity as set out in the Maastricht treaty. [36878]

Mr. David Davis: Subsidiarity has taken root in the EU. There has already been a sharp drop in the number of new legislative initiatives. At the 1996 IGC, the UK will bring forward specific proposals with the support of other member states further to entrench subsidiarity in the treaty.

European Policy

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed with other European Foreign Ministers European policy on foreign and security affairs; and if he will make a statement. [36880]

Mr. David Davis: I regularly discuss policy on foreign and security affairs with my EU counterparts, most recently at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 October and the informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers at Santander on 9 to 10 September 1995.

UNESCO

27. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom rejoining UNESCO. [36881]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: We are keeping this issue under review.

UN Peacekeeping Initiatives

28. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Government's policy towards UN peacekeeping initiatives. [36883]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: We have played a leading role in supporting the UN Secretary-General's efforts to enhance UN peacekeeping capacity. In particular, we have helped strengthen the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and have supported the Secretary-General's attempts to improve UN rapid reaction capability. We are also helping to enhance the capability of African states to undertake effective peacekeeping.

French Nuclear Testing

30. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his French counterpart since July in regard to French nuclear testing in the Pacific. [36886]

Mr. David Davis: I have discussed this question with my French counterpart on a number of occasions.

Middle East

31. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the middle east peace process. [36887]

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which was given earlier by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

European Elections

32. **Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which other European Union states British citizens can vote or stand in those countries' local elections. [36888]

Mr. David Davis: British citizens will be able to vote and stand in the local elections of any country of the European Union, under the same conditions as nationals of that country, once those countries have passed the necessary domestic legislation. Such legislation has already been passed in Denmark, Sweden, Ireland and Austria, and is under way in the remaining countries of the European Union. Limited exceptions may be made in areas with a high concentration of non-nationals, or when an elected office involves influence at national level.

European Political Union

33. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Union to discuss greater political union. [36889]

Mr. David Davis: The Secretary of State regularly meets his counterparts in the European Union at the Foreign Affairs Council. The next meeting will be held in Luxembourg on 30 to 31 October.

Palestine National Authority

34. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he will give towards ensuring that elections to the Palestine National Authority and the campaigning which precedes them are free and fair and suffer no interference from Israeli security forces. [36890]

Mr. Hanley: We are providing several staff for the EU electoral unit which will organise the international observation of the Palestinian elections. We will also send a full party of observers.

Intergovernmental Conference

35. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his preparations for the European intergovernmental conference. [36891]

Mr. David Davis: We are continuing to develop Britain's approach to the intergovernmental conference. The study group preparing for the intergovernmental conference is continuing its work and will report to the Madrid European Council in December.

Cuba

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's trade relations with Cuba. [38018]

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom enjoys normal trading relations with Cuba, and the Government's policy is to support the efforts of UK firms to exploit the growing civil market opportunities which will arise as Cuba progresses with the reform of its economy along market-oriented lines. Her Majesty's Government will continue to urge on the Cuban Government the importance of an early settlement of outstanding debts to UK firms.

The Government signed a bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement with Cuba on 30 January 1995. It entered into force on 11 May 1995. Such agreements are designed to encourage investor confidence and investment flows by setting high standards of investment protection binding in international law. They are important to British companies thinking of investing overseas, because they contain strong commitments from other Governments about the way British investment will be treated. The agreement with Cuba is one of almost 80 concluded by the United Kingdom to date.

Cuba is on the United Kingdom list of destinations for which export licences for certain goods are subject to special licensing procedures. There are no Untied Kingdom of EC restrictions on imports from Cuba, apart from those applied to imports from all sources, such as on certain firearms and fissile materials; specifically, there are no quantitive restrictions for trade policy purposes.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Science and Technology paid a second visit to Cuba in September to further strengthen bilateral relations, including the development of trade and investment. He opened the new embassy building in Havana and signed an operating agreement on behalf of the Commonwealth Development Corporation with the Cuban Government, paving the way for further British investment in support of economic reform.

Human Rights (Kenya)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions Her Majesty's Government have taken so far to put pressure on the Kenyan Government to stop human rights violations. [38016]

Mr. Hanley: We have drawn our concerns about aspects of the human rights situation to the attention of the Kenyan authorities.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all Ministers who

have visited Cyprus in the last three years to discuss the issue of Cyprus. [38486]

Mr. David Davis: None, although British Ministers maintain regular contact with leading figures in both Cypriot communities. The then Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) met President Clerides and Mr. Denktash while visiting the island for Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in October 1993.

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards the accession of Cyprus to the European Union; and if he will make a statement. [36862]

Mr. Davis: The Cannes European Council reaffirmed that accession negotiations will start six months after the conclusion of the IGC, and taking account of its outcome.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information the European Commission has requested from Her Majesty's Government for its special meeting on 23 October on nuclear testing. [39255]

Mr. David Davis: None.

Bosnia

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position in Bosnia. [36874]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Although skirmishing has continued in north-west Bosnia,. the situation is generally much quieter following the ceasefire which came into effect on 12 October. We remain concerned about the continuing tense situation in eastern Slavonia.

We call on all sides to abide by the terms of the ceasefire agreements and to co-operate fully with the UN.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent review he has made of the scale and resourcing of United Nation's peacekeeping operations. [36871]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The United Nations Secretary-General reports regularly to the Security Council and the fifth committee on peacekeeping operations. We keep their scale and resourcing under constant review in the light of these reports.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Magistrates (Secret Societies)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 17 July, *Official Report*, column *904*, how many magistrates in the Duchy of Lancaster included freemasonry when asked by advisory committees to list their outside interests. [38411]

Mr. Freeman: Advisory committees do not keep these statistics. Candidates are asked to give their outside interests, which are discussed during interviews. Advisory committees ask for this information to learn about a candidate's involvement in the local community. Some candidates volunteer the fact that they are freemasons.

Being a freemason is neither a qualification nor a disqualification for appointment as a magistrate.

On appointment, all magistrates take a judicial oath to administer justice without fear or favour, affection or ill will.

DEFENCE

University Air Squadrons

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the existing university air squadrons in the United Kingdom and those which he plans to relocate or close during the next three years. [39349]

Mr. Soames: The existing university air squadrons are as follows:

Aberdeen, Dundee and St. Andrews
Birmingham
Bristol
Cambridge
East Lowlands
East Midlands
Glasgow and Strathclyde
Liverpool
London
Manchester and Salford
Northumbrian
Oxford
Queens
Southampton
Wales
Yorkshire

Current proposals include the closure of Queen's university air squadron at the end of the 1995–96 academic year, and the relocation of East Lowlands university air squadron to RAF Leuchars by 1 April 1996.

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the need for alternative training facilities for members of the university air squadron of Queen's university, Belfast; and if he will make a statement. [39352]

Mr. Soames: Should the decision be taken to close Queen's university air squadron, alternative training facilities would in future be made available at other squadrons on the mainland for RAF sponsored students in Northern Ireland. Additional travelling expenses would be met by the Department.

RAF Units (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the units and formations of the

Royal Air Force currently in Northern Ireland with their locations; and what plans he has for changes to that list over the next three years. [39350]

Mr. Soames: The following units of the Royal Air Force are currently based in Northern Ireland.

Units	*Location*
3 Squadron RAF Regiment	RAF Aldergrove
230 Squadron Puma	RAF Aldergrove
27 Squadron Wessex	RAF Aldergrove
Queen's University Air Squadron	Belfast City Airport
No. 13 Air Experience Flight	Belfast City Airport

The Department has proposed the closure of Queen's university air squadron at the end of the 1995–96 academic year. This has been the subject of consultation with trade unions and other interested parties, and all representations will now be fully and carefully considered before any final decision is taken. Should Queen's UAS close, No. 13 Air Experience Flight, which shares accommodation with the UAS, would also close. It is, however, proposed to reactivate No. 664 Volunteer Gliding school to continue to provide flying experience for air cadets in Northern Ireland.

Derek Campion Laffey

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the reason for the discharge of 14190562 S/Sgt Derek Campion Laffey, Royal Corps of Transport; [38514]

(2) what estimate he has for the number of persons advised of discharge procedures by 14190562 S/Sgt Derek Campion Laffey, Royal Corps of Transport; [38515]

(3) what information was available to 14190562 S/Sgt Derek Campion Laffey, Royal Corps of Transport *(a)* during service and *(b)* at date of discharge; and if he will place it in the Library. [38516]

Mr. Soames: Mr. Laffey was discharged from the Army in June 1968. The information requested is not, therefore, readily available. Mr. Laffey's service documents have been requested from the records office at Hayes and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available from those documents. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the number of veterans of British nuclear tests who were alive at the start of the study conducted into the effects of radiation on them by the National Radiological Protection Board; what is his estimate of the number still alive; and if he will make a statement. [39214]

Mr. Soames: Out of over 20,000 veterans' studies by the National Radiological Protection Board, more than 3,000 would have died—over 900 of them from cancer—if the veterans had suffered the same death and cancer rates as members of the public in the same age groups. In fact, fewer than 2,800 veterans died—fewer than 800 from cancer—these figures being no higher than for the matched control group in the NRPB study. It follows that there has been no overall excess of death or cancer among test participants.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has made into the value of having an overarching sub-Department dealing with veterans' affairs; when he last met representatives of the Government of the United States of America to discuss this matter; when he next plans to meet them to discuss this matter; and if he will make a statement. [39210]

Mr. Soames: My Department has not carried out any studies into the value of having a sub-Department for veterans' affairs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not had any meetings with representatives of the Government of the United States of America to discuss this matter, nor has he any plans to do so.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on the study by the National Radiological Protection Board into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests; what instructions, advice and guidance he has given to the NRPB on the continuation of its study since the publication of its latest report; and if he will make a statement. [39215]

Mr. Soames: The studies conducted by the National Radiological Protection Board concluded that there has been no overall excess of death or cancer among British nuclear test participants. No instructions, advice or guidance have been given to the NRPB since the publication of the report in December, 1993, although we have made it clear that we see no need for a further study into the health of test veterans.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what categories of written or recorded oral evidence, computerised data and other information gathered by the National Radiological Protection Board before, during and after its study into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests is available for public inspection; what categories are not available for public inspection; what written or recorded oral evidence, computerised data and other information arising from this study has been destroyed or lost; and if he will make a statement. [39211]

Mr. Soames: Information available to the public is contained in the National Radiological Protection Board's report "Mortality and Cancer Incidence 1952–90 in United Kingdom Participants in the UK Atmospheric Nuclear Weapon Tests and Experimental Programmes", published in December 1993. Personal details including recorded radiation dosage are available only to the individuals to whom they refer or their next of kin. We are not aware of any evidence having been destroyed or lost.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy that the National Radiological Protection Board should continue its study into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests; what proposals he has to assist them; and if he will make a statement. [39213]

Mr. Soames: We have no plans to sponsor any further studies.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department has had with representatives of foreign Governments who pay and have paid compensation to veterans of nuclear tests; what conclusion he has drawn as to the reasons they have decided to take such action; and if he will make a statement. [39209]

Mr. Soames: Among British nuclear test veterans there has been no overall excess of death or malignant disease, so the question of compensation does not arise. I am not aware of detailed discussions with foreign Governments on the matter, but I understand that in the USA, some ex-service veterans involved in former atmospheric nuclear test programmes may receive a pension and entitlement to free medical care.

Royal Flight

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in 1994–95 the royal flight was used by members of the royal family; and how many of these flights were by fixed-wing aircraft. [38862]

Mr. Soames: During the financial year 1994–95, the Queen's flight was used by the royal family on 870 occasions; 479 of these flights were in fixed-wing aircraft.

Mr. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have taken place since 1992 in the organisation of the royal flight and in the methods of allocating and seconding costs. [38861]

Mr. Soames: On 1 April 1995, following a Cabinet Office efficiency scrutiny of royal and VIP communications flying, the Queen's flight amalgamated and collocated with No. 32 Squadron at RAF Northolt to form No. 32 (The Royal) Squadron. Prior to financial year 1994–95, costs represented the total operating costs of TQF, but included some flying by entitled non-royal users which could not be separately identified because of disproportionate cost. From financial year 1995–96 onwards, costs are calculated on the proportionate usage by entitled members of the royal family of No. 32 (The Royal) Squadron. The general costing philosophy remains as before. From 1995–96, private flying by the royal family becomes a charge to the Privy purse and no longer falls to class I votes.

Exercise Brilliant Foil

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who was the sponsor for Exercise Brilliant Foil, held between 18 and 22 September; and if he will make a statement. [39031]

Mr. Soames: Exercise Brilliant Foil was sponsored by Commander Air Forces North West Europe. It was a large-scale, multinational exercise, involving non-UK based foreign aircraft, designed to maintain the operational capabilities of the United Kingdom's air defence forces. It also provided valuable training for NATO offensive forces.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his Department's letter of 4 September, what factors led to his Department making available in the Vote Office copies of CM 2920, "The Atomic Weapons Establishment-Contractual Indemnities", on 14 August. [39259]

Mr. Arbuthnot: On 6 July, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence laid a departmental minute before the House seeking its approval for certain indemnification arrangements in respect of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. In such a case, if no objections are raised during the ensuing 14 days, it is normal procedure for parliamentary approval to be assumed. Accordingly, CM 2920, which describes the arrangements, was published by HMSO on 14 August.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Thurrock Borough Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *782*, if he will publish the replies he has received from the solicitors acting on behalf of the *(a)* hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and *(b)* the chief executive of Thurrock borough council in respect of the video sent to him; and if he will make a statement. [38715]

The Attorney-General: No. Neither of the letters referred to in my answer to the hon. Member of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *782*, required a response. The solicitors acting on behalf of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) did, however, request some further information.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussion he has had and with whom concerning Mr. Asil Nadir; and if he will make a statement. [38488]

The Attorney-General: I frequently discuss with the director of the Serious Fraud Office matters of departmental interest including the progress of current investigations and prosecutions. He keeps me informed of significant developments in cases including the Polly Peck case. It is my practice not to divulge the substance of discussions about current cases.

Prosecutions (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were sent forward for prosecution by the Northern Ireland Director of Public Prosecutions over the last 12 quarters, specifying the numbers of people so charged during those quarters; and if he will make a statement about the implications of the figures. [38482]

The Attorney-General: Statistics are not kept by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in the form as sought in the question. The director keeps statistics in relation to the number of files submitted to him for his decision. Statistics are also kept as to the number of persons prosecuted. These are as follows:

Quarter	*Files received*	*Prosecutions directed (persons)*
1992 July–September	2,854	2,192
1992 October–December	2,748	2,126
1993 January–March	2,720	2,111
1993 April–June	2,570	1,975
1993 July–September	2,571	1,942
1993 October–December	2,708	2,072
1994 January–March	2,898	2,229
1994 April–June	2,934	2,294
1994 July–September	3,056	2,442
1994 October–December	3,087	2,474
1995 January–March	3,154	2,544
1995 April–June	2,423	1,880
Total	33,723	26,281

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Attorney-General what jurisdiction and role the Serious Fraud Office has in Scotland. [39220]

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office was established by section 1(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1987. The power of the director of the Serious Fraud Office to investigate offences involving serious or complex fraud is confined to those justiciable in England, Wales or Northern Ireland. By virtue of section 17(2) of the 1987 Act the investigative powers of the director under section 2 of that Act—the powers to require the production of documents and the answering of questions—are exercisable in Scotland in connection with offences committed in England, Wales or Northern Ireland. Provision is made in section 2(19) for the director to apply to a sheriff in Scotland for a warrant to be granted under section 2(4) and (5) to search premises in Scotland and to take possession of documents found therein.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if the companies which successfully tendered for the national lottery contracts for *(a)* telecommunications links with lottery computer terminals, *(b)* software, *(c)* ticketing and consultancy services and *(d)* advice on consumer trends and retail development with the lowest cost bids in each case; [28723]

(2) how many companies tendered for the contract to provide Camelot with *(a)* telecommunications links with the national lottery computer terminals, *(b)* software for the national lottery, *(c)* ticketing and consultancy services for the national lottery and *(d)* advice on consumer trends and retail development. [38722]

Mr. Sproat: This is an operational matter for Camelot Group plc. I have therefore asked the director general of the national lottery, who is responsible for regulating the operation of the lottery, to write to the hon. Member, placing copies of his response in the Libraries of the House.

Downe House, Kent

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assistance her Department is giving in saving for the nation Charles Darwin's home, Downe house, at Downe, Kent; and if she will make a statement. [39072]

Mr. Sproat: My Department is providing grant-in-aid of £28.7 million in 1995–96 to the natural history museum, which took over the administration of Downe house in 1993. Decisions on how to spend this money are a matter for the trustees of the museum.

Media Concentration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will make a statement on the European Commission's proposed directive on media concentration; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the concept of cross-European media regulations. [39234]

Mr. Sproat: The European Commission has not yet put forward proposals for a directive in this area, but has instead undertaken a series of consultations among member states and other interested parties. The Government's position is set out in our response to EC questionnaire No. III on "Pluralism and Media Concentration in the Internet Market", which is available in the Library of the House. Our view is that the media industry cannot be treated on the same basis as other sectors of the economy. Ownership restrictions are an essential safeguard for plurality and diversity and, as such, are distinct from the separate question of controls on anti-competitive behaviour. We believe that member states are best placed to assess where the balance lies in securing both economic and cultural objectives, and do not therefore support the case for introducing harmonising legislation at the European level.

HEALTH

Correspondence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to reply to the letter of 8 September sent to his Department from the Nottinghamshire local medical committee; and if he will make a statement. [38322]

Mr. Sackville: A reply was sent today.

Suicides

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of recorded suicides in each year since 1979. [38366]

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table.

Recorded deaths from suicide in England and Wales in years 1979–1994, ICD9[1] Code E950-E959.

Year	Persons
1979	4,195
1980	4,321
1981	4,419
1982	4,279
1983	4,279
1984	4,315
1985	4,419
1986	4,126
1987	3,986
1988	4,220
1989	3,717
1990	3,950
1991	3,893
1992	3,952
1993[2]	3,485
1994[2]	3,256

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.
[2] Provisional.

Asthma

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated on the under-diagnosis of asthma with particular reference to schools since 1989; and if he will make a statement on the diagnosis of asthma. [38314]

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not commissioned or evaluated any studies specifically on under-diagnosis of asthma. Diagnosis is a matter of professional judgment. However, we are concerned about the burden which results from asthma and its increasing incidence, particularly in children. We shall continue to work with the medical profession, the Department of the Environment, the National Asthma Campaign and other interested parties to improve our knowledge of the causes of asthma and to make life as normal as possible for those who suffer.

Mr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to undertake a comprehensive review of the causes and effects of asthma; and if he will make it his policy to create a unified national strategy to combat asthma, involving his Department and other interested bodies. [38315]

Mr. Sackville: The Government already support an extensive programme of asthma research, particularly through the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

In 1992, the Department of Health asked the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants to advise on the possible links between outdoor air pollution and asthma. Its report "Asthma and Outdoor Air Pollution" was published on 19 October 1995, and copies have been placed in the Library. In addition, the Departments of Health and of the Environment, in collaboration with the Institute for Environment and Health and the National Asthma Campaign, are organising an important conference on the possible causes and successful management of asthma, to be held on 23 November 1995.

A wide-ranging review of the available information on the causes and effects of asthma, entitled "Asthma—An Epidemiological Overview", was published by the Department of Health in March 1995, a copy of which is available in the Library. Under the chronic disease management programme, introduced by the Department of Health in July 1993, over 90 per cent. of general practitioners are providing organised programmes of care for people with asthma.

Hospital Discharge Procedures

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received concerning hospital discharge procedures; and if he will make a statement. [38036]

Mr. Bowis: We have received a number of representations concerning hospital discharge procedures. National health service and social services departments should work together to ensure that integrated and sensitive hospital discharge arrangements are in place.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients presenting themselves to accident and emergency departments within *(a)* the London area and *(b)* England in 1994 were seen by a doctor more than four hours after arriving; [38625]

(2) what information his Department collects regarding waiting times for patients to be seen by a doctor after arriving in accident and emergency departments; [38629]

(3) what percentage of patients presenting themselves to accident and emergency departments within *(a)* the London area and *(b)* England in 1994 were seen by a doctor within two hours after arriving. [38624]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. All hospitals should have a locally set standard on the time patients should wait before receiving treatment in an accident and emergency department once their initial need for treatment has been assessed and will collect information on this standard.

Ms Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients admitted to hospital via an accident and emergency department waited more than four hours between the decision being made by a doctor to admit them and being admitted to a ward within *(a)* the London area and *(b)* England in 1994; [38627]

(2) what percentage of patients admitted to hospital via an accident and emergency department waited less than two hours between the decision being made by a doctor to admit them and being admitted to a ward within *(a)* the London area and *(b)* England in 1994. [38626]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally at present. Since April 1995, there has been a patients charter standard that a patient admitted to hospital via an accident and emergency department can expect to be given a bed as soon as possible, and certainly within four hours. From April 1996, this standard will be improved to two hours. Information relating to this standard will become available in due course.

Ms Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had regarding waiting times for patients to be seen by a doctor after arriving in accident and emergency departments; and if he will make a statement. [38628]

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend has frequent discussions with interested parties on many aspects of patient care including the organisation of accident and emergency departments.

Internet

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for connecting the NHS to the Internet. [38744]

Mr. Sackville: Framework contracts have been awarded to British Telecom and Mercury for wide area network services to establish a national health service-wide electronic communications infrastructure. This will provide an information super-highway dedicated to the NHS which will, in turn, be able to be connected to the global Internet through secure, centrally managed, gateways. These gateways will allow controlled access from the NHS-wide network but will prevent unauthorised intrusion from the Internet. Demonstration testing of the secure gateway between the NHS-wide networking services and the global Internet is under-way.

Medicines

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for reducing the cost to the NHS of medicines which are an alternative to those previously containing chlorofluorocarbons as a propellant. [38870]

Mr. Malone: We have no such plans.

Birth Defects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by regional health authority the percentage of parents who have declined to abort a pregnancy when told their child may have a birth defect for each of the last four years. [39017]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which NHS trusts have approached his Department with proposals for the involvement of private sector bodies in the provision of treatment facilities within NHS hospitals. [39062]

Mr. Sackville: National health service hospitals and facilities have always been built by private sector bodies. I have previously listed projects approved under the private finance initiative for the provision of facilities for the NHS, including the nature of the project. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 18 October *Official Report*, column *280*.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has issued to health authorities and NHS trusts relating to the involvement of private sector bodies in the provision of facilities for treatment within the NHS. [39061]

Mr. Sackville: The national health service executive issued guidance about the private finance initiative under HSG(95)15 in March 1995, copies of which are available in the Library. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) on 16 October *Official Report*, columns *141-42* and to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) on 4 February 1994 *Official Report*, columns *977-78*.

Alcohol

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population in each age cohort drank alcohol at least once each week, for each of the last five years, by gender. [38775]

Mr. Bowis: The available information is shown in the table.

Percentage of people drinking alcohol at least once a week by sex and age

Percentage

	Age groups			
	16 to 24	*25 to 44*	*45 to 64*	*65 and over*
Males				
1990	76	80	77	67
1992	76	78	76	67
Females				
1990	56	59	55	46
1992	58	58	57	43

Notes:
1. Percentages are rounded to nearest whole figure.
2. The General Household Survey collects data in alternate years only. The latest year for which data is available is 1992.

Sources:
General Household Surveys 1990 and 1992 (Office of Populations, Censuses and Surveys—analysis by Department of Health).

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the cost to the NHS of alcohol-related patient episodes, for each of the last five years. [38777]

Mr. Malone: There is no generally accepted method of producing such estimates.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population in each age cohort drank more than the recommended amount of alcohol per week, for each of the last five years, by gender. [38776]

Mr. Bowis: The available information is given in the table.

Percentage of the population aged 16 and above drinking above recommended sensible level: England 1990 to 1992:

Percentage

	Age Groups				
	16 to 24	*25 to 44*	*45 to 64*	*65 and over*	*Total*
Males					
1990	32	33	26	14	27
1992	33	30	24	15	26

Percentage of the population aged 16 and above drinking above recommended sensible level: England 1990 to 1992:

Percentage

	Age Groups				
	16 to 24	*25 to 44*	*45 to 64*	*65 and over*	*Total*
Females					
1990	17	13	10	5	11
1992	17	14	12	5	12

Notes:
1. Percentages are rounded to nearest whole figure.
2. The General Household Survey collects data in alternate years only. The latest year for which data are available is 1992.
3. The currently recommended sensible levels for alcohol consumption, 21 unites per week for men and 14 units per week for women[1] were adopted by the Government when it published in 1991 the Lord President's Report on Action Against Alcohol Misuse. They refer to adults only. The Government's advice on sensible drinking is currently being reviewed by an inter-departmental group of officials in light of the latest scientific and medical evidence.

[1]A unit of alcohol is 8 grams; the amount contained in half a pint of ordinary beer or larger, or in a small glass of wine, or in a standard measure of sprits.

Source:
OPCS General Household Survey (Analysis by Department of Health).

Oral Contraceptives

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the procedures adopted by his Department in respect of the brands of oral contraceptives about which a public warning was given on 19 October, with special reference of when the decision to give the warning about contraceptives was taken; when general practitioners and doctors working in family planning clinics were notified; and how the notification was given. [39353]

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement in the House on 23 October.

Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the cost to the NHS of tobacco-related patient episodes, for each of the last five years. [38774]

Mr. Sackville: The relationship between tobacco use and individual patient episodes is not straightforward. The best available assessment, from the Health Education Authority's 1993 report "The Smoking Epidemic—A Prescription for Change", estimated that the cost to the NHS of treating smoking-related diseases is £610 million.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population in each age cohort by gender, were regular smokers, for each of the last five years. [38773]

Mr. Sackville: Estimates of smoking prevalence are not carried out on a year-by-year basis. The available information is shown in the table.

Percentage of the population who were regular smokers England, 1990 to 1992

Percentage

	Age groups						
	11–15	*16–19*	*20–24*	*25–34*	*35–49*	*50–59*	*60 and above*
Males							
1990	9	28	39	37	34	27	24
1992	9	29	39	35	31	27	20
1993	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1994	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Females							
1990	11	33	39	34	32	27	19
1992	10	24	37	33	28	28	19
1993	11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1994	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Notes:
1. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole figure.
2. The General Household Survey collects data on smoking prevalence in alternate years only. The latest year for which data are available is 1992.

n/a—not available.

Source:
OPCS General Household Survey and, smoking among secondary schoolchildren. Analysis by Department of Health.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the quinquennial review of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority will include a reconsideration of the current exclusion from its membership of individuals who have ethical objections to the use of living human embryos for experimental purposes; and if he will make a statement; [39280]

(2) what steps he intends to take to implement the policy of Her Majesty's Government that the membership of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority should be balanced; and if he will make a statement. [39281]

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1992 sets down basic requirements for the balance between lay and scientific membership of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. Care is

taken in making appointments to ensure that the authority has access among the membership, to the relevant expertise, skills and personal qualities necessary to carry out its functions. No individual is excluded from membership of the authority because of his or her personal convictions. However, it is important before appointing members to ascertain whether they have any specific views which may make it difficult for them to participate in the full range of the authority's activities. These include granting licences for embryo research.

Mrs. Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he intends to make during the course of the quinquennial review of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of the conflict between the need responsibly to control experiments on human embryos in accordance with strict criteria and the need to generate income through fees charged upon the granting of licences authorising such experimentation. [39282]

Mr. Sackville: It was a decision of Parliament during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1992 that part of the running costs of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority should be met from fees. I am not aware of any evidence of a conflict of interests resulting from these arrangements. I will consider the matter again should the findings of the quinquennial review call for such action.

Mrs. Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has concerning the number of human embryos which have been killed in each year since the establishment of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and in accordance with licences issued by that authority; what fees were raised by such licences in each of those years; and what is the resultant cash revenue per human embryo death so far realised by the authority; [39283]

(2) if he will list by period of membership those individuals who have served on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority; if he will indicate in the case of each member the total number of *(a)* licences and *(b)* human embryo deaths which were authorised by the authority during that individual's terms of service; if he will indicate in each case the revenue raised by such licences in that period; and if he will calculate the cash revenue per human embryo death realised during the period of the term of office of each of those individuals. [39284]

Mr. Sackville: Details of the membership of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority are set out in the authority's annual reports, the fourth of which was published on 11 October 1995. Copies of all annual reports are available in the Library.

Information about the number of embryos is not available in the form requested. Information about the number of embryos donated for research, the number of research licences issued and income generated by them is shown in the table. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act requires the written consent of the man and woman who donated the gametes before any research is undertaken.

	Research licences	*Embryo donated for research*	*Income from research licences £*
August 1991–December 1991	1	2,497	100
1992	32	7,038	3,200
1993	30	9,518	3,000
1994	34	8,452	3,400

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Union Regional Funds

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those parliamentary constituencies covered *(a)* wholly or *(b)* partly by objective 5b European Union regional funds in England. [37689]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The information is as follows:

English Parliamentary Constituencies covered by Objective 5(B)

Partly covered

Berwick upon Tweed
Bishop Auckland
Bridlington and Driffield
Bridgewater
Central Suffolk
Devon North
Devon West and Torridge
East Lindsay
East Yorkshire
Gainsborough and Horncastle
Harrogate
Hereford
Hexham
High Peak
Holland and Boston
Lancaster
Leominster
Ludlow
Middlesborough
Morecambe and Lunesdale
Northallerton
Norfolk North West
North East Cambridgeshire
Pendle
Penrith and the Borders
Ribble Valley
Ripon
Scarborough and Filey
Shrewsbury and Atcham
Shropshire North
Skipton and Ripon
South East Cambridgeshire
South West Norfolk
Staffordshire Moorlands

Stamford and Spalding
Suffolk Coastal
Thirsk
Tiverton
Torbay
Waveney
West Derbyshire
Whitby
Worcestershire South
Workington
Wholly covered
Cornwall North
Cornwall South East
Falmouth and Cambourne
Malton
Pickering and Helmsley
Richmondshire
Settle
St. Ives
Truro and St. Austell

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those district and county councils that are covered *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly by objective 5b of European Union regional funds in England. [37687]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The information is as follows:

English district and county councils covered by Objective 5(B)
Partly covered
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cumbria County Council
Derbyshire County Council
Durham County Council
Humberside County Council
Lancashire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Norfolk County Council
Northumberland County Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Staffordshire County Council
Suffolk County Council
Allerdale District Council
Alnwick District Council
Berwick District Council
Breckland District Council
Bridgnorth District Council
Carlisle District Council
Castle Morpeth District Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
East Lindsay District Council
East Yorkshire District Council
Eden District Council
Fenland District Council
Hambleton District Council
Harrogate District Council
Kings' Lynn and West Norfolk District Council
Lancaster District Council
Leominster District Council
Malvern Hills District Council
Mid Devon District Council
Mid Suffolk District Council
North Devon District Council
North Norfolk District Council
North Shropshire District Council
Oswestry District Council
Pendle District Council
Ribble Valley District Council
Ryedale District Council
Scarborough District Council
Shrewsbury and Atcham District Council
South Hams District Council
South Hereford District Council
South Holland District Council
South Lakeland District Council
South Shropshire District Council
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Suffolk District Council
Teesdale District Council
Torbay District Council
Torridge District Council
Tynedale District Council
Waveney District Council
West Devon District Council
West Lindsay District Council
West Somerset District Council
Wyre District Council
Boston Borough Council
High Peak Borough Council
East Staffordshire Borough Council
Wholly covered
Caradon District Council
Carrick District Council
Craven District Council
Isles of Scilly District Council
Kerrier District Council
North Cornwall District Council
Restormel District Council
Richmondshire District Council

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by region the European Union grants *(a)* available to and *(b)* taken up by each region of the United Kingdom; how much each is or was worth; and if he will make a statement. [37824]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* Not all European Union grants are allocated by region. The amounts allocated to the United Kingdom under the three regional objectives of the structural funds, 1, 2 and 5b, are shown in the table. Almost 100 per cent. of the 1989 to 1993 allocations were committed to projects in the regions concerned.

Structural funds allocations

Million ecu, 1994 prices

	1989–93	*1994–96*	*1994–99*
Objective 1			
Merseyside	—	—	816
Highlands and Island	—	—	311
Northern Ireland	972	—	1,233
Total Objective 1	972	—	2,360
Objective 2			
North East	358	308	—
West Cumbria	23	25	—
Eastern England	485	392	—
West Midlands	438	371	—
North West	631	329	—
Greater London	—	74	—
South East (i.e. Thanet)	10	14	—
South West (i.e. Plymouth)	—	29	—
Total England	1,945	1,542	—
South Wales	244	188	—
North East Wales	72	—	—
Total Wales	316	188	—
Eastern Scotland	142	121	—
Western Scotland	486	286	—
Total Scotland	628	407	—
Total Objective 2	2,889	2,137	—
Objective 5b			
South West England	92	—	219
Shrops/Hereford and Worcs	—	—	40
Staffs/Derbyshire	—	1	12
Northern Uplands	—	—	108
Lincolnshire	—	—	53
East Anglia	—	—	60
Total England	92	—	492
Rural Wales	148	—	184
Highlands and Islands	172	—	—
Borders of Scotland	—	—	30
Dumfries and Galloway	17	—	47
Central Scotland/Tayside	—	—	25
Grampian	—	—	39
Total Scotland	188	—	141
Total Objective 5b	429	—	817
Objectives 1, 2 and 5b			
England	2,037	1,542	1,308
Wales	464	188	184
Scotland	816	407	452
Northern Ireland	972	—	1,233
Total United Kingdom	4,290	2,137	3,177

All figures exclude Community initiatives, which are not generally allocated by region.

ISDN

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the role of ISDN as a transmission technology; and what proposals he has to make it more widely available. [39236]

Mr. Ian Taylor: ISDN is one of a number of complimentary technologies that together will provide us with the digital networks necessary to support advanced telecommunications services and applications.

ISDN has been available in the UK for several years, but recent EC decisions on ISDN terminal standards and the growth of interest by British business in high-speed connection to the Internet are likely to increase demand for ISDN substantially. The extent to which ISDN services are available is obviously a commercial matter for the telecommunications operators.

With this in mind, the Government consulted in the summer on their proposals to hold a competition to award licences to run radio fixed-access systems. Such a system operating nationally at 10 GHz is intended to provide the minimum bit rate of 144 kbps necessary for an ISDN service as an alternative to the service already offered by BT and some cable operators.

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for what reasons an ISDN connection in the United Kingdom costs more than in France and Germany; and what measures he is taking to address this. [39235]

Mr. Taylor: The pricing of ISDN services is a matter for the commercial judgment of service providers. Both my Department and the Office of Telecommunications are aware of the level of relative prices of ISDN services in the UK compared to France and Germany. As both the latter markets are yet far from liberalised, there is little available information about whether the prices for ISDN charged there can be justified in relation to underlying costs. Oftel is considering the inclusion of ISDN services in BT's price cap when it is next reviewed.

The introduction of effective competition will also contribute to bringing prices down and this lies behind the Government's policy of licensing alternative infrastructure such as radio fixed access systems. Operating at 10 GHz these could provide an alternative ISDN service to that offered by BT and some cable providers.

Manufactured Exports

Mr. Alexander: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current estimate of the number of United Kingdom companies and firms which are engaged in the regular exporting of manufactured goods. [38745]

Mr. Oppenheim: According to HM Customs and Excise, there were approximately 112,000 exporting firms in the United Kingdom in 1994. This figure includes shipping agents but excludes firms that are below the United Kingdom VAT registration threshold.

Copyright

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to implement the new term directive on copyright. [38857]

Mr. Ian Taylor: A large number of submission were received in response to the consultative draft of legislation to implement this directive which was circulated to interested parties earlier this year. Consideration has now been given to the many points raised in these submissions, as a result of which we have concluded that a substantial number of changes to the proposed legislation are desirable. The draft is being revised, and regulation will be laid before both Houses as soon as possible.

Export Licences

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what export licences have been granted to British

companies for defence-related equipment sales to Guatemala in each of the past five years. [37975]

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 October]:* I have recently placed in the Library of the House details of all export licences issued in respect of arms, and of military and security equipment, for the years 1993 and 1994. The information is broken down by category of goods, as defined in the appropriate Export of Goods (Control) Order; and by the number of licences issued in each category to every country of destination, including Guatemala. For the years 1990 to 1992 inclusive, the relevant information is as follows:

Year	*EGCO category*	*Number of licences*
1990	—	Nil
1991	—	Nil
1992	ML11	1
	ML3	3

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences for the export of arms and ammunition were *(a)* issued and *(b)* applied for and refused for Indonesia between 1 January 1994 and 1 August 1995; and what were the items for which licences were refused. [37653]

Mr. Nelson: I have recently placed in the Library of the House details of all export licences issued in respect of arms, and of military and security equipment, for the year of 1994. The information is broken down by category of goods, as defined in the appropriate Export of Goods (Control) Order, and by the number of licences issued in each category to every country of destination, including Indonesia. In 1994, two licences were refused for Indonesia in the categories: ML1, ML2, ML3, ML4, ML6, ML9, ML10, ML11, PL5018, PL5021, and PL5030. For these categories of goods, and in the period 1 January to 1 August 1995, the numbers of licences issued and refused for Indonesia were 23 and three respectively.

Mr. Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences for the export of arms and ammunition were *(a)* issued and *(b)* applied for and refused for each of the countries of central and south America for *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* between 1 January 1995 and 1 August 1995. [37654]

Mr. Nelson: I have recently placed in the Library of the House details of all export licences issued in respect of arms, and of military and security equipment, for the year of 1994. The information is broken down by category of goods, as defined in the appropriate Export of Goods (Control) Order, and by the number of licences issued in each category to all countries of destination, including all those in south and central America. In 1994, nine licences were refused for Argentina for the categories: ML1, ML2, ML3, ML4, ML6, ML9, ML10, ML11, PL5018, PL5021, and PL5030. No other licence applications were refused for these goods to the other countries of central and south America.

For these categories of goods, and in the period 1 January to 1 August 1995, the numbers of licences issued and refused to the relevant destinations were as follows:

	Issued	*Refused*
Argentina	1	4
Belize	0	—
Bolivia	2	—
Brazil	60	—
Chile	102	—
Columbia	16	—
Costa Rica	0	—
El Salvador	3	—
Ecuador	24	2
French Guyana	0	—
Mexico	4	—
Guatemala	1	—
Guyana	5	—
Honduras	0	—
Nicaragua	2	—
Panama	0	—
Paraguay	0	—
Peru	30	—
Surinam	0	—
Uraguay	4	—
Venezuela	2	—

Export Market Information Centre

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many British companies have used his Department's export market information centre since its establishment. [38452]

Mr. Oppenheim: Since its establishment in 1989, the export market information centre has received over 120,000 visits. In addition, around 37,000 telephone inquiries are being received each year by the centre.

Television Programmes

Mr. Grocott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the balance of trade in television programmes *(a)* in 1985, *(b)* in 1990 and *(c)* in the latest year for which figures are available. [37916]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information, which is available only for films and television together, is published by the Central Statistical Office in the United Kingdom balance of payments—the Pink Book. The publication is available in the Library of the House.

Post Office

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the KPMG report on the Post Office commissioned by his Department. [38583]

Mr. Oppenheim: This report is confidential between the Government, their advisers, and the Post Office board.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the funding commitments which have been given to Assessment Services Ltd. as part of the purchase agreement for the takeover of the National Engineering Laboratory. [38184]

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* The Department is committed on behalf of industry over a five-year period to supporting the national measurement system through a programme of research and technology transfer at the National Physical Laboratory, the

Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the National Engineering Laboratory. Flow measurement work at NEL is an integral part of this. NEL has won other contracts under DTI's innovation and technology support budget. The Department will also be placing further work under these programmes in the next five years. The total of this guaranteed work at NEL is £30.2 million spread over five years.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the negotiated price paid by ASL for the National Engineering Laboratory. [38183]

Mr. Taylor *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* The Department and Assessment Services Ltd. signed on 23 October the assets purchase agreement and the framework agreement and supporting documents for the purchase of the National Engineering Laboratory, subject to the resolution of certain property issues which is expected shortly. Completion is planned to take place on 31 October as originally proposed.

Steel and Aerospace Imports and Exports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the *(a)* tonnage and *(b)* cash value of (i) steel exports from the United Kingdom and (ii) aerospace exports in each of the last five years. [37991]

Mr. Oppenheim: The available information is given in the following table.

UK exports of steel and aerospace

	Steel		*Aerospace*	
	£ million	*Tonnes (000s)*	*£ million*	*Tonnes*
1990	2,545	6,759	2,012	n/a
1991	2,534	7,671	5,050	17,214
1992	2,496	7,954	4,452	16,969
1993	2,644	7,973	3,967	13,484
1994	3,002	8,377	3,725	14,412

Source:

Annual Statistics Publication 1994, Iron and Steel Statistical Bureau Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, CSO.

The aerospace data refer to group 792 of the standard international trade classification; aircraft and associated equipment; spacecraft, including satellites and spacecraft launch vehicles; and parts thereof. The aerospace figures exclude avionic products which are products of the electronics industry. The cost of compiling information for such products would exceed the cost limit.

The 1990 tonnage of aerospace exports from the United Kingdom is commercially confidential.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the *(a)* tonnage and *(b)* cash value of (i) steel imports and (ii) aerospace imports into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years. [37968]

Mr. Oppenheim: The available information is given in the following table.

UK imports of steel and aerospace

	Steel		*Aerospace*	
	£ million	*Tonnes (000s)*	*£ Million*	*Tonnes (000s)*
1990	2,220	5,158	2,489	n/a
1991	2,184	5,309	3,079	17,119
1992	2,070	5,173	2,998	16,052
1993	2,028	4,820	2,945	13,873
1994	2,328	5,701	3,445	15,916

Source:

Annual Statistics Publication 1994, Iron and Steel Statistical Bureau Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, CSO.

The aerospace data refer to group 792 of the standard international trade classification; aircraft and associated equipment; spacecraft, including satellites and spacecraft launch vehicles; and parts thereof. The aerospace figures exclude avionic products which are products of the electronics industry. The cost of compiling information for such products would exceed the cost limit.

The 1990 tonnage of aerospace imports into the United Kingdom is commercially confidential.

Regional Industrial Support

Mr. Macshane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by *(a)* amount, *(b)* company and *(c)* regional government funds, grants on tax relief schemes offered to foreign companies investing in the United Kingdom each year since 1990. [38712]

Mr. Oppenheim: The question is unclear. If the hon. Gentleman would clarify the information he is seeking, I will endeavour to answer. However, the hon. Gentleman may care to note that the main instrument of regional industrial support is the regional selective assistance scheme. Details of the grants given can be found in the "Annual Report of the Industrial Development Act 1982".

Prawns and Shrimps

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the annual imports of prawns or shrimps from *(a)* Iceland, *(b)* Norway and *(c)* the Faroe Islands for each year since 1980 by volume and value. [37957]

Mr. Oppenheim: Information prior to 1988 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The available information is given in the following table.

UK imports of Prawns and Shrimps

	Iceland		*Norway*		*Faroe Islands*	
	£ million	*Tonnes*	*£ million*	*Tonnes*	*£ million*	*Tonnes*
1988	25	4,751	19	3,750	4	835
1989	22	4,162	29	6,075	6	1,329
1990	21	4,735	24	5,734	6	1,390
1991	28	7,244	20	5,118	6	1,470
1992	36	8,220	27	6,707	6	1,551
1993	42	9,559	25	6,361	6	1,346
1994	59	13,036	20	4,527	2	533

Source:

Overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom.

Shrimps and prawns are classified to codes 030623, 030613, and 160520 of the harmonised Commodity coding system.

Buses

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many buses were imported into and exported from Britain in each year since 1979. [38855]

Mr. Page: The available information is set out in the following table. The figures are for new and used public service type passenger vehicles taken from the overseas trade statistics.

Trade in buses 1979 to 1994

	Exports	*Imports*
1979	1,716	564
1980	1,243	444
1981	1,433	701
1982	3,003	1,087
1983	6,469	1,642
1984	7,078	1,321
1985	8,320	1,210
1986	5,907	1,599
1987	5,976	1,132
1988	1,223	1,183
1989	1,208	1,178
1990	2,656	747
1991	2,315	633
1992	1,579	783
1993	1,343	920
1994	1,313	1,037

Source:
HM Customs and Excise.

Mr. Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many buses were manufactured in Britain in each year since 1979. [38856]

Mr. Page: The available information is set out in the following table. The figures include buses, coaches and minibuses.

United Kingdom production of buses 1979 to 1994

	Number
1979	25,531
1980	21,572
1981	12,444
1982	13,107
1983[1]	15,616
1984	16,499
1985	16,027
1986	12,340
1987	13,996
1988[1]	16,500
1989	14,858
1990	12,320
1991	9,837
1992	8,517
1993[1]	7,019
1994	9,566

Note:
[1] 53 week years.
Source:
Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Coal Industry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the Coal Authority's actual budget figures for *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96 to prevent or control water pollution from mine workings, including the cost of pumping operations transferred from British Coal; and if he will make a statement. [39026]

Mr. Page: The Coal Authority's annual report and accounts for 1994–95 record that the authority is spending in excess of £1 million a year pumping and discharging minewater into rivers. The Coal Authority's main targets for 1995–96 include agreeing with the National Rivers Authority and the river purification boards in Scotland a list of "priority sites" for remediation, together with initial costings for the most significant of these, by 31 December 1995. In these circumstances, it would be premature for the Coal Authority to establish a separate budget.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the land and property in the Don Valley constituency which currently remains in the ownership of British Coal Property. [39554]

Mr. Page: This is a matter for British Coal.

Telephone Codes, Reading

Sir Gerald Vaughan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the costs to local businesses and residential telephone users of changing the dialling codes for the Reading area twice within one year; if he will require BT through Oftel to consider compensation for those affected; and if he will make a statement. [39246]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Numbering issues are the responsibility of the Director General of Telecommunications. However I understand that no existing Reading numbers will need to change their codes until 1998. Any changes reflect demand for new telecoms services.

Realising our Potential Awards

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment his Department has made of the success of the realising our potential awards; [38910]

(2) what action he is taking to ensure the quality of projects receiving realising our potential awards. [38909]

Mr. Ian Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 19 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *314*.

Technology Foresight Programme

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what collaborative projects with industry the technology foresight programme has identified for funding. [38908]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The technology foresight programme has produced 16 reports. These contain some 400 recommendations, many of which might be addressed by collaborative projects between academia and industry. Some of these priorities can be taken forward in more than one collaborative project—for example, the foresight vehicle priority of the transport foresight panel is being reflected in 15 collaborative project themes. Some collaborative projects identified in the foresight

programme are already being taken forward through the Link mechanism—see the table. The foresight challenge, which was launched in September 1995, is expected to identify many more collaborative projects; the closing date for the first round of outline applications under the challenge is 20 November 1995.

How foresight is being taken forward through Link

New Link programmes

Programme	*Announced*	*Sponsors*	*Description*
Applied Biocatalysis	March 1995	BBSRC/DTI	The programme aims to facilitate the broader application of biocatalysis in UK industry by supporting research to improve both the understanding and the usability of biocatalytic processes.
Waste Minimisation through Recycling, Re-use and Recovery in Industry	May 1995	EPSRC/DTI	The programme aims to develop and implement cost effective technologies for recycling, re-use and recovery of materials within the manufacturing and process industries, thereby reducing waste and input and disposal costs.
Integrated Approaches to Healthy Ageing	August 1995	MRC	The programme aims to improve understanding of psychological, physiological and social factors affecting good or ill health in old age. It also aims to develop new ways of supporting healthy ageing and independent living, and to develop new approaches to the prevention, management and rehabilitation of disorders affecting the elderly.
Genetic and Environmental interactions in Health	August 1995	MRC	The programme aims to develop collaborations between academia and industry in genetics, molecular/genetic epidemiology, pharmacogenetics and complementary disciplines and technologies.
Earth Observation	August 1995	BNSC/DTI/ NERC/DoE	The programme aims to support innovative pre-competitive earth observation applications research on a collaborative basis targeted on end user needs emerging from Foresight.

Boosts to existing LINK programmes

Programme	*Boost announced*	*Sponsors*	*Description*
Hydrocarbon Reservoirs	June 1995	DTI/NERC	Additional funds are being allocated to research directed at more accurate identification and assessment of new oil and gas fields; and technological improvements to increase yields from existing oil and gas fields.
Surface Engineering	July 1995	EPSR/DTI	The programme supports collaborative research into new and improved surface treatment and coating systems and their associated process technologies. Additional funds are being allocated to new projects that address relevant Foresight priorities.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to ensure that funding for existing research projects is not diverted to new research projects under the technology foresight programme. [38911]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Research council and departmental funds for existing projects have not been diverted in response to foresight. The foresight challenge provides extra funds for projects which take forward foresight priorities. New research projects in the public and private sectors may take account of foresight findings as existing projects are concluded.

SCOTLAND

News Releases

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many statements to the media in the last year have been made by civil servants at the Scottish Office; and if he will name the individuals concerned. [37508]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 1,722 Scottish Office news releases was issued in 1994; the name of the press officer concerned is given at the end of each news release.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions are given to members of the NHS management executive concerning statements to the media. [37510]

Mr. Forsyth: Statements to the media by members of the NHS management executive are issued on behalf of Ministers and on the advice of the information directorate of the Scottish Office operating under the Cabinet Office guidelines for information officers. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the guidelines for statements to the media by civil servants at the Scottish Office. [37511]

Mr. Forsyth: The guidelines for statements to the media are contained in the booklet "The Government Information Officer" published by the information officer management unit, which is a part of the Cabinet Office. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

Forestry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number, area and location of woods currently offered for sale by the Forestry Commission in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales, indicating those for which a legal agreement to protect public access on foot has been made and, for all woods, the length of time they have been on the market. [37500]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 18 October 1995]:* The following Forestry Commission woodlands are currently for sale on the open market:

County/Region	*Name of property*	*Area (hectares)*	*Time on market (months)*
England			
Buckinghamshire	New Sowed Wood	2	4
	Stoke Park Wood	64	1
Cambridgeshire	Great and Little Widgam Woods	55	1
	Salome Wood	23	1
Cornwall	New Road Plantation	16	3
	Port Eliot, Bones	13	24
	Port Eliot, Branchcombe	2	24
	Port Eliot, Perdredda	54	24
	Port Eliot, Rytha Plantation	11	24
	Prideaux	24	2
	Treworgey Wood	17	3
Cumbria	Bird Dyke, Lamplugh (part)	9	1
	Chalk Plains	40	1
	Denton Fell	627	1
	Leesrigg Plantation	17	1
	Nuthill and Simpson's Wood	14	1
	Sunderland Gill	28	1
Derbyshire	Kennel Wood	6	12
	Moorhall Wood	8	12
Devon	Deershill	11	3
	Hawkmoor	22	27
	Knowle Wood	8	2
	Little Silver/Crowball Wood	8	3
	New Moor Plantation	12	3
Durham	Stanley Wood Cottages	31	24
Humberside	Greenwickdale Wood	37	18
Isle of Wight	Kemphill Moor	20	4
Kent	Cole Wood	22	2
Lancashire	Tythe Barn Plantation	8	1
Leicestershire	Bolt Wood	27	1
	Clipsham (part)	14	12
Lincolnshire	Hurn Wood	9	1
Norfolk	Foulden Broom Covert	6	1
	Great Wood Outliers	18	1
North Yorkshire	Seaton Ross Woods	43	24
Northamptonshire	Sandpit Copse	3	12
Nottinghamshire	Nut Wood	9	12
Shropshire	Cantlop Woods, Lot 1	13	3
	Cantlop Woods, Lot 2	10	3
	Cantlop Woods, Lot 3	8	3
	Coed Detton	14	59
Somerset	Higher Bitcombe	30	59
South Yorkshire	Greensprings Wood	12	24
	Old Park Wood[1]	41	24
	Owston and Duck Holt Woods	66	2
Suffolk	Barthorps Folly	6	1
Scotland			
Borders	Edgarhope	143	7
	Priesthaugh[1]	787	2
Dumfries and Galloway	Dalquhairn	180	2
	Glenshimmeroch	178	2
Grampian	Auchinroath Plantation	62	6
	Auqharney[1]	133	12
	Drybridge Woodlands	52	3
	Glenbuchat	530	11
	Hillockhead	42	3
	Malcolm Wood	14	3
	Rhynagoup Woods	52	3
	Rosarie Strip	23	9
	Tulloch Wood[1]	239	3
	Wangie Plantations	47	3
Highland	Avriachan Plantation	865	12
	Achrugan[1]	559	15
	Culdrach Plantation	58	8
	Tote Plantation	421	8
	Uig Plantation	40	8
Strathclyde	Ardmarnock[1]	1,284	3
	Caladh[1]	153	3
	Crookedstane	347	1
	Daljarrock	51	7
	Dererach Plantation	177	3
	Docherneil	83	7
	Glenmard	56	7
	Little Clyde	650	1
	Scoor Wood(part)	360	33
	Uluvalt	197	3
Tayside	Camusericht	304	13
	Upper Glenprosen	230	8
	Warroch	68	3
Wales			
Clwyd	Blackthorn Covert	22	3
	Castle Great Wood	49	3
	Coed Melin y Moch	12	13

County/Region	Name of property	Area (hectares)	Time on market (months)
Dyfed	Allt Cil y Llyn Fawr	3	34
	Cilflower Wood	3	2
	Penhill Wood	4	7
	Ty'r Shyme	6	34
	Waun Baglan[1]	26	5
Gwent	Craig yr Arail	56	4
Gwynedd	Aberdunant(part)	16	12
	Amnodd Wood	88	3
	Beudu Mawr	8	1
	Cabin Wood	18	1
	Cefn Glas	12	3
	Cwm Prysor	56	3
	Factory Covert	5	1
	Glyn Covert[1]	7	1
	Gwinllan Rhos Dhu	10	1
	Gwinllan y Gaerwen[1]	9	1
	Rhiwbach and Tyddyn Bach[1]	106	8
	Ynysfor (part)	4	12
West Glamorgan	Graig Ynysgollen	10	8
	Nant y Stalwyn[1]	44	25

[1] Woodlands where a legal agreement to protect public access on foot has been concluded. For the other woodlands, either the local authority or a third party with an interest has declined to enter into an access agreeement.

Road Accidents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road accidents in the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [37990]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the following table.

	Fatal	Non-fatal	Total
1981–85 average	641	26,502	27,142
1990	546	26,675	27,221
1991	490	24,849	25,339
1992	463	23,709	24,172
1993	399	22,016	22,415
1994	363	22,220	22,583

The continuing fall in the number of fatalities to the lowest on record is very encouraging and good progress is being made towards achieving the Government's target of reducing overall causalities by one third by the year 2000 compared with 1981–85 average. The Scottish Office and local authorities will continue to take forward road safety initiative designed to contribute towards achieving the target.

Pay Delegation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38278]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At April 1996 six distinct pay bargaining units are expected to operate within the Scottish Office and its associated departments. The approximate number of employees in each unit, distinguishing agency and HQ staff, are:

	Agency Staff
Scottish Prison Service	4,500
Historic Scotland	780
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	280
Scottish Courts Service	870
Registers of Scotland	1,120

The core departments of The Scottish Office, plus remaining Agencies and Associated Departments, form a single central bargaining unit; covering some 5,960 staff, 670 of whom serve in Agencies, the remainder on HQ functions.

For the central unit discussions are in progress on trade union recognition and possible future bargaining arrangements. In each of the separate agency bargaining units, the chief executive has responsibility for pay negotiations.

Child Prostitution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to hold centrally information in respect of the number of cases of child prostitution that are reported; and if he will make a statement. [38297]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Child prostitution is neither a separate criminal offence nor a statutory ground for referring a child to a children's hearing and is therefore not recorded as such. Where a child under the age of 16 becomes involved in prostitution, the child is considered more as a victim rather than an offender. The child is invariably referred by the police to the reporter to the children's panel who decides whether there should be a reference to a panel to consider whether compulsory measures of supervision may be appropriate. An adult involvement in the matter would be referred by the police directly to the procurator fiscal. I am satisfied that in these cases we have in place the necessary system of referrals and procedures to ensure that the action which is taken in relation to the child is in the best interests of the child's welfare.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest estimates of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland together, in each case with the equivalent electoral registration figures also expressed as a percentage of these population figures. [36777]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* The information requested is given in the table. The population figures have been prepared by a method that involves a certain degree of approximation and therefore must be treated with some caution.

Parliamentary constituencies

Parliamentary constituency	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1994) (a)*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1995 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1994) (b)*	*(b) as a percentage of (a)*
Aberdeen north	61,700	59,390	96.3
Aberdeen south	62,900	60,612	96.4
Angus east	67,200	64,745	96.3
Argyll and Bute	51,000	49,885	97.8
Ayr	68,400	67,258	98.3
Banff and Buchan	68,800	67,769	98.5
Caithness and Sutherland	30,800	31,298	101.6
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	56,400	56,712	98.8
Central Fife	57,600	57,412	99.7
Clackmannan	51,600	50,413	97.7
Clydebank and Milngavie	50,300	48,768	97.0
Clydesdale	65,300	63,652	97.6
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	49,400	47,857	96.9
Cunninghame north	57,400	56,026	97.6
Cunninghame south	51,000	49,774	97.6
Dumbarton	61,100	57,497	94.1
Dumfries	62,700	61,591	98.2
Dundee east	59,800	57,292	95.8
Dundee west	59,300	56,822	95.8
Dunfermline east	53,500	52,374	97.9
Dumfermline west	53,500	52,203	97.6
East Kilbride	68,000	66,772	98.2
East Lothian	69,100	68,714	99.4
Eastwood	66,300	64,814	97.8
Edinburgh central	61,300	59,201	96.6
Edinburgh east	48,000	46,346	96.6
Edinburgh Leith	58,700	56,694	96.6
Edinburgh Pentlands	57,800	55,910	96.7
Edinburgh south	64,800	62,668	96.7
Edinburgh west	61,500	59,442	96.7
Falkirk east	53,600	52,280	97.5
Falkirk west	51,100	49,822	97.5
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	55,200	54,882	99.4
Glasgow Cathcart	46,400	44,277	95.4
Glasgow central	51,000	48,638	95.4
Glasgow Garscadden	43,300	41,310	95.4
Glasgow Govan	47,200	45,059	95.5
Glasgow Hillhead	62,300	59,483	95.5
Glasgow Maryhill	51,900	49,499	95.4
Glasgow Pollok	47,400	45,223	95.4
Glasgow Provan	36,200	34,525	95.4
Glasgow Rutherglen	54,800	52,314	95.5
Glasgow Shettleston	54,200	51,778	95.5
Glasgow Springburn	48,400	46,214	95.5
Gordon	86,700	84,897	97.9
Greenock and Port Glasgow	51,700	50,935	98.5
Hamilton	65,000	62,866	96.7
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	72,500	72,378	99.8
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	63,900	62,555	97.9
Kincardine and Deeside	72,900	70,116	96.2
Kirkcaldy	53,500	53,328	99.7
Linlithgow	64,000	68,825	98.2
Livingston	64,500	63,325	98.2
Midlothian	62,700	61,013	97.3
Monklands east	50,400	49,132	97.5
Monklands west	51,500	49,850	96.8
Moray	68,500	65,625	95.8
Motherwell north	60,400	58,157	96.3
Motherwell south	52,100	50,164	96.3
North East Fife	59,700	58,332	97.7
North Tayside	59,600	57,800	97.0
Orkney and Shetland	32,900	32,411	98.5
Paisley north	47,800	46,448	97.2
Paisley south	49,400	48,037	97.2
Perth and Kinross	69,900	67,985	97.3
Renfrew west and Inverclyde	62,100	60,616	97.6
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	59,000	58,393	99.0
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	44,100	44,163	100.1
Stirling	60,600	59,813	98.7

Parliamentary constituencies

Parliamentary constituency	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1994) (a)*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1995 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1994) (b)*	*(b) as a percentage of (a)*
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	64,300	62,003	96.4
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	41,000	40,881	99.7
Western Isles	23,000	23,304	101.3

NHS Trusts

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will order a Scottish Office investigation into the causes of the financial difficulties of Aberdeen Royal Hospitals trust and Highland Communities trust, with a view to publishing a report, on the matter. [38499]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* The Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS trust and the Highland Communities NHS trust have reported to the Scottish Office Department of Health forecast deficits for 1995–96. These matters are being addressed by the trusts and health boards concerned and by the Department. All NHS trusts are required by statute to publish an annual report and audited accounts at the appropriate time.

Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will put measures in place to allow Paisley to obtain city status. [39180]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: City status in Scotland can be achieved only through the granting of a royal charter. It has no statutory significance in Scotland. No royal burgh charter has been granted in modern times and there are no plans to revive the practice.

Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95: and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39135]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The number, category and value in each of the stated years of frauds committed by employees of my Department, its associated agencies and non-departmental public bodies and reported to Treasury via the annual fraud return are as follows:

(i) 1991–92: 1 Departmental fraud and 1 Agency fraud to the total value of £6,051.82 of which £5,653.84 was recovered.

(ii) 1992–93: 1 fraud in a non-departmental public body, valued £255.00 non of which was recovered.

(iii) 1993–94: 9 Departmental frauds and 1 Agency fraud to the total value of £11,047.40 of which £11,000 was recovered.

(iv) 1994–95: 9 Departmental frauds and 1 Agency fraud amounting to £39,490.79 of which £5,550 has been recovered to date.

In addition, in 1993–94 there was one fraud in a non-departmental public body, reported to my Department. This amounted to £850.97 all of which was recovered. In 1994–95, three similar frauds amounting to £5,850.00 were reported of which £4,350.00 was recovered.

Tate and Lyle

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been paid to Tate and Lyle plc, in relation to its cane sugar refinery in Greenock, by way of regional selective assistance grants in the period of time in which such grants have been available; and if he will make a statement. [38519]

Mr. Kynoch: Since the introduction of regional selective assistance under the Industry Act 1972, Tate and Lyle plc, through Tate and Lyle Industries Ltd., has received a total of £600,000 in regional selective assistance in respect of its cane sugar refinery in Greenock, the latest payment being made in 1988.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the progress being made towards the Forestry Commission becoming a next steps agency; and what targets and timetables he has for woodland disposal as a result of this process. [38265]

Mr. Kynoch: We shall publish the framework document establishing Forest Enterprise as an agency soon. This will not affect the current target and timetable for woodland disposals.

Fishing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the prohibition of the use of mobile fishing gear in sea lochs; and if he will make a statement. [38439]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Representations were received from 17 individuals and organisations on the prohibition of the use of mobile gear in sea lochs in response to a consultation paper which was issued by the Scottish Office on 24 May 1995. These are being considered.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the exclusion orders granted under the terms of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976, in each of the past 10 years; how many have been extended and for what lengths of time; what plans he has to issue further exclusion orders in the near future; and if he will make a statement. [38441]

Mr. Robertson: The following protection orders have been made under the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976:-

The Rivers Tweed and Eye Protection Order 1980;

The Upper Spey and Associated Waters Protection Order 1982;

The River Lunan Catchment Area Protection Order 1983;

The River Tummel Catchment Area Protection Order 1983;

The River Tay Catchment Area Protection Order 1986;

The West Strathclyde Protection Order 1988;

The River Earn Catchment Area Protection Order 1990;

The River Don Catchment Area (Part) Protection Order 1990;

The Loch Morar and River Morar Protection Order 1992;

The Loch Awe and Associated Waters Protection Order 1992;

The River Clyde Catchment Area (Part) Protection Order 1994;

The North West Sutherland Protection Order 1994;

The River Arkaig, Loch Arkaig and Associated Waters Protection Order 1995.

With the exception of those for the River Spey and River Tay, the orders run without limit of time. The current orders for the River Spey and River Tay run to February and October 1996 respectively.

Further orders can be made on application, provided there is provision for increased access to the fisheries.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce a ban, under the terms of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984, on the fishing for scallops in inshore waters; and if he will make a statement. [38442]

Mr. Robertson: A review of regulations made under the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 was the subject of a consultation paper issued on 24 May. Views were sought on the possibility of introducing a weekend ban on scallop fishing in Scottish inshore waters. Twenty-two representations were received which commented on this proposal and these are currently being considered.

Loch Caolisport

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the issue of suction dredging in Loch Caòlisport; and if he will make a statement. [38440]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Representations were received from seven individuals and organisations on suction dredging in Loch Caolisport in response to a consultation paper which was issued by the Scottish Office on 24 May 1995. These are being considered.

Fisheries Research Vessel

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the signing of the contract for the construction of a fisheries research vessel; and if he will make a statement. [38518]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Tenders for the construction of a replacement fisheries research vessel are currently being assessed and a decision as to their acceptability has to be made by 31 December 1995.

WALES

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will itemise payments made in each NHS trust to *(a)* chairs, *(b)* non-executive directors, *(c)* chief executives and *(d)* board directors for 1993–94 and 1994–95 by region. [37920]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is as follows.

NHS trusts' board director's remuneration[1]

£ thousand

	1993–94				*1994–95*			
NHS trust	*Chairman's remuneration*	*Non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chief executive's remuneration*	*Executive and non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chairman's remuneration*	*Non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chief executive's remuneration*	*Executive and non-executive board director's remuneration*
Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS trust	19	39	70	269	18	38	72	278
Clwydian Community NHS trust	23	47	71	291	21	47	71	371
Wrexham Maelor NHS trust	0	29	71	327	0	26	74	339
North Wales Ambulance trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	39	59	219
Gwynedd Community NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	42	64	223
Gwynedd Hospital NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	22	77	287
Powys Healthcare NHS trust	22	49	61	312	22	48	62	317
Carmarthen and District NHS trust	17	37	67	274	17	37	69	277
Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS trust	20	37	57	250	20	37	52	246
Derwen NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	21	38	61	288
Llanelli/Dinefwr NHS trust	18	42	52	281	19	44	57	308
Pembrokeshire NHS trust	17	42	90	373	17	42	77	363
Morriston Hospital/Ysbyty Traforys NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	30	69	295
Swansea NHS trust	17	41	61	305	17	40	67	331
Bridgend and District NHS trust	19	44	67	330	19	44	74	351
Glan Hafren NHS trust	20	46	73	340	20	45	82	367

NHS trusts' board director's remuneration[1]

£ thousand

NHS trust	*1993–94*				*1994–95*			
	Chairman's remuneration	*Non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chief executive's remuneration*	*Executive and non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chairman's remuneration*	*Non-executive board director's remuneration*	*Chief executive's remuneration*	*Executive and non-executive board director's remuneration*
Nevill Hall NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	42	60	289
Gwent Community Health NHS trust	23	47	61	301	22	47	66	327
Llandough NHS trust	23	64	73	350	17	40	75	355
Velindre NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	35	56	218
Rhondda NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	30	67	291
East Glamorgan NHS trust[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	37	59	264
South East Wales Ambulance Trust	15	40	55	240	15	40	58	211
Mid Glamorgan Ambulance Trust[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20	40	53	233

Source:
NHS trust's annual accounts.

Computers in Schools

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics he has on the change in the number of computers available to pupils in schools in Wales in the last decade. [38410]

Mr. Richards: Surveys of microcomputers in schools were undertaken in 1986, 1988 and 1992. The 1986 survey covered only a third of primary schools, and special schools were covered only in 1992. The following table shows the average number of pupils per microcomputer, in those primary, secondary and special schools who responded to the surveys.

Number of pupils per microcomputer

	1986	*1988*	*1992*
Primary schools	97	68	34
Secondary schools	55	30	14
Special schools	—	—	6

Film Industry

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his office has made of the total amount of financial support provided by local authorities for the film industry in Wales for each of the last three available years; what is his assessment of the support which will be provided by the unitary authorities after April 1996; and if he will make a statement. [38133]

Mr. Richards: Information on local authority funding for the film industry in Wales is not held centrally. It will be for unitary authorities to decide on future levels of funding in the light of their available resources.

Drug Prevention Week

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial provision his office has made to support Drug Prevention Week Wales; what is the funding level for drug prevention in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a proportion of the figure in England; and if he will make a statement. [38135]

Mr. Richards: Drug Prevention Week was a police initiative; they and the agencies working with them were responsible for funding it.

Welsh Office funding for combating drug misuse is generally made available through general allocations to and various grant schemes operated by health and local authorities. It is not possible to identify separately the total amounts spent on drug prevention.

University Research

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what way the Welsh Office co-ordinates and administers scientific research carried out at Welsh universities. [38737]

Mr. Richards: Public funding for research in higher education in Wales is directed through two distinct channels. General funds, for use at institutions' discretion, are allocated by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales from grant in aid provided by the Welsh Office and are used to support basic and strategic research. The allocation of funding to individual institutions reflects the assessed quality of research undertaken at each institution. Specific funding for particular research projects undertaken by an institution is provided by the appropriate research council.

The Welsh Office provides advice to the HEFCW on the general policies to be adopted in the allocation of funding for research. Neither the Department nor the funding council seeks to co-ordinate research undertaken in the higher education institutions.

Renovation Grants (Rhondda)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take in relation to the recent findings about the operation of the renovation grant system by Rhondda borough council and if he will make a statement. [38616]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the renovation grant system rests with district councils. Any suggestion of malpractice should be placed before the monitoring officer, district auditor, local government ombudsman or the police to investigate. The district auditor has already carried out a full inquiry and reported on renovation grants in Rhondda.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has for the journey times for each of the lorries containing livestock that were taken from Shoreham to Dieppe aboard the Northern Cruiser on 17 May; [34864]

(2) what action he has taken in respect of sheep that died during their export to France and Shoreham on 17 May; [34868]

(3) if he will make a statement on the transportation of livestock on the Northern Cruiser from Shoreham on 17 May with particular reference to *(a)* the suitability of the vessel for livestock transportation and *(b)* the prevailing weather conditions; [34872]

(4) what account was taken of the presence of a pregnant ewe in granting a certificate for the consignment of sheep exported on 17 May from Shoreham. [34869]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* It is, of course, the master's responsibility under the law not to carry animals if in his judgment there are grounds for believing that, due to adverse weather conditions, the voyage will be attended by serious risk to the animals of injury, suffering or death. It does on occasion happen, particularly during the winter months, that the master of a livestock vessel cancels a sailing because of adverse weather. This was not the case on 17 May, but I understand that the vessel was held in port while weather checks were made. Information about the journey times of the lorries on this voyage is given in the table.

The local authority has completed its investigation with regard to the two dead sheep and the third animal which had given birth. The deaths of the sheep and the birth of a lamb do not in themselves amount to conclusive evidence of infringements, and the local authority will have needed to consider the available evidence in this respect. The local authority has in fact concluded that in this case it did not have evidence to support a prosecution. All the animals in the consignment had been certified as fit to travel, which suggests that the ewe which gave birth was showing no obvious sign of being pregnant and about to give birth at that time.

Travelling times—17 May sailing, Shoreham to Dieppe
(from returned journey plans and reports)

Lorry Number / *Number and species*	*1.* *220 sheep*	*2.* *222 sheep*	*3.* *144 calves*	*4.* *147 calves*	*5.* *211 calves*	*6.* *205 calves*
Departure (including loading) to point of sailing	5 hrs 20 mins	2 hrs 50 mins	2 hrs 50 mins	5 hrs 20 mins	5 hrs 20 mins	2 hrs 50 mins
Voyage (including unloading)	9 hrs 10 mins	9 hrs 25 mins	9 hrs 10 mins	9 hrs 40 mins	9 hrs 40 mins	9 hrs 10 mins
(Period of rest in Dieppe)	(8 hrs)	(none)	(8hrs)	(none)	(none)	(none)
Dieppe to final destination	5 hrs 30 mins	1 hr	5 hrs	1 hr 15 mins	1 hr 15 mins	4 hrs
Maximum period without rest	14 hrs 30 mins	13 hrs 50 mins	12 hrs	16 hrs 15 mins	16 hrs 15 mins	16 hrs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy regarding the export of live farm animals for slaughter or further fattening to countries outside the European Union; [38006]

(2) what plans he has to permit the export of live farm animals for slaughter or further fattening to countries outside the European Union; and if he will make a statement. [38009]

Mrs. Browning: There is no intention of changing our long-standing policy of permitting the export of food animals only to those countries with standards at least equivalent to those in force within the European Union on the protection of animals during transport and at slaughter.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many alleged infringements of the laws designed to protect the welfare of animals in transit have been dealt with by his officials during the last two months in *(a)* Dover and *(b)* Brightlingsea; and how many prosecutions have been brought in respect of such infringements; [38010]

(2) whether it is his policy that his officials should continue to inspect every consignment of animals exported through Dover and Brightlingsea; and if he will make a statement. [38011]

Mrs. Browning: During the months of August and September, all consignments of animals for slaughter or further fattening exported from Dover and Brightlingsea were monitored by officials. This kind of monitoring brings to light a number of incidents ranging from the detection of actual welfare problems to minor documentary discrepancies: within this range there can be welfare problems that do not involve an infringement, and cases where intervention by Ministry staff anticipates and prevents problems or infringements from occurring.

At Dover during the period in question, officials dealt with 43 incidents, of which three were subsequently referred to the local authority—which is, I understand, considering two of these for possible prosecution. At Brightlingsea, officials dealt with 11 incidents during the period. Four were referred to the local authority for action and dealt with either by verbal warning, formal caution or by statutory notice requiring remedial action to be taken. I understand that one case is being considered for prosecution.

We intend for the time being to maintain this level of monitoring in the ports.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy on the export of horses for slaughter; [38005]

(2) what plans he has to amend or repeal the minimum values system which prevents the export of horses for slaughter; and if he will make a statement. [38008]

Mrs. Browning: We remain committed to the minimum values system for exported equines, and have no intention of amending or repealing it.

DNA Nucleotides

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his letter 90854, of 23 September to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, if he will make a statement on his consultation with legal experts and scientists about the Torry research and development project, and the Bartlett-Davidson patent, relating to patenting of DNA nucleotides sequencing for identification of animal species. [37299]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 23 October 1995]:* I am not yet in a position to make a statement.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy on the export of horses for slaughter; [38005]

(2) what plans he has to amend or repeal the minimum values system which prevents the export of horses for slaughter; and if he will make a statement. [38008]

Mrs. Browning: We remain committed to the minimum values system for exported equines, and have no intention of amending or repealing it.

Pay Delegation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38279]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following is the information:

A. Bargaining Units

There will be the following four pay bargaining units from 1 April 1996:

	Bargaining unit	*Grades*
1	Core-MAFF	all grades
	Pesticides Safety Directorate[1]	all grades
	Veterinary Medicines Directorate[1]	all grades
	Directorate of Fisheries Research[2]	for grades other than those below
2	Directorate of Fisheries Research	for marine industrials/non-industrials and shore-based industrials
3	Central Science Laboratory[1]	all grades
4	Central Veterinary Laboratory[1]	all grades

[1] Agency.
[2] Canidate Agency.

Note:
ADAS and Meat Hygience Service are not covered by the MAFF pay delegation plan because they have already taken pay delegation from April 1994 and 1995 respectively.

B. Trade Union Recognition and Negotiating Arrangements

For the bargaining units list above:

1. Single table negotiations have been agreed with the FDA, IPMS, NUCPS, and CPSA.

2. Multiple table negotiating arrangements will continue with GMB, NUMAST and TGWU.

3. Single table negotiations have been agreed with the IPMS, NUCPS and CPSA.

4. Discussions on single table negotiations are in progress with IPMS, NUCPS, CPSA and GMB.

Animals (Transport)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to amend the Animal Transport Order 1994 to take into account the increase of trailer size to 3.7 metres. [38153]

Mrs. Browning: A number of representations have been made to us about the increase in the size of trailers commonly used by farmers to transport livestock on short journeys. We are currently consulting on revisions of the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1994 and we are considering in that context how to update the current legislative requirements to reflect current practice.

Fisheries

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions have taken place with Fisheries Ministers and officials of the Irish Republic regarding the harmonisation of fishing regulation in the Irish sea; and if he will make a statement. [38443]

Mr. Baldry: Officials in the UK Fisheries Departments are in frequent touch with officials of the Irish Republic's Departments of the Marine. I met the Irish Minister of the Marine in Dublin on 18 September when we discussed a range of fisheries questions including the regulation of fisheries in the Irish sea. All countries that fish in the Irish sea do so under the rules of the common fisheries policy.

Departmental Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and, *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39136]

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The analysis of reported cases of fraud committed by employees of the Department and its agencies is set out in the table:

Financial year	*Number cases*	*Value*	*Amount recovered*
1991–92	6	£3,000	See note
1992–93	3	£1,000	See note
1993–94	4	£14,000	£5,000 recovered £5,000 not recovered £4,000 under prosecution
	1	—Still under investigation—	
1994–95	No new cases		

Details of amounts recovered for earlier years are not readily available.

Details of frauds committed by staff of non-departmental public bodies for 1991–92 are not readily available. No frauds have been reported to the Department in respect of the years 1992–93 onwards.

Toxic Waste

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what nuclear and toxic waste was deposited in the Beaufort dyke and in other areas of the North channel and the Irish sea in each of the last 20 years. [38591]

Mr. Baldry: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible for licensing the disposal of waste at sea around the coast of England and Wales. The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department performs a similar function in Scottish waters which includes Beaufort's dyke as do the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland in their waters. No nuclear waste has been dumped in the Irish sea, North channel or Beaufort's dyke. The Ministry has granted a number of licenses for the disposal of sewage sludge, industrial waste and dredged material in the North channel and Irish sea. None of this waste was toxic. The annual "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report" published by the Directorate of Fisheries Research contains details of all licenses issued and copies are placed in the Library of the House.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in respect of implementing the days at sea limitation provision of the Sea Fish Conservation Acts after the recent rejection of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations case against it by the European Court of Justice. [39354]

Mr. Baldry: I welcome the European Court of Justice's clear endorsement of the legality of the measures adopted by this House in 1993. However, after two years' delay while the legal processes have been taking place, I would not see it as being sensible to implement now the planned arrangements which were based on levels of fishing in 1991.

There have, in addition, been a number of developments in EU fisheries policy, including the new EU effort ceilings applying to all member states fishing in western waters, the enforcement of which is currently under discussion in the Fisheries Council. We also need to take account of the fact that the Council will soon be discussing the next stage of the multi-annual guidance programme to apply from 1997, in which it is expected that the concept of effort management will be extended further.

Against the background, I do not at present see it as appropriate to reactivate the days at sea policy. We need to look ahead in the wider context of EU policy developments and the growing role envisaged for effort management. This will need careful consideration in close consultation with the industry in order to find the best way of securing a proper balance between the legitimate activities of our fishermen and the need to conserve the fish stocks on which they depend for tomorrow's catches.

Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor the effort currently being deployed to ensure that it does not undermine the reductions in capacity which we are securing through the decommissioning programme.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will pay the costs incurred by the NFFO in its action against the days at sea limitation in the Sea Fish Conservation Acts. [39355]

Mr. Baldry: This case arose as a result of a judicial review sought by the NFFO of measures which had been adopted by both Houses of Parliament. The measures adopted by Parliament have been found by the European Court of Justice to be compatible with EU law. The question of costs, including the Government's defence costs, will be dealt with by the UK courts when they consider the rulings of the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Michell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the total costs incurred in setting up the machinery for implementing and adjudicating the days at sea provisions of the Sea Fish Conservation Acts. [39356]

Mr. Baldry: Implementation of the Sea Fish Licensing (Time at Sea) (Principles) Order 1993 was suspended pending the outcome of a legal challenge initiated by the United Kingdom fishing industry, which the European Court of Justice has not upheld. Because of the suspension, the provisions of the legislation relating to the operation of a tribunal were not put into effect. Costs associated with preparatory work on the policy within Government prior to the suspension are estimated at approximately £555,000.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he proposes to hold with fishermen's organisations and what proposals he intends to put up for technical conservation measures following the decision by the European Court that those are lawful methods of restraining fishing effort. [39357]

Mr. Baldry: Technical conservation measures already apply to all sectors of the fishing industry. Consultations have recently taken place on new measures affecting fixed gear. Further discussions are planned for both the North sea and western waters fisheries. The Government will not put forward any proposals without discussing them with the industry.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for increasing the saithe quota for British fishermen and for stopping the dumping of saithe. [39358]

Mr. Baldry: If the fishing industry would like an increase in its saithe quota for 1995, I will explore the possibility of obtaining additional quantities through exchanges with other member states. The size of the United Kingdom quota for 1996 will be decided in the light of scientific advice on the state of the stocks.

In considering ways of improving the common fisheries policy, I will look at constructive ideas for reducing the discarding of saithe and all other fish.

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the French and British total allowable catches for saithe; what is the distribution of

saithe between British and French waters; and what are the reasons for the variation in total allowable catches. [39359]

Mr. Baldry: There are three saithe stocks for which the United Kingdom and France have quotas: ICES areas IIa, III and IV—(the North sea and Baltic)—areas Vb, VI, XII and XIV—(west of Scotland), and areas VII, VIII, IX, and X—waters to the west of Ireland, England, France, Spain and Portugal. UK and French shares of the European Community total allowable catch for each of these stocks, reflecting historic catches during the period 1973 to 1978, are as follows:

Per cent.

Stock	*UK*	*France*
North Sea and Baltic	17	51
West of Scotland	24	66
Other western waters	15	56

Among member states, France has the largest quota and the UK the second largest.

It is not possible to specify the distribution of saithe between British and French waters, since saithe cover extensive areas in their normal migration between spawning and feeding grounds.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Nursery Education

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) what is the estimated cost of providing nursery education through the proposed voucher scheme in Solihull in 1995–96; [38794]

(2) what is the cost of the provision of nursery education provided by Solihull council in 1995 and 1996; [38793]

(3) what estimate she has made of how many additional pupils will be recruited to her nursery scheme in Solihull by the voucher scheme. [38792]

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of providing nursery education through the nursery voucher scheme, and the number of additional places that will be created, will depend on parental choice and the response of providers in the area.

The current cost of nursery education provided by Solihull council is not held centrally.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what powers she has in respect of the provision of nursery education by local authorities. [38791]

Mr. Squire: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Employment may give notice to a local authority that a statutory proposal published by the authority to establish a new nursery class in a county school or to cease to maintain a nursery school or nursery class, requires her approval.

Education Expenditure (West Sussex)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much money West Sussex county council spent on education in 1994–95 on administration and other central costs apart from direct expenditure on schools. [38578]

Mr. Robin Squire: Expenditure by West Sussex education authority on service strategy and regulation, management and administration and the inspection and advisory service was £11.074 million in 1993–94. This figure has not been adjusted for any changes of function. Outturn figures for 1994–95 are not yet available.

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will list the revenue support grant settlement for education for West Sussex for each of the last five years up to and including 1994–95, the percentage movement in each year; and if she will give the equivalent percentage figure for England and Wales as a whole. [38579]

Mr. Squire: The information requested since the introduction of the standard spending assessment system in 1990–91 in West Sussex and English local education authorities as a whole is set out in the table. Welsh authorities are funded separately. The percentage figures take amount of local authority changes of functions, such as the transfer of responsibility for most further education to the Further Education Funding Council in 1993–94.

Year	*£ million*	*West Sussex percentage change over previous year*	*England percentage change over previous year*
1990–91	183.940	—	—
1991–92	217.707	18.4	16.2
1992–93	236.038	8.4	7.1
1993–94	209.127	3.2	2.9
1994–95	220.285	6.3	2.7

Fish Tank (Minister's Office)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the cost of installing a fish tank in the office of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan). [38848]

Mrs. Gillan: The cost of installation of the fish tank was paid by me privately.

Retired Teachers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many teachers retired from the profession in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what proportion of them had reached statutory retirement age. [39116]

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 21,254 teachers started to draw a pension in 1994–95. Of these, 5,814 were aged 60 or more, the age at which they may retire and receive their pension of their own accord.

Secondary Schools (Admission)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment which local education

authorities have, during the last five years, successfully sought a change in age of admission to their secondary schools from 12-plus to 11-plus; how many introduced the change in phases and how many all at once; and what were the capital costs in each case. [38589]

Mrs. Gillan: The table shows the local education authorities that have successfully sought a change in the age of admission to their secondary schools from age 12 or above to age 11 since January 1990 and whether the change was phased. Details of the capital costs involved could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

LEA	
Barnsley (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Berkshire (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Birmingham (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Bradford (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Devon (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Doncaster	Phased
Dudley	Not phased
Ealing	Not phased
Hampshire	Phased
Humberside (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Kent (part of the LEA area only)	Phased
Kirklees (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Leeds	Phased
North Tyneside (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Sheffield (part of the LEA area only)	Not phased
Surrey	Phased
Wakefield	Phased
Warwickshire	Phased

Training for Work

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what plans she has to review outcome-related funding structures in the training for work scheme. [38520]

Mr. Paice: Any changes to the current funding arrangements for training for work will be considered in the light of performances of the programme, but we have no plans to cease making output-related payments, which are an effective incentive to produce results for participants.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what priority will be given to the long-term unemployed and persons with special needs, including illiteracy and innumeracy, within the training for work programme; and if she will make a statement. [38521]

Mr. Paice: People aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for two years or more and people with special needs—people with disabilities, those needing help with literacy and numeracy, and those needing help with English for speakers of other languages—have priority for places on the programme, and TECs have been set specific targets for starts in these groups. People with special needs also have accelerated entry to the programme. Priority entry is also given to those referred from specific Employment Service programmes designed to help the one year or two year unemployed.

In addition, the Government pay TECs considerably higher prices for starts and outcomes for those who have been unemployed for over a year and for those with special needs.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the findings of the Coopers and Lybrand report "Evaluation of the Training for Work (TFW) Funding Pilots: Final Report". [38522]

Mr. Paice: The Coopers and Lybrand report made some useful suggestions for the funding of the programme.

All the recommendations in the report regarding funding policy were implemented, bar one. The move to a funding system based on 25 per cent. payment for starts and 75 per cent. for outcomes, rather than to one partly based on a payment for weeks of training delivered as suggested in the report, will sharpen the focus on achieving a successful outcome for trainees.

The Department's response to the report is set out, in full, in a note which accompanies the report. This is available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what steps she will take to improve recruitment rates on the training for work scheme. [38523]

Mr. Paice: Recruitment this year to training for work has been below anticipated levels. I am determined that performance should improve. Officials and TEC representatives have worked together to ensure that the changes necessary to improve recruitment are made as quickly as possible.

I have written personally to all TEC chairmen stressing the importance that I place upon recruitment to the programme.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how she monitors the effectiveness of the training for work scheme in providing placements for the long-term unemployed. [38524]

Mr. Paice: The provision of placements is the responsibility of TECs in meeting their contracted starts and outputs targets. TECs are monitored against these targets.

Walsall TEC

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what progress Walsall training and enterprise council is making in meeting the criteria for the award for a three-year licence. [39993]

Mr. Paice: I am pleased to announce the award of a three-year licence to Walsall TEC, which has now completed the process of meeting the rigorous standards we set.

TRANSPORT

A66

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now support the addition of the A66 between Penrith and Scotch corner to the Trans-European road network. [38728]

Mr. Watts: The A66 was carefully considered for inclusion in the Trans European road network during the consultation period in 1994 but it was decided not to incorporate the route into the United Kingdom portion of the network. As the circumstances of the route have not materially changed since, this remains the position.

British Bus

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the flotation of British Bus and the establishment of a potential national cartel in the public bus transport sector. [38903]

Mr. Norris: The flotation of British Bus is a matter for the company concerned. The question of any potential cartel is a matter for the competition authorities.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government grant made to Mersey Docks and Harbour Co., in 1989, was written off; and if he will make a statement. [38435]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* As part of the company's capital reconstruction in 1989, the Government agreed to write off £1.5 million, being a proportion of outstanding loans, and to waive its entitlement to £110 million of repayable grants made between 1971 and 1982. No additional grants were made to the company by Government in 1989 as part of that reconstruction.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the dock labour force who accepted payment in 1989, are now being re-introduced by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.; and if he will make a statement. [38434]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* This is a matter for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what instructions the Government representatives on the board of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co., have been given to resolve the dispute with the dock labour force; and if he will make a statement. [38436]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* My right hon. Friend ceased to appoint "A" directors to the board of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. in 1989, following a capital reconstruction.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the salary and names of the board of the Mersey Dock and Harbour Co. and the salary in the financial year for 1987–88. [38432]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* These are matters for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. Details can be found in its annual report for the year involved.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it a condition of further grants to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. that the company provide permanent contracts of employment in respect of stevedoring work. [38739]

Mr. Norris: It is not Government policy to make grants to harbour authorities. Contracts of employment are matters for the company.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the Government's share in the Mersey Docks and Harbours Co. was used to finance the purchase of Medway Ports Ltd. in 1993; and if he will make a statement. [38433]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October]:* The Government played no role in this purchase which was entirely a commercial matter for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.

Passenger Rail Franchises

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the companies which have expressed an interest in bidding for passenger rail franchises. [38907]

Mr. Watts: No. This information is commercially confidential.

A(1)M bypass

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate he has made of the daily number of vehicles which use the Doncaster A(1)M bypass in each direction; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* five years and *(b)* 10 years ago. [39028]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 25 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what is the current estimate of the daily number of vehicles using the A1(M) Doncaster Bypass in each direction and what were the comparable figures 5 and 10 years ago.

The provisional estimate for 1995 is 26,600 northbound and 27,000 southbound. The corresponding figures for 1990 were 22,800 northbound and 25,400 southbound. Estimates for 1985 are on a slightly different basis but showed 17,300 vehicles per day travelling northbound and 17,500 southbound.

Tax Discs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles have been clamped by the driving and vehicle licensing centre for failing to display a valid tax disc since July; and if he will make a statement. [39019]

Mr. Norris: None. However, a pilot scheme to clamp those evading duty will commence early next year in parts of London.

Marine Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the British-registered ferries *(a)* Pride of Bruges, *(b)* Pride of Cherbourg, *(c)* Pride of Hampshire and *(d)* Pioneer are now able to offer 100 per cent. dry-shod evacuation arrangements; and if he will make a statement. [38289]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 25 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about whether the British—registered PRIDE OF BRUGES, PRIDE OF CHERBOURG, PRIDE OF HAMPSHIRE and PIONEER are now able to offer 100% dry-shod evacuation arrangements.

The evacuation arrangements for these ferries remain as set out in my reply to Mr. Paul Flynn on 9 May (Official Report, vol 259 col 347).

Right-hand Driving

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department is considering to introduce driving on the right hand side of the road. [39763]

Mr. Norris: None.

Motorways

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce high-occupancy vehicle lanes on the motorway systems of the M1, M62 and the new sections of the A1 in Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement. [38999]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 25 October 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the introduction of high occupancy vehicle lanes on the M1, M62 and the new sections of the A1 in Yorkshire.

There are currently no plans to introduce high occupancy vehicle lanes on the M1, the M62 or on the new sections of the A1 in Yorkshire. However, the Highways Agency is studying the use of high occupancy vehicle lanes overseas.

Although useful lessons can be learnt from the experience of others, we need to judge how effective the technique is likely to be on the UK network with its traffic flow levels, types of driver behaviour and road layout. If the results of our studies are promising, we will consider introducing a pilot scheme at a selected site to trial the initiative.

Railway Noise

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons the Noise Insulation (Railways and other Guided Transport Systems) Regulations 1995 do not set standards to be applied to the mitigation of railway noise at source. [39846]

Mr. Watts: The enabling legislation for the Noise Insulation Regulations for new railway lines in section 20 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. This section authorises the Secretary of State to make regulations imposing a duty or conferring a power on the authority responsible for the public works to insulate buildings against noise from the construction or use of public works. This means that regulations made under the Land Compensation Act 1973 cannot include standards for the mitigation of noise at source.

However, the existence of regulations for railways, and the noise trigger levels included in them, will encourage authorities constructing new lines to incorporate noise mitigation at source into the design of the lines.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Miss Chelsea Austin

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's treatment of the funds raised by the Chelsea Austin appeal fund in respect of Chelsea Austin, Dingwall, Rossshire. [38588]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ursula Brennan to Mr. Charles Kennedy, dated 24 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked Peter Mathison, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning the Department's treatment of the funds raised by the Chelsey Austin Appeal Fund. Mr. Mathison is away from Leeds on Benefits Agency business and he has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Adjudication Officer's original decision to treat the monies in the Chelsea Austin Appeal Fund as capital failed to take account of changes to Scottish Trust law, introduced earlier this year. As a result of those changes, the Chelsey Austin Appeal Fund is accepted as a trust fund in Scottish law.

The Adjudication Officer has revised her decision in the light of this and arrears of benefit amounting to £143 have been paid to Chelsey's father, Mr. Kevin Austin.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what procedures a lone mother with two children of different fathers is expected to take when completing the Child Support Agency maintenance application form if she wants only one father to be pursued; and what consideration has been given to requiring more than one signature on the maintenance application form to authorise maintenance from two separate fathers. [37587]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State concerning maintenance applications and disclosure of information about absent parents.

To establish whether "good cause" applies in an application for child maintenance, a letter is first issued to the parent with care. This letter allows her to inform the Agency why she should not be required to co-operate with the Agency in respect of *any* alleged absent parent. The Agency will consider her representations and a maintenance application form will be issued to establish details only of the absent parent or parents for whom "good cause" has not been accepted.

All of the parent with care's details are obtained on one form. She is asked to provide information about all the children who live with her. For each child she is asked "Is this child included in the application for child maintenance?". Where "good cause" has been accepted against that child's absent parent, she should answer "No" to that question. This procedure is explained in the help notes that accompany the maintenance application form and removes the need for multiple signatures on one form where there is more than one absent parent involved.

The Child Support National Enquiry telephone line is quoted in this section of the help notes and will provide help or confidential advice about the completion of this section of the form. Clients are also advised that they can contact the Child Support Agency Centre for help and if necessary an interview will be arranged to discuss matters.

I hope this is helpful.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *1499*, what steps are taken to ensure that benefit savings specified as coming from income support claims being withdrawn within four weeks of Child Support Agency action are entirely due to the operations of the Child Support Agency and not any external factors. [37616]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the subject of benefit savings.

For the Child Support Agency, a benefit saving is only recorded when a parent with care ceases to claim Income Support within four weeks of Agency action, or within eight weeks if the action relates to an investigation into the requirement to co-operate.

Savings which may not have arisen directly as a result of the Agency's action will be more than offset by those savings which *are* due to the Agency's actions, but occurred outside the four or eight week period and are not taken into account at all.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *1499*, what are the arguments for including benefit savings resulting from pre-Child Support Agency assessments within the total figure for benefit savings achieved by the Child Support Agency during 1994–95. [37617]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the subject of benefit savings resulting from pre-Child Support Agency assessments.

The Agency has Departmental responsibility for all benefit savings arising from child maintenance. This includes savings arising from pre-Child Support maintenance arrangements under which maintenance was paid direct between parents, and cases in which the Agency provides a collection service for parents with care. In both categories, the Agency fulfils a continuing monitoring and, where necessary, enforcement role.

It is estimated that of the £479 million in benefit savings recorded in 1994/95, £126.5 million arose in cases where the parent with care was receiving Income Support with maintenance under a pre-CSA arrangement. As more cases are assessed or reviewed by the Agency, the proportion of savings arising from these arrangements is reducing.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the average times taken for the liable relatives unit and the courts to deal with a child maintenance case in the last year of that system; and what is the equivalent figure for the Child Support Agency. [37595]

Mr. Mitchell: The information is not readily available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Lord Chancellor's Department does not hold information as to the time taken by the courts to deal with child maintenance cases.

The average time taken by the Child Support Agency between the issue of a maintenance application form and the maintenance assessment being made is 211 days. This calculation is based on 5 per cent. sample cases taken for May 1995.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a breakdown of the amounts of child maintenance absent parents were required to pay by the child support unit in the financial year 1992–93. [37598]

Mr. Mitchell: The information requested is not available as, in many of the cases dealt with by the child support unit, an arrangement was made for the absent parent to pay maintenance direct to the parent with care. Where this exceeded the parent with care's benefit entitlement, benefit ceased and the unit was not required to collect information. In those cases where benefit continued to be paid, information collected centrally related only to the total amounts of maintenance which were actually paid.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will name the suppliers which were invited to tender for the supply of the Child Support Agency computer system; and what were the terms of their offers. [37599]

Mr. Heald: In 1992, a contract for the provision of the Child Support Agency's operational accounting system was awarded following a competitive procurement under European Community rules. Following a formal shortlisting process EDS Scicon and Lockheed IMS were invited to submit tenders. Following formal evaluation of these tenders the contract was awarded to EDS Scicon. The contract has later been extended to include additional requirements.

In 1993, following a competitive procurement under EC rules a contract was awarded for a CSA financial accounting system. IBM United Kingdom Ltd., Easams Ltd. and Walker International were shortlisted and a contract was subsequently awarded to IBM United Kingdom Ltd.

In 1995, following a competitive procurement under EC rules Sanderson CFL Ltd. and ICL (UK) Ltd., were shortlisted for a CSA debt management system. A letter of intent for contract award has been issued to Sanderson CFL Ltd.

The terms of the offers received are regarded as commercial in confidence and cannot be disclosed.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *181*, whether the figure for benefit savings achieved by the liable relatives unit in the year 6 April 1991 to 5 April 1992 includes an allowance for parents with care who ceased to claim income support within four weeks of being contacted by the Department of Social Security, or for parents with care who ceased to

claim income support after maintenance had been arranged; and if he will estimate the benefit savings to the Child Support Agency of using the 1994 accounting rules in the financial year 1994–95. [37618]

Mr. Mitchell: The benefits savings figure for 1991–92 included amounts for cases where claims ceased within four weeks of the Department taking action to arrange, increase or enforce payment for maintenance.

The Child Support Agency made benefit savings of £479.05 million in 1994–95.

Chief Adjudication Officer

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the 11th annual report of the chief adjudication officer, and if he will make a statement. [39870]

Mr. Roger Evans: The report is published today. The chief adjudication officer's findings record further improvement in the standards of adjudication on benefits. Overall, more than three quarters of all decisions were correct in every respect. I am particularly pleased to see the substantial improvement in income support and the disability benefits.

The chief adjudication officer will continue to work on a day-to-day basis with the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service providing additional guidance and expert technical assistance in those areas where further improvements are needed.

The agencies are committed to improving standards of adjudication, as illustrated by the continuing emphasis on quality in their annual business plans. Both the chief adjudication officer and I look forward to continuing progress in coming years.

Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the number of claims for benefit under the chronic bronchitis and emphysema regulations for each month in the current year; and if he will make a statement on the successful claims. [36736]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table:

Number of claims per month during 1995 in respect of PD D12—chronic bronchitis and emphysema

Month ending	*PD D12 claims received*
31 January 1995	208
28 February 1995	243
31 March 1995	214
30 April 1995	190
31 May 1995	185
30 June 1995	131
31 July 1995	133
31 August 1995	147

Source:
BA CDU 100 per cent. count, subject to amendment.
The overall success rate for awards of PD D12 is 11.3 per cent. which is in line with the overall average success rate for claims in respect of prescribed diseases.

Students' Benefits

Mr. Battle: to ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the effect of the new Social Security Benefits Regulations, SI 1995, No. 1742, upon intercalating students who cease to be eligible for educational maintenance and who now will be ineligible for social security maintenance; and if he will make a statement. [38406]

Mr. Roger Evans: In general, it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide support for students, not the social security system. It has always been the case that students who temporarily suspend their studies are not entitled to claim social security benefits unless they fall within one of the specified vulnerable groups, including disabled students and families with dependent children. The effect of the new Social Security Benefits Regulations, SI 1995, No 1742, is to restore the policy intention following a recent Court of Appeal decision. The Department for Education and Employment has recently issued revised and expanded guidance to all local education authorities about their discretionary powers to continue to pay mandatory awards to students during periods of temporary absence.

Athsma Sufferers (Benefits)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce dedicated training for Benefit Agency staff on the problems faced by those asthma sufferers on low incomes. [38313]

Mr. Roger Evans: There are no plans to introduce dedicated training to Benefits Agency staff specifically on the problems faced by asthma sufferers on low incomes. The agency is not aware of any particular problems asthma sufferers have encountered with the service provided by its staff.

Should information be received which indicates otherwise, the agency will consider what action, if any, is appropriate.

Lone Parents

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents signed on to benefits in each of the last four years. [37606]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The information is in the table.

Lone parents signing on to Income support/Family credit:

Financial year	*Family credit*	*Income support*
1990–91	98,000	n/a
1991–92	96,000	n/a
1992–93	158,000	303,000
1993–94	149,000	290,000

Claims to One Parent Benefit:

Calendar Year	*One Parent Benefit*
1991	180,000
1992	188,000
1993	196,000
1994	177,000

Source:
Family Credit 5 per cent. sample of awards
Income Support statistics Quarterly Enquiries
One Parent Benefit/Child Benefit Branch.
Note:
1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

2. One Parent Benefit figures are only available for calendar years.
3. Figures relate to new claims in the periods shown. It is possible for the same person to appear more than one if they cease claiming benefit and subsequently make a fresh claim after some time has elapsed.
4. Income Support figures are derived from 'point in time' figures at quarterly intervals through the year. It is possible that some new claimants may be omitted from the table if they started and ceased to claim Income Support entirely in the interval between two quarterly enquiries.

Chief Child Support Officer

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the second report of the chief child support officer; and if he will make a statement. [39869]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: His report for 1994–95 is published today. The report shows that the CSA is making good and steady progress after a difficult start. The findings on the standard of adjudication show improvements over the first year, but that there is still some distance to go before standards may be regarded as generally acceptable. However, the chief child support officer, Mr. Ernie Hazlewood, recognises that there has been a high degree of legislative and operational changes over the last year and that this is bound to affect performance. He acknowledges the agency's obvious commitment to attaining good adjudication standards, which he expects to show further improvements in 1995–96. I am pleased to see that this improvement has continued strongly in the first half of this year.

The continuing requirement for further improvement is substantial, but the key elements are in place and he and I expect the agency to use them effectively to produce the standards which all concerned have a right to expect.

ENVIRONMENT

Pesticides

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inspectors are employed in the field to check on the use of and levels of pesticides. [37744]

Sir Paul Beresford: Inspectors or other enforcement officers are not allocated solely to matters relating to pesticides. Pesticides work forms only part of a range of work for which they are responsible. This includes, for example, the health and safety of people at work, the protection and improvement of the water environment and the protection of wildlife. As at 1 October 1995, the total number of inspectors or enforcement officers in the field are set out in the table.

Figures for Great Britain unless otherwise stated

	Number
Health and Safety Executive	742
Local Authorities	6,560
National Rivers Authority (England and Wales)	545
River Purification Authorities (Scotland)	111
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (England and Wales)	34
Scottish Office (Scotland)	59

Bottle Factories

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the result of his Department's evaluation of the study carried out by the Health and Safety Laboratory in conjunction with the division of respiratory medicine at Sheffield in respect of respiratory illness experienced by bottle factory workers; what recommendations were made; and if he will make a statement. [38634]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Health and Safety Executive has released to the employers and trade unions involved the Health and Safety Laboratory's preliminary report on the investigation of the small group of bottle factory workers. Further work is required to determine the significance of the results.

Mine Safety

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how pit safety in the privatised mining industry is currently regulated. [38491]

Sir Paul Beresford: The newly privatised mining industry is subject to the same regulatory regime for health and safety as its predecessor. All mines are subject to the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 as well as the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969. An extensive range of regulations applicable to mines has been made under both the 1954 and 1974 Acts. The Health and Safety Commission is the regulatory body and the Health and Safety Executive, through its inspectorate of mines, is the enforcing authority.

Wylfa Power Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the nuclear installations inspectorate in respect of the magnox reactors at Wylfa power station consider whether a grab dropped into a fuel channel was specifically considered in the hazard and operability study; what their assessment of the minimum resistance to gas-flow passed by such an obstacle as a grab was; if they have discovered how many components needed to fail before the grab dropped off; what required modifications have been carried out to prevent a recurrence; when they were implemented; and if he will make a statement. [39069]

Sir Paul Beresford: The circumstances surrounding the failure of the grab component at Wylfa power station and the subsequent actions taken to prevent a recurrence were presented at Mold Crown court on 12 to 14 September 1995 and are now a matter of public record.

Social Housing

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to amend his guidance to housing associations to ensure that this does not encourage the break-up of families and the increase of housing benefit through increased provision of social housing for single people. [39268]

Mr. Clappison: Housing associations' provision of social housing is based on the local authorities' analysis of local needs for family and other accommodation contained in their annual housing strategies, which are assessed by Ministers. I have no plans to alter this policy.

Opencast Mines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider holding centrally, by county or region, records of contractors wishing to develop opencast mining who have submitted planning applications; and if he will make a statement. [39067]

Sir Paul Beresford: Local planning authorities, usually the district or borough council, are statutorily required to maintain records of all minerals planning applications including those for opencast mining. The minerals planning authorities, usually the county council, are also advised by Government to maintain a similar register. To hold all this information centrally or regionally would be a needless duplication of effort.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications his Department has received submitted by contractors in respect of opencast mining in *(a)* Oxfordshire and *(b)* its neighbouring countries; and if he will make a statement. [39066]

Sir Paul Beresford: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment does not receive planning applications. However, the requested information can be obtained from the local planning authorities which have a statutory responsibility to maintain a public register of all planning applications that they receive.

Menwith Hill

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons why Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire does not appear on ordnance survey maps. [39068]

Sir Paul Beresford: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Ordnance Survey under its chief executive, Professor Rhind. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 24 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply to your Question about the depiction on Ordnance Survey maps of Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire.

I have confirmed that the topographic feature, Menwith Hill, at National Grid reference SE1957, is included on Ordnance Survey maps and in our digital products at scale between 1:2500 and 1:50 000. It is omitted from the TravelMaster map at scale 1:250 000 due to the limited space available for features at this scale.

However, it may be that your interest lies in the United States military establishment, Menwith Hill Camp, situated approximately one kilometre east of the hill. At present, the camp is named on the 1:25 000 scale Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map (Number 663) and on all larger scales of Ordnance Survey mapping. On the 1:50 000 scale Landranger map (Number 104), the camp is not named, but a number of the camp buildings, the internal roads and several radio masts are shown in a generalised way, consistent with the specification for the map.

A review of the specification, insofar as it covers the depiction of security sites, has recently been completed by the various government departments concerned. The principle underlying the new specification is that sufficient details will be shown to satisfy the general map user whilst avoiding compromising the security and safety of the site concerned. The protective marking and hence depiction appropriate for Menwith Hill Camp is currently under discussion between other parts of HM Government Survey has been informed of the outcome, our surveyors will revise the depiction of the site so that it conforms with the new specification. The timing of the revision will be dependent on the extent of the change involved.

A number of considerations will determine whether the name of the establishment will be added if the site's protected status is amended or removed. In essence, at any scale of mapping, cartographic decisions have to be made about the amount of detail that can sensibly be shown at the scale, taking full account of map users' needs and priorities. In deciding whether to add the name, we would take into account the space available for it, the naming of Menwith Hill just to the west of the camp and features (topographic and textual) which would be of most use to Landranger users, as well as the need to conform with the rules on the depiction of security sites.

I hope that the foregoing fully addresses your concerns but please let me know if you require any additional information or clarification.

South Yorkshire Navigation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) at how many points along the South Yorkshire navigation there is need for repairs or other action, in order that this navigation can be maintained as a satisfactory waterway; [38197]

(2) how many people are employed to maintain and to operate the South Yorkshire navigation; and what the figure was in 1983; [38200]

(3) if he will ensure that the hours during which freight can be carried on the South Yorkshire navigation are sufficient to allow this trade to continue effectively. [38203]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The British Waterways Board is the navigation authority for the Sheffield and South Yorkshire navigation. These questions are matters for the board, which is responsible for management and operational issues on its waterways.

Waterways

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment (1) what action is to be taken to ensure that boats are not moored in a position which impairs access to locks on navigable waterways; [38198]

(2) if he will ensure that mooring bollards on navigable waterways which are placed close to locks occupy such a position as will allow crew members to drop ropes upon them without the need to leave their vessels especially when such siting is conducive to safety. [38201]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: These are matters for the navigation authority responsible for regulating activities on the waterway concerned.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent to which policies of his Department are designed to promote the movement of freight on inland waterways. [38199]

Mr. Jones: Government policy is that we wish to see maximum use made of inland waterways for freight

transport, but that this must be subject to commercial judgment. Freight hauliers should be free to choose the mode of transport best suited to their needs. The Department draws attention, where appropriate, to the potential of water for the carriage of freight, and grants that are available.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether dredging operations upon commercial waterways are at a level which will ensure effective and continuing use. [38202]

Mr. Jones: The Department has made no assessment of dredging operations upon commercial waterways. This is the responsibility of the navigation authorities concerned.

Local Authority Archives

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to hold centrally information in respect of local authorities on the amount of funding that is provided to maintain county archival records; and if he will make a statement. [38301]

Mr. Sproat: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has recently assumed certain additional responsibilities for archives, formerly with the Department of Environment. Local authorities provide information on the funding of their archive services to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. This is collated in its annual publication "Archive Services Statistics".

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 26 October 1995

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Capital Building Programme

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list each capital building programme, costing more than £1 million, completed in each year since 1979–80, by or on behalf of his Department or local magistrates committees, together with the cost expressed in 1995–96 prices. [38331]

Mr. John M. Taylor: A schedule of all Crown, combined court and county court schemes is attached at annexe A. The readily available information on magistrates courts schemes is attached at annexe B. Although it is completed for the last four years, the Department does not hold detailed records of all magistrates court schemes completed prior to 1992 which is when responsibility transferred from the Home Office.

Annexe A: Crown county and combined court building project

£ million

Title of scheme	*Type of court*	*Works cost cash*	*Works cost 1995–96 prices*
1979–80		0	0
1980–81			
Wood Green Phase 1	Crown	1.25	2.73
Leicester	Crown	4.42	9.66
Romford	County	1.03	2.24
Nottingham Phase 1	Crown	2.23	4.86
Birmingham Newton St	County	1.10	2.40
Snaresbrook Phase 1	Crown	2.78	6.07
Total		12.80	27.97
1981–82			
Burnley	Crown	1.50	2.99
Kings Lynn	Crown	1.12	2.22
Bolton	Comb	4.00	7.97
Total		6.61	13.18
1982–83			
Portsmouth	Comb	7.00	13.02
Chelmsford	Crown	5.61	10.43
Leeds	Comb	9.68	18.00
Southwark	Crown	12.60	23.44
Total		34.89	64.89
1983–84			
RCJCrypt	High	2.47	4.38
Maidstone	Comb	10.20	18.14
Total		12.67	22.52
1984–85			
Liverpool	Comb	43.44	73.55
Snaresbrook Rebuild (Fire)	Crown	1.40	2.37
Total		44.84	75.92

Annexe A: Crown county and combined court building project

£ million

Title of scheme	*Type of court*	*Works cost cash*	*Works cost 1995–96 prices*
1985–86			
Oxford	Comb	5.17	8.29
Swindon	Comb	2.36	3.79
Salisbury	Crown	1.18	1.89
Total		8.71	13.97
1986–87			
Isleworth D.O.G. House	Crown	4.43	6.91
Milton Keynes	County	1.17	1.82
Guildford	Crown	4.70	7.32
Manchester Wood St Phase 1	Crown	10.13	15.78
Peterborough	Comb	3.96	6.16
Southampton	Comb	7.08	11.02
Total		31.46	49.01
1987–88			
Birmingham	Crown	8.87	13.12
Newcastle Moot Hall	Crown	1.68	2.48
Nottingham Phases 2&3	Crown	6.18	9.14
Norwich	Comb	7.02	10.38
Swansea	Crown	5.15	7.62
Total		18.90	42.74
1988–89			
Lambeth	County	1.14	1.58
Coventry	Comb	5.25	7..28
Telford	County	1.05	1.46
Snaresbrook Phase 2	Crown	2.50	3.47
St. Dunstans House	High	1.67	2.31
Truro	Comb	4.93	6.84
Middlesex Guildhall	Crown	6.90	9.56
Grimsby	Comb	4.84	6.71
Derby	Comb	7.40	10.26
Croydon	Comb	15.13	20.97
Total		50.82	70.44
1989–90			
Doncaster	Crown	3.42	4.44
RCJ 123 Additional	HC	11.36	14.72
Manchester Cr Sq/Wd St 2/3	Comb	4.97	6.44
Taunton	Crown	2.79	3.62
Wood Green Phase 2	Crown	15.26	19.77
Total		37.80	48.99
1990–91			
Wolverhampton	Comb	9.17	11.00
RCJ Thomas More	High	2.54	3.05
Newcastle Quayside	Comb	17.13	20.56
Total		28.84	34.61
1991–92			
Northampton	Comb	11.49	12.97
Teesside	Comb	15.09	17.04
Hull	Co-loc	11.28	12.73
Stoke	Comb	9.50	10.72
Stafford	Comb	10.35	11.68
Harrow	Crown	17.61	19.88
Lincoln	County	2.31	2.61
Luton	Crown	9.96	11.25
Warrington	Comb	7.48	8.44
Newport	Crown	10.90	12.30
Total		105.96	119.63
1992–93			

Annexe A: Crown county and combined court building project

£ million

Title of scheme	*Type of court*	*Works cost cash*	*Works cost 1995–96 prices*
Carlisle	Comb	9.29	10.08
St. Albans	Crown	16.34	17.73
Central London County Court Phase 1	County	1.62	1.76
Bradford	Comb	18.85	20.45
Chester	Crown	6.55	7.10
Borough	Crown	19.06	20.68
Dartford	County	2.16	2.34
Total		73.87	80.15
1993–94			
Woolwich	Crown	31.15	32.80
Bristol	Crown	33.49	35.26
Total		64.64	68.06
1994–95			
RCJ East Wing	High	15.57	16.08
Neath and Port Talbot	County	1.31	1.35
Pontypridd	County	1.42	1.46
Central London County Phase 2	County	6.43	6.64
Newport (IOW)	Comb	2.23	2.3-0
Leicester	County	3.47	3.59
Birmingham	County	33.34	34.44
Cardiff County	County	3.49	3.61
Total		67.25	69.47
1995–96			
Canterbury	Comb	15.69	15.69
Preston	Comb	24.84	24.84
Worcester	Comb	7.80	7.80
Total		48.33	48.33
Grand Total		658.37	849.87

Annexe B: Magistrates court building projects

£ million

Scheme	*Actual cost*	*Cost at 1995–96 prices*
1981–82		
Lancaster	1.925	3.836
1987–88		
Merton	3.196	4.727
Lewes	2.394	3.541
1988–89		
Lowestoft	2.099	2.909
Brighton	2.289	3.172
Port Talbot	1.415	1.961
Stockport	4.630	6.417
Bath	2.098	2.908
Dewsbury	2.394	3.318
1989–90		
Brent	7.782	10.085
Cardiff	7.401	9.592
Hertford	4.000	5.184
Oldbury	2.795	3.622
Woking	2.064	2.675
Thames	5.086	6.591

Annexe B: Magistrates court building projects

£ million

Scheme	*Actual cost*	*Cost at 1995–96 prices*
1990–91		
Bootle	2.935	3.522
Bury	3.541	4.249
Chester	3.700	4.440
Basildon	2.700	3.240
Great Yarmouth	3.167	3.811
Harrogate	2.351	2.821
Lincoln	4.113	4.935
Milton Keynes	4.587	5.504
Newton Aycliffe	1.657	1.988
Wigan	5.077	6.092
City of London	3.990	4.788
1991–92		
Haywards Heath	2.576	2.908
Kendal	1.552	1.752
Wimbledon	3.196	3.608
Leicester	7.432	8.391
1992–93		
Bedlington	2.848	3.090
Woolwich	3.294	3.574
Newport (IOW)	3.406	3.695
Taunton	2.503	2.716
1993–94		
Fareham	2.637	2.777
Leeds	18.132	19.093
Llandudno	1.810	1.906
North Shields	3.262	3.435
Rotherham	5.400	5.686
1994–95		
Newham	11.747	12.135
Shrewsbury	3.983	4.114
Rhondda	1.678	1.733
Barrow	3.072	3.173
Bexley	1.208	1.248
Milton Keynes	1.108	1.144
1995–96		
Nottingham	20.000	20.000
Mansfield	5.127	5.127
West London	8.335	8.335

Unregistered Land

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the acreage and percentage of land in each county in England which is unregistered. [38037]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The registration of land is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Land Registry which was established as an executive agency of the Lord Chancellor in July 1990. The question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of the agency is best placed to provide the answer. I have accordingly asked the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry to reply direct.

Letter from E. Beardsall to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 26 October 1995:

Acreage and Percentage of land in each English County which is unregistered

In the absence of the Chief Executive, who is presently away from the office, I have been asked by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, to reply to your recent question to

him concerning the acreage and percentage of land in each county of England which is unregistered.

I regret that statistics relating to unregistered land or to land acreage are not maintained by the Registry but I can tell you that out of an estimated 20 million titles in England, nearly 15 million are registered. The majority of registered titles relate to residential properties in urban areas.

I hope this information will be helpful.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will provide in respect of his plan of pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38271]

Mr. John M. Taylor: In addition to the headquarters of the Lord Chancellor's Department and associated offices, the Lord Chancellor has responsibility for four agencies: the Court Service, Her Majesty's Land Registry, the Public Record Office and the Public Trust Office. He is also responsible for the Legal Aid Board, which is an executive non-departmental public body.

The Public Trust Office and the Court Service became executive agencies in July 1994 and April 1995 respectively, but pay issues of common interest have continued to be subject to joint consultation with LCD HQ. From 1 April 1996, however, the headquarters of the Lord Chancellor's Department—with associated offices—the Court Service and the Public Trust Office will each assume responsibility for the pay and grading of their staff and from that date will become separate units for collective bargaining purposes. The Legal Aid Board already has delegated responsibility in this area, from 1 April 1995. Staff in headquarters, the two agencies and the Legal Aid Board are primarily in senior management, executive, clerical, secretarial and office support grades. The Court Service also includes county court bailiffs, clerks to HM judges and a small number of domestic staff, the latter serving judges' lodgings.

The present pay and grading structures are, however, now under review. It is not envisaged that, in the immediate term, there will be any significant changes in the present recognition arrangements with the trade unions, who have been invited by headquarters and the two agencies to be party to interim pay agreements which would remain in place pending the outcome of the pay and grading reviews. Changes in pay, structure and collective bargaining arrangements may follow, after consultation and negotiation, as a result of these reviews.

The chief executives of Her Majesty's Land Registry and the Public Record Office have been asked to reply direct.

Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. John McAllion, dated 26 October 1995:

I have been asked by the Lord Chancellor's Parliamentary Secretary to reply to your question about pay delegation.

(a) The Public Record Office, a small Government Department and an Executive Agency of the Lord Chancellor's Department, is making its own arrangements for pay delegation. All staff, comprising the unified (administrative and curatorial), secretarial, conservator and support grades, are covered in the bargaining unit.

(b) The office is proposing to continue current trade union recognition (FDA, NUCPS, CPSA and IPMS), and is seeking single table bargaining arrangements.

Letter from E. Beardsall to Mr. John McAllion dated 26 October 1995:

In the absence of the Chief Executive, who is presently away from the office, I have been asked by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, to reply to your recent question to him concerning pay delegation in HM Land Registry.

As a separate department, the Registry has always dealt directly with HM Treasury and, since 1 April 1994, has been responsible for its own pay and grading systems. Agreed negotiating machinery is in place which involves three trade unions representing all groups of Land Registry staff.

I do hope that this answers the points raised with the Parliamentary Secretary but please contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

TREASURY

Less-developed Countries (Debt)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table projecting, for each less-developed country, the total debt stock and annual debt service obligation if the Trinidad and Madrid terms were to be implemented in full. [38396]

Mrs. Angela Knight: I regret that the figures are not available to produce meaningful projections as requested.

Our objective in proposing the Trinidad terms for bilateral debt, and the multilateral debt initiative launched in Madrid, is to reduce the debt burden of the poorest, most indebted countries to sustainable levels. We continue to pursue this objective.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures of people employed in the tobacco industry at the latest available date and the figures for 1990. [39286]

Mrs. Angela Knight: Available information closest to that requested is for employees in employment in the tobacco manufacturing industry at September 1989, 1991 and 1993. The information is provided in the following table.

Year	*Employees (thousands)*
1989	11.4
1991	8.7
1993	8.0

Source: CSO.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many jobs, created in the last year, were in *(a)* small and medium-sized companies, *(b)* manufacturing industries and *(c)* service industries. [39376]

Mrs. Angela Knight: The information requested for small and medium-sized companies is not available. Information for manufacturing and services is available only for the net change in jobs and is provided in the following table.

Employment in Great Britain: June (thousands)[1]

	1994	*1995*	*Net change*
Manufacturing	4,052	4,086	34
Services	17,832	18,145	313

Note:

[1] Includes employees and self-employed.

Source: CSO.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is proposing to reduce tendering costs for public finance initiative schemes. [37162]

Mr. Jack: This is, of course a private not a public finance initiative—although the Government want to keep costs down for both the private and public sectors. I am keen to see an increase in the use of the private finance initiative for the scouring of public projects. However, I am aware of concerns about the costs involved in this exercise and plan shortly to meet with representatives of the construction industry to discuss the matter. However, as experience of the PFI grows costs will continue to fall as Government and business improve their expertise in making contracts in this way. The Government are also encouraging the spread of best practice among Departments, for example by avoiding over-prescriptive specifications.

Income Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the rate of higher rate of income tax necessary to counterbalance the effect of *(a)* abolition of the lower rate of income tax and *(b)* the abolition of the lower rate of income tax and national insurance contributions for the lowest band tax payers. [37959]

Mr. Jack: It would be inappropriate to comment about the range of possible changes to tax rates and thresholds being assessed for the Budget statement. The direct revenue effects of illustrative tax changes are shown in "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" published by HM Treasury in July, a copy of which is in the Library.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of evasion of payments of *(a)* income tax and *(b)* other tax have been discovered in each of the last five years; and what has been the value of the revenue recovered in both categories. [37922]

Mr. Jack: The information requested for taxes administered by the Inland Revenue is as follows:

Year	*Income tax investigations*	*Other investigations*	*Yield from counter-evasion work (£ million)*
1989–90	57,997	12,551	933
1990–91	61,755	13,219	1,091
1991–92	59,993	14,421	1,324
1992–93	55,611	12,952	1,361
1993–94	58,420	12,200	1,295
1994–95	57,701	10,643	1,378

The figure of yield for 1994–95 cannot be compiled on a basis exactly comparable with earlier years, owing to a change in the way these figures are maintained. Unlike previous years, it includes the yield from all employer compliance work.

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average accrued capital value based on private sector annuity rates or other appropriate calculation method of *(a)* a civil service employee's pension and *(b)* other public sector employee's pensions of those (i) employees retiring this year and (ii) those current and past employees with future pension rights at retirement. [37884]

Mr. Waldegrave: Information for all public sector and public service pension arrangements is not kept centrally. However, the table sets out the average capitalised values of retirement benefits for civil servants who are members of the principal civil service pension scheme together with corresponding figures for two of the large public service schemes.

Approximate capitalised value of average accrued retired benefit entitlement

Pension scheme	*Pensioners retiring over the year to 1 October 1995* £	*Active members at 1 April 1995* £	*Pensioners with preserved benefits at 1 April 1995* £
1. PCSPS (excluding N.I.)	98,000	32,000	14,000
2. NHS (England, Wales, Scotland and N.I.)	80,000	30,000	10,000
3. Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (England and Wales)	146,000	61,000	16,000

Notes:

The capitalised values include the value of pension benefits, lump sum retirement benefits and attached spouse's pensions.

The values for pensioners retiring over the year to 1 October 1995 exclude those retirements due to ill health.

Source:

Government Actuary's Department.

Fidelity Bonus

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to funding a fidelity bonus paid to couples who stay married for five years. [39030]

Mr. Jack: I have received many interesting proposals in the run-up to the Budget which I am considering carefully.

Black Economy

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest date when an investigation into the black economy took place; what was its findings; and what was the estimate of the extent of the black economy, and the resulting loss of revenue in income tax, in actual and at 1995 prices. [39009]

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the size of the black economy. However, the Inland Revenue has an on-going programme to detect and deter evasion in all areas of the tax system for which it is responsible. I refer the hon. Member to the chapter entitled "Compliance" in the annual report of the board of Inland Revenue for the year ending 31 March 1995, which may be found in the House of Commons Library.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the size of the black economy. [39008]

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the size of the black economy.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of people who will pay capital gains tax in 1996–97 and 1997–98. [39091]

Mr. Jack: The number of individuals and trustees who will have capital gains tax liabilities arising from disposals in 1996–97 and 1997–98 are provisionally estimated at 90,000 and 95,000 respectively.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the behavioural effects of the abolition of capital gains tax. [39102]

Mr. Jack: It would not be appropriate to comment on tax matters in the run-up to the Budget.

Advance Corporation Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of ACT receipts for 1995–96. [39095]

Mr. Jack: The forecast of advance corporation tax receipts for 1995–96 made at the time of the 1995 summer economic forecast was £9.5 billion.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the savings that could be made annually by linking British defence expenditure to the average level of other western European countries. [39252]

Mr. Waldegrave: None. UK defence expenditure is determined by UK defence needs and spending priorities. It would be meaningless to link it to the average of other countries' defence spending.

Overseas Aid Budget

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations his Department has received from *(a)* members of the general public, *(b)* hon. Members and *(c)* non-governmental organisations on the size of the overseas aid budget since 1 September; and what were the figures for the same period last year. [39084]

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

	1 September 1995 to 23 October 1995	*1 September 1994 to 23 October 1994*
(a) Letters from general public	1,150	35
(b) Hon. Members' letters	260	20
(c) Non-governmental organisations' letters	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Not separately recorded.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to end or alter the tax reliefs available on the first £30,000 of redundancy payments; and if he will make a statement. [39143]

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget statement.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated in such frauds and (2) subsequently recovered. [39126]

Mrs. Angela Night *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The total number of cases of fraud and the total monetary sum misappropriated and subsequently recovered is shown in the following table.

£

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
HM Treasury				
(cases)	(0)	(1)	(0)	(0)
misappropriated	nil	22	nil	(0)
recovered	—	nil	—	—
Forward: Civil Service Catering				
(cases)	(2)	(19)	(1)	(0)
misappropriated	60,000	78,496	268	nil
recovered	nil	790	nil	nil
Agencies				
(cases)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(0)
misappropriated	nil	31,754	nil	nil
recovered	—	23,573	—	—

£

	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95
NDPBs				
(cases)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
misappropriated	nil	nil	nil	nil
recovered	—	—	—	—

National Insurance

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the additional revenue yield which would result from extending employers' national insurance contributions to all fringe benefits currently liable to income tax only. [29141]

Mr. Heald: I have been asked to reply.

We estimate the figure to be £250 million based on 1994–95 figures.

TRANSPORT

Transport Council

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Brussels on 28 September. [40234]

Sir George Young: The Transport Council met in Brussels on 28 September. My hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed proposals for a Community negotiating mandate on road transport agreements with certain central and eastern European countries, and invited the Committee of Permanent Representatives to prepare detailed texts with a view to agreement at the December Transport Council.

The Council met Transport Ministers from the nine central and eastern European countries which have association agreements with the European Community. Discussion concentrated on the approximation of legislation and development of infrastructure.

The Council reached a common position on a consolidating and amending directive on the weights and dimensions of goods vehicles, which extends to national traffic the limits on dimensions—but not weights—applying to international traffic. On the initiative of the UK and the Netherlands, existing goods vehicles which cannot comply with the new provisions may continue in use in national transport until the end of 2006.

The Council also reached a common position on a directive transposing into Community law and applying to national transport the existing regulations on the international carriage of dangerous goods by rail. Special, more stringent rules will continue to apply to the channel tunnel.

The Council reached political agreement on a scrapping scheme to reduce capacity in the inland waterways industry. Together with Germany, the UK opposed the use of Community funds for this purpose. The Council also reached political agreement on a regulation giving inland waterways operators the freedom to provide services in any member state.

The Council continued to discuss the Commission's proposals for liberalisation of ground handling services at Community airports. These will now be considered further by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Council agreed a resolution on air traffic management in situations of crisis and congestion.

Other items raised at the Council included proposals for a plastic card driving licence, which were welcomed by the UK and other member states, and taxation of aviation fuel.

Trans-European Transport Networks

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the United Kingdom's share of the funds available in 1995 for priority projects under the European Community's financing programme for trans-European transport networks. [40233]

Sir George Young: Priority projects in the United Kingdom will receive some £22 million, which is just over 15 per cent. of the total funds available for priority projects in 1995 and more than any other member state will receive from the EC fund. In addition to the £7 million for the west coast main line, which I announced in the House on 18 October, *Official Report*, column *370*, the channel tunnel rail link will receive £13.6 million and schemes along the Ireland-UK-Benelux road link will benefit from £1.6 million. The UK will also receive £36,000 million for road traffic management research and has an interest in a number of other traffic management schemes, including a global navigation satellite system, which will together receive some £16 million of TENs funding in 1995.

Airports

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum current capacity of each terminal of *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* Stansted for (i) passengers and (ii) flights. [39367]

Mr. Norris: These are matters for BAA plc.

The number of passenger air transport movements at Stansted is limited to 78,000 per annum under the Stansted Airport Aircraft Movement Limit Order 1987.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers used Stansted airport in *(a)* the year of its opening and *(b)* 1994. [39371]

Mr. Norris: Stansted airport opened for commercial use in 1946, but the first regular services did not operate until the following year. The new terminal opened in March 1991, and in that year 1.9 million passengers used the airport. The comparable figure for 1994 was 3.3 million passengers.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake the environmental impact assessment in respect of a new terminal 5 at Heathrow. [39774]

Mr. Norris: No. An environmental impact assessment was prepared by BAA plc prior to its application for planning permission for a fifth terminal.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers used each of the terminals at *(a)* Heathrow and *(b)* Gatwick in (i) 1984 and (ii) 1994. [39379]

Mr. Norris: I understand from BAA plc that the information requested is as follows:

	1984	*1994*
	Million passengers	
Heathrow Terminal 1	11.46	21.37
Heathrow Terminal 2	7.45	8.23
Heathrow Terminal 3	10.23	10.79
Heathrow Terminal 4	[1]—	10.97
Gatwick South Terminal	13.95	12.76
Gatwick North Terminal	[2]—	8.29

[1] Opened April 1986.
[2] Opened March 1988.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of existing *(a)* passenger and *(b)* freight capacity is being used currently at (i) Heathrow, and (ii) Gatwick and (iii) Stansted. [39373]

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for BAA plc.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has for passenger use of *(a)* existing Heathrow terminals, *(b)* Gatwick terminals, *(c)* Stansted and *(d)* terminal 5 at Heathrow in (i) 2000 and (ii) 2005. [39372]

Mr. Norris: I understand that BAA plc has presented the following projections to the Heathrow terminal 5 public inquiry:

	2000	*2005*
	(million passengers per year)	
Existing Heathrow Terminals	60.0	52.6
Gatwick Terminals	22.1	27.3
Stansted	7.1	12.5
Heathrow Terminal 5[1]	—	14.4

[1] Application to build terminal 5 is currently the subject of a public inquiry. If planning permission is granted, BAA plc aims to have the first phase open by 2003.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments he had made of the environmental impact of the airports on *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* Stansted. [39366]

Mr. Norris: For Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, the Department publishes an aircraft noise exposure index in the form of annual aircraft noise contours using Leq—equivalent continuous sound level, 16 hour dBA. It is the responsibility of airport operators or developers to undertake appropriate environmental impact assessments of any major new developments proposed at airports.

ENVIRONMENT

Green Belt Land

Sir Michael Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the past five years he has granted planning permission for the development on land in the metropolitan green belt for *(a)* motorways and *(b)* motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement. [38353]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We are not aware of any such cases in metropolitan green belt land around London. Approval should not be given for inappropriate development in a green belt except in very special circumstances. Further advice on control over development in green belts is given in section 3 of planning policy guidance note 2—revised—January 1995.

My right hon. Friend has called in four planning applications for motorway service areas on different sites in the green belt, along the M25 in Epping Forest district, Essex. They were considered at a joint inquiry which ended in the summer. The Government Office is awaiting the inspector's report.

The Secretary of State is minded to grant permission for a motorway service area in the green belt, on the M25 at Iver, Buckinghamshire, but is considering further representations on new evidence that has arisen.

Motorway Service Areas

Sir Michael Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the locations for possible motorway service areas adjacent to the M25 which were rejected by his inspector as being unsuitable on the ground that they are off-line. [38355]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We are not aware of any such cases.

Noise Legislation

Mr. Atkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his proposals to improve the current noise legislation. [38039]

Mr. Gummer: I am aware of my right hon. Friend's continuing interest in this important subject. We are currently considering both the written responses to the recommendations in the consultation paper on neighbour noise controls and the results of recent trials of the proposed new night noise offence. We hope to announce shortly how we propose to take forward the recommendations.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate *(a)* the costs and *(b)* the costs of delay relating to the planning inquiry into the developing at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in the borough of Greenwich. [38736]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: No. Such estimates are unnecessary as they are not material to the Secretary of State's decision on whether a planning application should be called in.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the shortest, the average and the longest period of delay in setting up a local public inquiry. [38735]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The provision of information on public local inquiries is the responsibility of the planning inspectorate. I have asked the inspectorate's chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from James Greenfield to Mr. Peter Bottomley, dated 23 October 1995:

The Secretary of State asked the Chief Planning Inspector to reply to your question about the shortest, the average and the longest period of delay in setting up a local public inquiry. Mr. Shepley is away from the office this week, and I am writing on his behalf.

In the case of planning appeals and planning applications called-in for the Secretary of State's decision, the Inquiries Procedure Rules state that the inquiry shall be not later than 20 weeks or 22 weeks respectively after the relevant start date for the case, unless such a date is impracticable. Generally, the earliest possible date for an inquiry to be arranged is about 14 weeks after the relevant date (16 weeks or more for called-in applications), allowing the parties adequate time to submit and exchange statements and prepare proofs of evidence within the recommended timescales.

There is general delay in arranging dates for these inquiries caused by the need to provide Inspectors for development plan inquiries. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 required mandatory district wide plans to be published by local authorities, so that future development control decisions were made in accordance with the plans, unless material considerations indicated otherwise. Ministers expectations were that all plans would be in place by the end of 1996. Extra Inspectors have been recruited, but need to undergo an extensive training programme before they become fully effective.

Within the Inspector's published Business Plan there are a number of performance targets, many of which are measured against the time taken to complete 80% of our caseloads. The latest statistics show that during September, 80% of the dates for inquiries proposed by the Inspectorate to the parties were made within 40 weeks of the relevant dates. The earliest date proposed was made in week 18, and the latest date in week 51. The average waiting time for an inquiry date was 35 weeks.

Special Areas of Conservation

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list proposed special areas of conservation in the United Kingdom that contain specimens of shore dock. [39244]

Mr. Clappison: The sites proposed to Government by the statutory nature conservation agencies, working through the Joint Nature Conservation committee, as possible special areas of conservation representing an appropriate UK contribution for the shore dock—Rumex rupestris—to the European Union wide Natura 2000 network were:

Angelsey Coast Dunes (Glannau Mons)

Fal and Helford

Isles of Scilly Complex

Penhale Dunes

Plymouth Sound and Estuaries

The Lizard

Following a public consultation on those proposals in the spring, the Anglesey coast dunes site was submitted to the European Commission as a candidate special area of conservation in June. I anticipate that other sites for this species will go forward as candidate special areas of conservation later this year.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by county, those designated areas that have been damaged in each of the last four years, with the cause of damage in each case. [39064]

Mr. Clappison: The information is not available in the form requested. Information on damage to SSSIs is contained in the annual reports of English Nature, copies of which are in the Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of people receiving benefit, where the level of housing benefit has been capped in line with the local reference rate, on the overall availability of private rented accommodation; [38895]

(2) what assessment he has made of the extent to which the private rented sector will be used only by people with a guaranteed income capable of paying the levels of rent demanded following the capping of housing benefit levels. [38871]

Mr. Clappison: Under the changes to the housing benefit system, housing benefit will continue to meet in full rents at or below the general level of rent for similar accommodation in the same locality. Even where the market rent is above the general level, housing benefit will meet half the excess. The effect of the new system will depend on the decisions landlords and tenants reach on rents locally and we will be monitoring this closely.

The Housing White Paper made it clear that we see the private rented sector as an important complement to social housing for people on low incomes. We are committed to providing an effective housing benefit system that enables low income households to rent in the private sector.

Wetland Sites

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to invite the application of the Montreux procedure, in accordance with resolution C.5.4 of the Ramsar convention, for those United Kingdom wetland sites where the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has recently predicted or recorded negative changes in ecological character. [39238]

Mr. Clappison: None. The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the Ramsar convention, which does much valuable work in fostering the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The United Kingdom national report to the sixth meeting of Ramsar contracting parties in 1996 states that the ecological character of 12 of the 95 United Kingdom Ramsar sites has changed, is changing or is likely to change. No additional UK sites are appropriate for inclusion on the Montreux record. In responding the UK national report, the Ramsar secretariat stated that the UK report is one of the most comprehensive, detailed and open of the reports they receive. A copy of the UK national Ramsar report is in the House Library.

One UK Ramsar site, the Dee estuary, is currently on the Montreux record, and was the subject of a monitoring visit last autumn by the Ramsar bureau and other

international wetland experts who reported to my right hon. Friend this summer. A response to this report is currently in preparation.

Water Extraction Licences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if water extracted from boreholes or aquifers requires a water extraction licence: and if he will make a statement. [38994]

Mr. Clappison: The National Rivers Authority has a duty to manage water resources, including groundwater, under part II of the Water Resources Act 1991. Most abstractions from groundwater require a licence from the authority. The major exemptions are for agriculture or domestic use below 20cm per day.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by *(a)* region or county and *(b)* location the number of new water extraction licences that have been approved since 1 July; and if he will indicate the amount of water granted to be extracted. [38993]

Mr. Clappison: The number of new abstraction licences issued by the National Rivers Authority between 1 July and 15 October, with their associated quantities, are as follows:

Region	*Number of new licences*	*Quantity (Megalitres per annum)*
Anglian	26	462
North West	21	200
Northumbria and Yorkshire	38	2,751
Severn Trent	53	6,811
Southern	5	14,708
South Western	34	13,040
Thames	4	2,801
Welsh	22	35,920
Total	203	76,693

These figures do not include variations, successions, drought orders or re-issued time limited licences. The quantities for Welsh, South Western and Southern regions have been distorted by the issue of several very large, low loss licences—fish farms, Hydropower and cooling.

Rural Housing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to exempt small rural villages from his Department's new right-to-buy arrangements for *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations' tenants to ensure their homes are not turned into holiday cottages or sold to outsiders; and if he will make a statement. [39057]

Mr. Clappison: Following the publication of the Housing White Paper, we consulted widely on the proposal for a purchase grant scheme for tenants of housing associations. In the light of concerns expressed about the impact of the proposals on the availability of social housing in rural areas, we have concluded that existing and future housing association properties situated in rural communities of less than 3,000 people will not be included in the purchase grant scheme. This will be provided for in legislation.

The purchase grant proposals relate only to tenants of housing associations, and not those of local authorities.

Homelessness

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of discretionary subsidies on homelessness among the most vulnerable groups in society. [38897]

Mr. Clappison: The changes to the housing benefit rules that will be introduced in January 1996 are intended to bear down on high rents in the private rented sector. There is no reason to assume that the changes will affect the level of homelessness.

Water, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the extent to which water in the aquifers of the Doncaster area geological syncline could be used in greater volumes, either in the public water supply or other purposes; what is the current cost of obtaining potable water from this source; what capital and revenue cost would be incurred in using sufficient water for these uses so as to stabilise the height of the local water table; and if he will make a statement. [39035]

Mr. Clappison: The National Rivers Authority has a duty to conserve and secure the proper use of water resources in England and Wales. I understand that the Sherwood sandstone aquifer in the Doncaster area is already fully utilised for public water supply. It is possible that some groundwater could be made available from the carboniferous stratum, but the quantities are expected to be small and the water quality poor. The cost of obtaining a potable water supply or stabilising the local water table have not been investigated.

Latham Report

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress on implementing the Latham report. [38868]

Mr. Clappison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden on 18 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *1065*. We have now published the results of the two consultation exercises and continue to consider legislative proposals in the light of these, and subsequent discussions with the construction industry.

Drinking Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information he has for each of the water companies of the level of dissolved lead in water pipes; and if he will make a statement. [38995]

Mr. Clappison: The standard for lead in drinking water in England and Wales is a maximum allowable concentration of 50 microgrammes per litre—ug/litre. This standard relates to unflushed samples at consumers's taps and is equivalent to an average concentration of about 20ug/litre. This is more stringent than the 50ug/litre standard in the European Community directive on water intended for human consumption which relates to flushed samples.

There is no lead in the water that leaves treatment works. Most of the lead is picked up from the consumers own pipework. The drinking water inspectorate has issued a leaflet to advise consumers on simple steps they can take to minimise the levels of lead in their drinking water.

The table sets out the number of samples containing lead in various concentrations by water company for 1994, the latest year for which information is available. No distinction is made between dissolved lead and particulate lead.

Number of samples containing lead in various concentrations by company for 1994

Company	*Number of samples taken*	*Lead concentration µg/litre*						
		<10	*11–20*	*21–30*	*31–40*	*41.–50*	*51–100*	*>100*
Anglian	2,272	2,181	63	20	4	2	1	1
Bournemouth and West Hampshire	73	71	1	—	—	—	—	—
Bristol	321	212	39	31	12	10	12	5
Cambridge	247	185	41	14	4	1	—	2
Chester	20	19	1	—	—	—	—	—
Cholderton	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dwr Cymru	1,437	1,236	71	40	20	17	27	26
East Surrey	271	252	12	2	2	2	1	—
Essex and Suffolk	1,045	981	32	11	9	7	4	1
Folkestone	64	54	6	4	—	—	—	—
Hartlepoole	12	12	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Kent	137	131	3	2	—	—	—	1
Mid Southern	179	178	1	—	—	—	—	—
North East	906	717	112	42	15	9	10	1
North Surrey	73	63	2	4	2	—	—	—
Northumbrian	1,125	941	87	39	22	12	22	2
North West	15,868	12,103	1,426	829	472	320	500	218
Portsmouth	243	193	28	13	4	11	3	1
Severn Trent	4,834	3,645	455	286	148	110	156	34
Southern	869	731	64	22	18	8	15	11
South Staffs	489	406	47	17	8	2	9	—
South East Water	345	294	19	11	7	6	8	—
South West	671	573	53	17	10	6	10	2
Sutton District	32	31	1	—	—	—	—	—
Tendring Hundred	268	263	3	—	1	—	—	1
Thames	1,082	1,014	50	5	8	1	4	—
Three Valles Water	1,599	1,435	90	42	16	6	8	2
Wessex	1,304	1,152	71	33	12	13	10	13
Wrexham	52	49	1	1	1	—	—	—
Yorkshire	2,783	2,235	252	111	54	34	62	35
York Waterworks	113	107	3	—	3	—	—	—
Total samples in 1994	38.737	31,467	3,034	1,596	852	567	862	356
Per cent. of total samples	–	81.25	7.85	4.1	2.2	1.5	2.2	0.9

Birmingham Airport

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to call in the planning application for expansion of Birmingham international airport. [39621]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The application is still being considered by the local planning authority, Solihull metropolitan borough council. Should they be minded to approve it the application will be notified to the Secretary of State in due course and he will then decide whether to call it in for his own decision.

Tenants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to enable tenants in rent arrears to transfer to cheaper accommodation where this is at the tenant's request. [38538]

Mr. Clappison: None. Transfers of local authority tenants and rent arrears are matters for local authorities.

Incinerators

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer of 21 February, when he now expects to publish Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's report on polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzo-para-dioxins and polychlorinated d:benzofurans in the vicinity of incinerators. [38904]

Mr. Clappison: It should be available before Christmas.

Area Cost Adjustments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has commissioned on the use of travel-to-work areas to calculate area cost adjustment; what further studies have been commissioned into area cost adjustments, and if he will make a statement. [38918]

Sir Paul Beresford: We commissioned research into the possible use of travel-to-work areas from the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at

Newcastle university. The report of this work has subsequently been discussed with the local authority associations in the standard spending assessment sub-group.

This sub-group has received a number of other papers on area cost adjustment which include or comment on other research work. These are a report from a technical sub-group which sought to investigate alternatives to the current methodology, a commentary by the south east counties on the alternatives, and a paper by the metropolitan districts which covered a report by Ernst and Young on the current methodology.

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration has announced his proposals for an independent review of the adjustment. I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend gave on 17 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *185—86*.

Homelessness, London

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently homeless in London. [39645]

Mr. Clappison: Local authorities in England report on their quarterly PIE return to my Department the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985.

The latest estimate for London appears in table 1 of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England. Statistics for the second quarter of 1995", a copy of which is in the Library.

Housing, London

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many London homes *(a)* public and *(b)* private sectors are unmodernised. [39369]

Mr. Clappison: The 1991 "English House Condition Survey" recorded modernisation only in relation to kitchens and bathrooms. The following were found in London.

	Public sector		*Private sector*	
	Percentage of sector	*Number*	*Percentage of sector*	*Number*
Unmodernised kitchen	142,000	20.6	325,000	14.1
Unmodernised bathroom	216,000	31.4	486,000	21.1

The 1991 EHCS defines an unmodernised kitchen or bathroom as one with amenities more than 25 years old.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes in London are unfit for habitation. [39368]

Mr. Clappison: The 1991 "English House Condition Survey" found 301,000 London dwellings to be unfit under section 604 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by schedule 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Development Land

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has for the amount of *(a)* land and *(b)* buildings in London which are available for development. [39370]

Mr. Clappison: The Department of the Environment does not hold detailed information on buildings in London available for development. A central register of unused and underused public land was maintained in the Department from 1981 onwards in accordance with part X of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. In 1989 this responsibility was transferred to local authorities.

Berkshire County Council

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if he intends to appeal against the ruling of the High Court on 6 October 1995 that his decision to abolish Berkshire county council and transfer its functions to the six existing district councils was invalid in so far as it concerns the transfer of functions to the borough of Bracknell Forest and the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. [40487]

Mr. Gummer: The court ruling was not a judgment on the merits of my decision on the structure of local government in Berkshire, but turned on a point of interpretation of the Local Government Act 1992 which I feel needs to be tested further. Leave to appeal was granted by the High Court, and I shall be serving notice of appeal to enable the matter to be argued further in the Court of Appeal. I shall not lay the Berkshire (Structural Change) Order before Parliament while the appeal is proceeding.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's responsibilities. [38450]

Mr. Lang: My Department's responsibilities are indicated in the list of ministerial responsibilities which is published regularly by the Cabinet Office and is available through the Vote Office. The Department's objective is to help UK business compete successfully at home and abroad. It also aims, through the Office of Science and Technology, to strengthen the UK's science engineering and technology capability and to maximise its contribution to national economic performance and quality of life.

Fireworks

Mr. Chris Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received following the revocation of the Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986. [39348]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My Department has received a number of inquiries about the implications of the revocation of the 1986 regulations. My officials have held discussions with representatives of the trading standards service and explained that the supply of fireworks to

children under 16 remains an offence both under section 31 of the Explosives Act 1875 (as amended) and under the General Product Safety Regulations 1994.

Mr. Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will reintroduce the Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986. [39347]

Mr. Evans: I am satisfied that the requirements currently in place are adequate to prevent the sale of fireworks to children under 16 years of age. I do not believe there is any need for changes in the legislation.

Newsagents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the chief executive of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents; and what was discussed. [39088]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I met Mr. Bob Frost, chief executive of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents, on 13 July 1995.

Mr. Frost expressed the NFRN's concerns about recent developments, in particular: the recent increases in wholesaler's carriage charges; the changes being made in wholesale distribution areas; the decision by several publishers to reduce the newsagent's margin on retail sales; and the effect on newsagents of orders made against the NFRN under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976.

Mr. Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Office of Fair Trading's proposals which require that all retail newsagents supplied from the same distribution point must by October 1996 be charged the same rate for delivery. [39087]

Mr. Evans: The OFT has no such proposal. However, I agree with the OFT that high carriage charges should not be used as a means of deterring new entrants.

Mr. Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the recent increases in carriage charges on newspaper outlets. [39086]

Mr. Page: It appears that wholesalers have increased their charges to recover an increased element of the expenses associated with distribution and delivery. That is a matter for their commercial judgment.

Company Takeovers

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reviews of the law and regulations regarding company takeovers have been carried out since 1985; and what were their main conclusions. [39262]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: In 1988, the Government published the results of a review of mergers policy and the merger control procedures of the Fair Trading Act 1973—"Mergers Policy—a DTI paper on the policy and procedures of merger control". The main conclusion was that the policy towards mergers should remain unchanged but that a number of changes would be made to merger control procedures to help speed up decision. The changes introduced include a non-mandatory prenotification system and the power to accept divestment undertakings in lieu of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. More recently, following a review of merger control procedures as part of the Government's deregulation initiative, a number of changes have been made or are to be made, including the power to accept behavioural undertakings in lieu of reference to the MMC and a reduction in the period during which a merger may be referred to the MMC from six to four months.

Mr. Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will make a statement on the objectives of the current law regarding company takeovers. [39264]

Mr. Evans: The Fair Trading Act 1973 gives my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade discretion to refer qualifying mergers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where he believes they may operate against the public interest. Since 1984, the Government's policy has been that, in determining whether mergers should be referred, the primary consideration is the effect on competition. Certain mergers are also subject to the City code on takeovers and mergers which is a non-statutory code administered by the panel on takeovers and mergers. The code and the panel operate principally to ensure fair and equal treatment of all shareholders in relation to takeovers. The code also provides an orderly framework within which takeovers are conducted.

In 1987, a review of the operations of the takeover panel identified a number of measures to strengthen the panel's regulation of takeovers while maintaining its existing non-statutory status. The measures were designed to improve the monitoring and investigative capabilities of the panel and to bring the panel into a closer relationship with the regulatory arrangements established by the Financial Services Act 1986.

The Trade and Industry Committee of the House also undertook a review of takeovers and mergers policy and made a number of recommendations, which were published on 27 November 1991, HC 90. The Government's response to that report was published on 26 February 1992, HC 300.

Newspaper Industry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his proposals for deregulatory changes within the newspaper industry. [39085]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The changes introduced in October 1994 have had a significant effect in opening the retail market. I have no further proposals in this area.

Cable Companies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints he has received in the last 12 months from (i) members of the public, (ii) local authorities and (iii) hon. Members about cable companies failing to reinstate properly the pavement or highway after cabling work is completed. [38850]

Mr. Ian Taylor: One complaint was received between 21 October 1994 and 20 October 1995 stating that a cable company had not met its statutory requirements with regards to reinstatement. However, the number of complaints received during this period expressing displeasure over reinstatements by cable operators are as follows:

Members of the public: 41

Local authorities: 2

Hon. Members: 21

The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 sets the standard of works for cable operators and the utilities, and provides that both interim and permanent reinstatements must conform with the statutory national specification. All cases of defective reinstatement which are identified by the local highway authority must be rectified at the undertaker's expenses; additionally, the undertaker must for each proved defect bear the cost of the initial investigation and three further follow-up inspections.

The number of complaints per kilometre trenched has fallen.

Mountain Bikes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department is taking in respect of those manufacturers who sell mountain bikes that are unsafe for use other than on a tarmac road as notified to him by Nottingham university in the research it has carried out for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [39017]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The report commissioned by my Department into the safety of mountain bikes made a number of recommendations aimed at better matching the performance of mountain bikes with user's expectations and intended use. My officials will shortly be discussing the detailed findings of the completed research with the bicycle industry.

Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Company

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much funding has been provided to Barnsley and Doncaster TEC for small and medium-sized businesses in each year since its inception, including the current financial year; what is his forecast for the coming financial year; and if he will make a statement. [39556]

Mr. Page: Barnsley and Doncaster TEC has received funding for the support of small and medium-sized businesses from numerous Government and European sources. The main DTI support is the enterprise budget which was £328,000 in 1993–94, £362,500 in 1994–95 and is forecast to be £294,000 in 1995–96.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the hon. Member for Walsall, North may expect to receive a reply to his letter of 5 September concerning a company in his constituency which is being dealt with by the offices of the Minister for Trade. [39646]

Mr. Nelson: I replied to the hon. Gentleman's letter on 23 October.

PRIME MINISTER

British Workers (Japan)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to discuss with the Japanese Government the position of those British workers in Japan who, after paying into the Japanese state retirement pension scheme, are eligible neither for a pension nor for a lump sum payment [39393]

The Prime Minister: Officials in the Department of Social Security have held informal, exploratory discussions with Japanese officials about a social security agreement between the two countries concentrating on matters of national insurance contribution liability. We have had no formal request from the Japanese Government for such an agreement, but any such approach would be carefully considered.

Free Phone Numbers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the Departments and agencies that provide a free phone number allowing members of the public to pass on information regarding private individuals. [38893]

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

Young Scientists Contest

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what were his engagements on 11 September; what factors made it impossible for him to accept an invitation to open a European contest for young scientists on that date; and if he will make a statement. [39029]

The Prime Minister: I have no record of an invitation to open such a contest on 11 September. I did receive an invitation, in February, to attend the meeting on 12 or 13 September, but I declined the invitation since I had no plans to be in Newcastle on that date; nor was I.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish an updated list of ministerial Committees of the Cabinet. [39495]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *1005–12*.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the campaign led by the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association for recognition and compensation for those veterans who participated in or witnessed nuclear tests held by the United Kingdom. [39208]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 25 May, *Official Report*, column *662*.

Public Appointments, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary; [39434]

(2) if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Office makes appointments in the county of South Yorkshire, with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years. [39463]

The Prime Minister: For these purposes, my Office is part of the Cabinet Office—Office of Public Service. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Scottish Breast Campaign

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister how many postcards he has received from the Scottish Breast Campaign; and to how many of these he has replied. [38772]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1995]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 16 October, *Official Report,* column *23.*

Duke of Windsor (Papers)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on information relating to *(a)* the conduct of the Duke of Windsor in world war two, *(b)* Anthony Blunt's visit to Schloss Friedricshof in April 1945 and *(c)* documents taken from Schloss Friedricshof in 1945 held by Her Majesty's Government; and when this information will be available for public inspection. [38002]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 October 1995]:* Papers removed from Schloss Friedricshof by Sir Owen Morshead, the King's Librarian, and Anthony Blunt in 1945 were returned to Schloss Friedricshof in 1951.

Papers relating to the Duke of Windsor's passage through Spain and Portugal in 1940 were published in 1957 in volume X of "Documents on German Foreign Policy".

United Nations Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what engagements he had to mark United Nations Day. [36752]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* I attended the United Nations 50th anniversary commemorative summit meeting in New York between 22 and 24 October.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss French nuclear testing in the Pacific in his forthcoming meeting with President Jacques Chirac of France. [38428]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* I shall be holding talks with President Chirac on 30 October, during the Anglo-French summit. It is expected that the talks will cover a wide range of current issues.

Joseph Rotblat

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what communications he has had with Joseph Rotblat on winning the Nobel peace prize. [39269]

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence he has had with Professor Joseph Rotblat since the award to him of the Nobel peace prize; what assessment he has made of the works of the Pugwash Foundation; and if he will make a statement. [38831]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* None.

Employee Fraud

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* office and *(b)* non-departmental public bodies for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (1) misappropriated in such frauds and (2) subsequently recovered. [39123]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* None.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Information Technology

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to ensure that Government Departments are making best use of the skills and expertise of the private sector in their expenditure on information technology. [40457]

Mr. Freeman: The private finance initiative has the aim of delivering high quality and more cost-effective public services by bringing the private sector more directly into the provision of those services. Expenditure on information technology on which government spends over £2 billion per year is a key area where the private finance initiative has demonstrated a vital role.

Many Government Departments have already established dedicated private finance units. But, given the unique nature of information systems and information technology projects, I am establishing a new team to work specifically on IS/IT projects. This will be in the Office of Public Service, and draw on resources from the private finance panel executive and CCTA, the Government centre for information systems.

The new unit will ensure that the principles of the private finance initiative are applied to IT expenditure across the whole of Government, with strong backing from the centre of Whitehall.

Public Appointments, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Office makes appointments in the county of South Yorkshire, with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years; [39467]

(2) if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary. [39430]

Mr. Freeman: There are no Cabinet Office, Central Office of Information or HMSO public appointments in South Yorkshire.

Agencies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 17 October to the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), *Official Report*, column *183*, if the three appointments of consultants in connection with the future of his agencies were made after considering alternative sources for such appointments tested by competition; and if those appointments are subjected to *(a)* maximum total cost ceilings *(b)* maximum cost per day ceilings or *(c)* a time limit for their appointment. [39334]

Mr. Freeman: The three appointments of consultants in connection with the future of my agencies were made through a competitive process following an advertisement in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities.

The appointment to advise urgently on ways of increasing private sector involvement in the Occupational Health and Safety Agency, Recruitment and Assessment Services, the Central Office of Information and the Civil Service College is subject to a maximum total cost ceiling and a time limit.

The total fees for the appointments in relation to HMSO and Chessington Computer Centre are fixed in so far as the projects conform to the terms of reference in the invitation to tender and the assumptions set out in the bids from the financial advisers. Elements outside the control of the financial advisers may lead to an application for additional fees which would then need to be carefully considered. Expenditure will be closely monitored.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon Advisory Committee

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has reached a decision on the future of the Salmon Advisory Committee. [40202]

Mr. Baldry: The Salmon Advisory Committee has now largely completed the various tasks that Fisheries Ministers have asked it to undertake. Six of its reports have been published and a further five reports are nearing completion. When its current work is completed, the committee's report will provide a set of studies comprehensively examining all the factors that affect salmon during the various stages of their life cycle as well as on a range of other important topics. The committee's published reports have all been well received.

The terms of appointment of a great majority of the committee's members will shortly come to an end, and with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales I have been considering whether the life of the committee should be extended for a further period. We have concluded that, once the committee has completed its current programme of work, there are no further tasks for it to undertake of sufficient importance to justify its retention. The committee will, therefore, be wound up at the end of the current financial year.

A particularly valuable feature of the Salmon Advisory Committee is that it represents views from all part of Great Britain. My right hon. Friends and I do not wish to lose the opportunity to seek advice on salmon issues on a Great Britain basis and we are, accordingly planning to hold regular meetings with representatives of the various organisations interested in salmon fisheries; these will take place at least once a year and will provide a forum for the discussion of matters relating to salmon and salmon fisheries.

My right hon. Friend and I wish to thank all members and former members of the Salmon Advisory Committee for their hard work and dedication; they have made a major contribution to improving our understanding of salmon. Particular credit is due to the committee's chairman, Professor George Dunnet, CBE who, sadly, died last month. We have asked Mr. Robert Clerk OBE, an existing member of the committee, to take over the duties of chairman for the remaining life of the committee.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE there have been in animals born in each year since the ruminant feed ban was introduced. [40301]

Mrs. Browning: Up to 24 October 1995, BSE has been confirmed in the following numbers of animals born after the ruminant fed ban was introduced on 18 July 1988:

1988[1]: 10,689
1989: 9,364
1990: 2,425
1991: 461
1992: 6
1993: 1

[1]19 July–31 December:

Countryside Schemes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost in 1994, in Humberside and the three counties of Yorkshire, of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1995. [38989]

Mr. Clappison: I have been asked to reply.

Payments in the counties in question in the financial year 1994–95 under the countryside stewardship scheme totalled £1.279 million and under the Wildlife Enhancement scheme £464,000. Payments for the two schemes in 1995–96 are estimated to be £1.534 million and £330,000 respectively. The hedgerow incentive scheme was combined with countryside stewardship in October 1994 and separate costs are not available. Countryside premium is not available in the counties in question.

Animal Transits (Deaths)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate for the number of sheep and lambs who die in transit each year. [31128]

Mrs. Browning: It is not possible to produce such an estimate from the information available.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of calves that are exported from the United Kingdom are checked by MAFF at the time that an export certificate is signed to see if they are from herds with histories of either bovine spongiform encephalopathy or enzootic bovine leukosis; [38707]

(2) how many calves from herds known to have had BSE have been exported in each of the last five years; and to which countries they have been sent; [38709]

(3) how many calves from herds known to have had EBL have been exported in each of the last five years; and if he will indicate to which countries they have been sent. [38708]

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North–West (Mr. Banks) on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *125–26*.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many imperfect animal health certificates, including their schedules, were recorded by his staff monitoring livestock exports at Brightlingsea during September; [38695]

(2) what action was taken in respect of imperfect animal health certificates recorded by his staff at Brightlingsea during September. [38697]

Mrs. Browning: No consignments of live animals exported out of Brightlingsea during September were accompanied by imperfect animal health certification.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many imperfect animal health certificates, including their schedules, were recorded by his staff monitoring livestock exports at Dover during September; [38696]

(2) what action was taken in respect of imperfect animal health certificates recorded by his staff at Dover during September. [38698]

Mrs. Browning: In September, the documentation accompanying two consignments of live animals which underwent official checks before their export from Dover was found to be incorrect. In the first instance, the export health certificate indicated that there were 260 animals in the consignment although there were in fact only 160. The certifying veterinary inspector confirmed that the certificate should have referred to 160 animals and amended the certificate appropriately, in accordance with official procedures for making such amendments. In the second instance, the export health certificate number was misread by the certifying veterinary inspector and misquoted on the accompanying schedule listing the animals in the consignment. As soon as the certifying inspector confirmed the error, the schedule was amended by MAFF personnel and the export allowed to proceed.

Spring Traps

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policy consideration led to the decision to add four spring traps to the previous list of 11 traps already approved for use under the Spring Traps Approval Order 1995. [38699]

Mrs. Browning: Under the Pests Act 1954, the Ministry has to consider proposals for the use of spring traps for animals. The four new traps met the necessary conditions for approval.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria were used by him for approval of the four new traps he has added to the list of 11 traps already approved for use under the Spring Traps Approval Order. [38701]

Mrs. Browning: The four traps were assessed for their safety, efficacy and humaneness. The impact and clamping forces delivered by the BMI Magnum 55, 110 and 116 traps were all at least equal to, or greater than, those for traps previously approved for the same species under the 1954 Act. The Aldrich spring activated animal snare is a spring-operated, live-capture, padded foot snare; it was tested first on a human volunteer and then results were collected in the field.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he added four spring traps to the previous 11 traps already approved for use under the Spring Traps Approval Order before the outcome of the current consideration being given to the humane trapping standards by his Department and the British Standards Institute. [38700]

Mrs. Browning: The work of the International Standards Organisation's Technical Committee 191 is not yet complete and discussions are still taking place. Under the Pests Act 1954, the Ministry has to consider proposals for the use of spring traps for animals and cannot unreasonably delay consideration of such proposals.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if animals were used to test any of the four new traps he has added to the list of 11 traps already approved for use under the Spring Traps Approval Order; and if the Animal Procedures Committee of the Home Office was consulted. [38702]

Mrs. Browning: No animals were used in the laboratory assessment of the three new BMI traps. For the Aldrich spring activated snare, field results were collected.

As required under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the relevant Home Office inspector was consulted.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of organophosphate compounds in licensed sheep dips sold in the British Isles have passed the neurotoxicity screen tests required by EC regulations, and if he will make a statement. [38691]

Mrs. Browning: There are two organophosphate compounds used in products authorised in the United Kingdom as sheep dips. Reviews of the products are being undertaken by the Veterinary Products Committee in accordance with directive 81/852/EEC, as amended, and guidelines published by the European Commission. These include a requirement for data to assess any risk which might result from exposure to the products.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ban the use of organophosphate-based sheep dips pending the completion of the epidermiological studies of organophosphate-related illness being pursued by a consortium of Government Departments; and if he will make a statement. [38618]

Mrs. Browning: The safety of organophosphorus sheep dips is kept under constant review by the Veterinary Products Committee, the independent body of scientists which advises the Government on veterinary medicines matters. Its most recent advice, following assessment of a report from the Institute of Occupational Health on research into the long-term health effects of exposure to organophosphorus sheep dips, is that, on the basis of current scientific evidence, the marketing of OP dips should continue. However, it is essential that the guidance in the leaflet "Sheep dipping" and label instructions on the product are carefully followed in full.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department will suspend the sale of all organophosphate-based dips which *(a)* have not passed the neurotoxicity screening tests or *(b)* have not yet been tested; and if he will make a statement. [38693]

Mrs. Browning: Following a review of organophosphorus sheep dips by the Veterinary Products Committee in 1993, the committee concluded there was no scientific evidence for a ban. This advice by the VPC was re-affirmed earlier this year, following its assessment of Institute of Occupational Health report about research into the possible long-term health effects of exposure to organophosphorus dips. Ministers' decisions following VPC advice on such reviews are made public.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the available research material his Department has *(a)* evaluated and *(b)* commissioned on the toxicity and neurotoxicity of organophosphate compounds; and if he will make a statement. [38617]

Mrs. Browning: As part of its comprehensive review of the issues surrounding OP dips in 1993, the Veterinary Products Committee considered a considerable number of scientific papers, some published and others containing confidential information. A full list of all the papers involved was included as an annex to MAFF news release 424/93 issued on 1 December 1993 announcing the outcome of the review. A copy of this news release is available in the Library of the House.

MAFF has not commissioned any research on the toxicity or neurotoxicity of organophosphate compounds. However, MAFF is jointly commissioning with the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Executive an epidemiological study. The results of this study will be published.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to extend the use of BHC (Gammexane)-based sheep dips; and if he will make a statement. [38615]

Mrs. Browning: No BHC (Gammexane)-based products are currently authorised for use as sheep dips. The last product licence for such products was withdrawn by the company in 1991, and there are no plans to re-introduce these products.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will extend the provision of research into new methods of sheep scab control to include the commission of a full economic audit of the options currently available for controlling this disease; and if he will make a statement. [38614]

Mrs. Browning: On 10 July 1995, when I gave the results of the 1995 spring surveillance exercise carried out by the State Veterinary Service into the incidence of sheep scab, I announced that I had also requested a review of the alternative options that may be available to deal with this disease.

A consultation paper will be issued shortly.

WALES

Rechem International, Pontypool

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to hold a public inquiry into Rechem International, Pontypool. [39594]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) on 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *1203–04*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to make his announcement on the level of revenue support grant for the new local authorities in Wales. [39577]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In accordance with the normal timetable, provisional standard spending assessments for local authorities, including provisional levels of revenue support grant and non-domestic rate income, will be announced in mid-December. The final 1996–97 local government revenue settlement will be announced in late January.

Cardiff Bay Opera House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, column *285*, and his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *1200–01*, concerning the Cardiff Bay

Opera House Trust, if he will specify the nature of the potential conflict of interests problem resolved in September 1993. [39816]

Mr. Hague: The attention of Welsh Office officials was drawn to the fact that Grosvenor Waterside, a subsidiary of Associated British Ports, might become a member of the trust. It was agreed that the company should not be represented on the trust until such time as the terms of purchase of the land had been formally agreed.

Housing Association Ombudsman

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce legislation establishing an ombudsman in Wales to deal with complaints against housing associations which are registered with Tai Cymru, in line with the arrangements for England and Scotland. [39874]

Mr. Hague: I am considering the question of such complaints procedures in the light of my consultation paper "More Choice in the Rented Sector".

Land Authority for Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *341*, if the use of the Land Authority for Wales compulsory purchase powers to acquire land on the Caldicot Levels will require his approval. [39876]

Mr. Hague: Yes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what grounds summonses have not been issued against those involved with the Dutch transport firm Nicolay following allegations of offences under the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order. [35601]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 19 July 1995]:* I have been asked to reply.

The summonses issued by Dover magistrates court on 8 December 1994 for service in the Netherlands on W. Nicolay bv and named employees of the company were received by the UK central authority in the Home Office on 3 February 1995 and were forwarded for service to the Ministry of Justice in The Hague on 26 February. The summonses were not served by the authorities in the Netherlands, but the company submitted voluntarily to the jurisdiction of the magistrates court. The charges against the employees were withdrawn. The case was heard on 23 October 1995.

Prison Population

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of the daily prison population of a minimum jail sentence for *(a)* drug traffickers and *(b)* burglars with three previous convictions; [39598]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on the jail population of abolishing remission for prisoners serving less than one year; [39600]

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect on the daily prison population of moving the eligibility for remission to the 85 per cent. point of each sentence. [39599]

Mr. Maclean: A White Paper will be published early in 1996 setting out full details of the Government's proposals on sentencing and our assessment of their implications.

Prison Inspections

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* members of their staff are allowed to accompany the chief inspector of prisons when he visits a prison in hon. Members' constituencies; and if he will make a statement. [39548]

Miss Widdecombe: It is not normal practice for HM chief inspector of prisons and prison inspectors to be accompanied by visitors while conducting inspections of prison establishments in England and Wales.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the members of the board of visitors at Doncaster prison; and when their term of office expires. [39551]

Miss Widdecombe: The members of the board of visitors at HMP Doncaster are as listed:

Mrs. Audrey Anne Murphy JP (Chairman)
Mr. John Sammuel George Share (Vice Chairman)
Mr. Michael Andrew JP
Mrs. Diane Atkinson
Mrs. Hazel Pauline Bailey JP
Mr. William John Barton
Mrs. Yvonne Cooke
Mr. Pete Etherington
Mr. Martin John Faulkner
Mr. Barry Michael Goforth
Mr. Roy Hunt
Miss Susan Iris Mackay
Mr. Douglas Manners
Mrs. Carole Diane O'Neill JP
Mrs. Maureen Oakes
Mrs. Andrea Robinson
Mrs. Cynthia Janice Thomas JP
Mrs. Pauline Wilson

The term of appointment of members of the board of visitors at HMP Doncaster is up to the triennial review date of the board, which is 31 December 1996.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the chief inspector of prisons is next scheduled to visit Doncaster prison; and if he will make a statement. [39547]

Miss Widdecombe: The next announced full inspection of HMP Doncaster is scheduled to begin on 10 March 1996. Whether HM chief inspector—if by then in post—will visit on that occasion will be a matter for decision at the time.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the subcontractors providing services at, or relating to, Doncaster prison since it opened whose contract was terminated before its time of expiry; and if he will indicate the reason for the contract being terminated; [38965]

(2) if he will list the subcontractors currently providing services at or relating to Doncaster prison; and if he will list in each case the services provided, the length of contract and the cost of the contract. [38966]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the temporary director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about present and former sub-contracted services at Doncaster prison.

Premier Prison Services does not sub-contract any operating functions involving security, the provision of prisoner programmes, health care, food services, works services or laundry.

There are, however, several specialist contracts in place to deal with the maintenance of computer equipment; electronic locking systems; closed-circuit television linked to video recording systems; and specialist plant and equipment. In addition, specialist medical personnel support Doncaster prison on a contractual basis when required. The terms of such contracts are a matter of commercial confidentiality for Premier Prison Services and the contractors concerned.

To date Premier Prison Services has not terminated any contract with sub-contractors at Doncaster prison.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current reinstatement value of Doncaster prison; how it is calculated; and how often it is reassessed. [39054]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the temporary director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the current re-instatement value of Doncaster prison, how it is calculated, and how often it is assessed.

Doncaster prison is contractually managed by Premier Prison Services. Under the terms of the contract, damage to the structure of the prison buildings is the responsibility of the contractor, except where it is deemed to have been outside the contractor's control.

The pre-final account construction costs of Doncaster prison are estimated at £92.4 million (including VAT, variation of price and resource costs). However, given the extent of the liability agreed with the contractor and the need to evaluate the cost of damage should it occur, it is not necessary for the Prison Service to calculate, or re-assess, the costs of the potential re-instatement value of the prison. This is not our practice even for prisons for which we must fully bear any re-instatement costs.

Badsworth Hunt

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by date and location the number of police deployed to keep the peace at each meeting of the Badsworth hunt during the last 12 months. [39562]

Mr. Maclean: This is an operational matter for the chief constable of West Yorkshire.

Farm Fires

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires occurred on United Kingdom livestock farms in each of the last five years; how many *(a)* poultry and *(b)* other animals died in farm fires in each of those years; and if he will make a statement. [39335]

Mr. Kirkhope: The available information is for fires in agricultural buildings attended by local authority fire brigades; livestock farms are not separately identified in the statistics. The latest year available is for 1993.

Fires in agricultural buildings[1] showing poultry and other animals killed, United Kingdom 1989–93

	Fires		Animals killed		
Year	Total	in which animals died	Poultry[2]	Other	Total
1993	1,820	104	[3]8,165	4,322	12,487
1992	2,050	123	[4]42,808	4,651	47,459
1991	1,885	120	[5]188,483	6,147	194,630
1990	2,072	101	[6]74,649	17,499	92,148
1989	2,233	121	[7]58,967	16,382	75,349

Notes:
[1] Includes buildings associated with agriculture, forestry and fishing.
[2] Includes chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese.
[3] Includes 3 fires killing 1,000 chickens, 3,000 chicks and 3,300 ducks.
[4] Includes 7 fires killing 1,000, 1,000, 3,000, 5,500, 9,000, 9,600 and 15,000 chickens.
[5] Includes 5 fires killing 5,000, 5,000, 13,000, 21,000 and 90,000 chickens.
[6] Includes 5 fires killing 10,000, 18,000 and 30,000 chickens, 5,000 turkeys and 5,082 ducks.
[7] Includes 3 fires killing 8,258, 18,000 and 27,000 chickens.
Source:
Home Office Fires Statistics.

Pipe Hawk

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police authorities who currently use the ground-probing system Pipe Hawk; and if he will make a statement. [39022]

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the Pipe Hawk ground-probing radar system has been used by the Gloucestershire, Essex and Gwent police.

Firemen (Deaths and Injuries)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number of injuries to and deaths of firemen in each of the last five years in (i) Wales and (ii) England; and if he will make a statement. [38987]

Mr. Kirkhope: The information is given in the following table:

Deaths and injuries of fire brigade personnel while on duty in England and Wales 1990 to 1994–95

Year	England		Wales	
	Deaths	Injuries[1]	Deaths	Injuries[1]
1990	5	671	1	59
1991	3	880	1	42
1992	3	811	0	50
1993[2] Q1	0	251	0	25
1993–94	3	722	0	75
1994/5p[3]	1	567	0	40

[1] Injuries are defined as those which result in absence of duty for at least one month or 2 weeks or more of hospitalization.

[2] January to March 1993. Since 1993 data is collected on a financial years (April to March) basis; prior to that it was on a calender year.

[3] Figures for 1994–95 are provisional and those for England exclude London Fire Brigade casualties. In 1993–94 there were 149 non-fatal London Fire Brigade casualties and no deaths.

Source:

Home Office

Prison Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the 137 full submissions referred to in Mr. Lewis's letter of resignation which the prison service were required to submit to the Home Office between October 1994 and January 1995 together with the name of the addressee. [38860]

Miss Widdecombe: No. The advice given to Ministers is confidential.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what date the director general of the prison service provided evidence to the inquiry; and on how many occasions he was called out of the interview on the instructions of Ministers, as described in paragraph 3.81 of the report of the Learmont inquiry; [38863]

(2) on how many occasions the then Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Stirling, called out the director general of the prison service from his interview, as described in paragraph 3.85 of the Learmont report; and what was the nature of the business which necessitated this action. [38864]

Miss Widdecombe: The former director general, Mr. Lewis, was interviewed by members of the inquiry team on five occasions. The interview referred to in paragraph 3.85 of Sir John Learmont's report took place on 29 March 1995. On this occasion, the beginning of the interview was delayed, there was an early adjournment for lunch, and Mr. Lewis was called out on one occasion during the afternoon, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Stirling, who was then Minister of State, requested urgent briefing about matters which were the subject of media interest and on which radio and television interviews had been requested. These matters included the market testing programme, the rise in the prison population, and the high intensity training scheme.

Public Events (Arrests)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many arrests were made during the VE-day anniversary celebrations held in Hyde park, London in May; and if he will list the offences committed; [39082]

(2) how many arrests were made during the lesbian and gay parade march in London on 24 June; and if he will list the offences committed. [39077]

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Fire Service, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of people employed in the fire service in Wales in each of the brigades. [38985]

Mr. Kirkhope: The following table shows the establishment figures as at 1 January 1995 which have been taken from returns made by the brigades:

	Regular firefighters	Retained firefighters	Control room personnel
Clwyd	185	225	22
Dyfed	228	342	17
Mid Glamorgan	335	264	21
South Glamorgan	323	24	17
West Glamorgan	247	111	18
Gwent	286	189	20
Gwynedd	105	418	15
Powys	31	257	9
Total	1,740	1,830	139

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on response rates by the fire brigades in Wales. [38988]

Mr. Kirkhope: The following table shows the average response time in minutes in respect of fire incidents, taken from when the brigade answered the first call to when the first fire appliances attended at the fireground:

Brigade	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Clywd	7	7	8	7	7
Dyfed	9	9	9	9	8
Gwent	8	8	7	8	7
Gwynedd	9	9	9	9	10
Mid Glamorgan	9	8	9	9	9
Powys	10	11	11	10	10
South Glamorgan	6	6	6	7	6
West Glamorgan	7	7	7	7	6

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the annual budget for each fire brigade in Wales, in real terms, in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [38986]

Mr. Kirkhope: The budgeted net current expenditure for the brigades concerned—at constant 1995–96 prices—is as follows:

£ million

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
Clwyd	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.8	9.5
Dyfed	9.1	9.2	8.7	9.2	9.2
Gwent	11.7	11.3	11.6	11.6	11.4
Gwynedd	6.1	5.9	6.2	6.2	6.1
Mid Glamorgan	12.8	12.8	13.1	13.1	13.0
Powys	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9
South Glamorgan	10.0	9.7	9.8	10.0	9.9
West Glamorgan	10.3	9.4	9.7	10.0	10.1

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total cost involved in the tagging of Clive Barratt of Kings Lynn, Norfolk; and if he will make a statement. [30811]

(2) if he will list the number of people *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have been given a tagging system by courts; and what is the average cost of such a scheme. [30812]

Mr. Kirkhope: The electronic monitoring trials in Manchester, Reading and Norfolk are expected to cost a total of about £1.6 million over nine months. It is not possible to ascribe costs to an individual offender.

The trials started in July this year. As of 23 October, 11 men and no women have been sentenced to electronically monitored curfew orders. One of the purposes of the trial is to assess the cost-effectiveness of electronic monitoring.

Mr. Matthew Powell

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Police Complaints Authority has finished its investigations into Mr. Matthew Powell of Nottingham; what was the result of its investigations; and if he will make a statement. [39081]

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the investigation into Mr. Powell's complaint against the Nottingham constabulary, which is being supervised by the Police Complaints Authority, has not yet been completed.

General Election (Voting)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures will be put in place prior to the general election to ensure that those entitled to postal and proxy votes are made aware of their rights as soon as possible by means of public advertising; and if he will make a statement. [39171]

Mr. Kirkhope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his question on 22 May, *Official Report*, column *497*.

Cemeteries

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of when the supply of land for burials in urban areas will become exhausted. [38852]

Mr. Kirkhope: None. The provision of cemeteries is a local matter.

Animal Transport

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to issuing summonses against those involved with the Dutch transport firm Nicolay on behalf of Kent county council concerning offences alleged under the Welfare of Animals During Transport Order 1994. [38703]

Mr. Kirkhope: The summonses issued by Dover magistrates' court on 8 December 1994 for service in the Netherlands on W. Nicolay and named employees of the company were received by the UK Central Authority in the Home Office on 3 February 1995 and were forwarded for service to the Ministry of Justice in the Hague on 26 February. The summonses were not served by the authorities in the Netherlands, but the company submitted voluntarily to the jurisdiction of the magistrates' court. The charges against the employees were withdrawn. The case was heard on 23 October 1995.

Pay Bargaining

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in HQ functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38286]

Mr. Howard: The prison service, forensic science service and the fire service college already have delegated authority from the Secretary of State to make their own pay arrangements, and each has established its own recognition and negotiating arrangements. The Passport Agency is expected to have delegation from 1 April 1996.

The delegation plan which was recently submitted to the Treasury covered the remainder of Home Office staff. These comprised some 9,000 staff at grade 6 level and below.

There are no agency candidates at present and no plans to create more than one bargaining unit within the non-agency Home Office. We intend to recognise the First Division Association, National Union of Civil and Public Servants—which will become the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union on 1 January—Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialist and Civil and Public Services Association for the grades for which they are currently recognised. We also plan to recognise the Immigration Service Union for immigration service grades. Talks have taken place with all five unions about negotiating machinery. Our preferred option is for single

table bargaining but, as the other four unions will not sit with the ISU, separate arrangements will be needed to cover immigration service grades. These are not yet finalised, but may involve separate negotiations with the NUCPS/PTC and with the ISU.

Mr. Peter Clowes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement of the detailed charges which were brought against Mr. Peter Clowes in connection with the collapse of the Barlow Clowes companies and related matters, and of which Mr. Clowes was convicted; what was the sentence awarded by the courts in this case; what part of the sentence has so far been completed; what stage in the process of parole has been reach; if he will set out all statements made by the courts or parole authorities about the extent to which Mr. Clowes has had sufficient time in prison satisfactorily to consider and appreciate the impact of his action upon his victims; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that Mr. Clowes remains in prison for the full term of his sentence. [39325]

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 25 October 1995]:* Mr. Peter Clowes was convicted in February 1992 on eight counts of making a false statement to induce investment contrary to section 13(1) of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 and on ten counts of theft contrary to section 1(1) of the Theft Act 1968. Mr. Clowes was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in all. To date he has served about three years eight and a half months of that sentence.

Mr. Clowes became eligible for parole in June this year. All prisoners, like Mr. Clowes, who were sentenced before 1 October 1992 to sentences of 12 months imprisonment or more become eligible to be considered for parole after serving one third of their sentence. Mr. Clowes was not granted parole at his first review. His legal representatives sought leave to move for a judicial review of that decision. Leave was refused but an appeal against that refusal was successful. The decision not to grant parole will therefore be subject to judicial review. This aspect of Mr. Clowes' case is therefore sub judice and I regret that I am unable to give details of his parole reports.

Once eligible for parole, prisoners such as Mr. Clowes are assessed annually by the Parole Board and if release on licence is not recommended they are released unconditionally once they have served two thirds of their sentence. If Mr. Clowes is not granted parole he can expect to be released in October 1998.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the funding for women's refuges for each of the last five years and for the current year. [38471]

Mr. Clappison: I have been asked to reply.

In 1995–96 the Department is providing, through the Housing Corporation, £2.2 million in capital funding for women's aid projects in England largely to provide refuge places. Comparative figures for earlier years are given in the table. No information is available about revenue funding.

1994–95 £4.6 million
1993–94 £5.8 million
1992–93 £5.4 million
1991–92 £5.2 million
1990–91 £1.7 million

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women's refuges there are per region and in the country as a whole; [38469]

(2) what has been the percentage change in the number of women attending women's refuges in the past five years nationally and in each region. [38466]

Mr. Clappison: I have been asked to reply.

The Government do not have information about the number of women's refuges, or the number of women staying in refuges. Some information on the number and locations of refuges is being collected.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend the number of women's refuges; and in which regions they will be introduced. [38472]

Mr. Clappison: I have been asked to reply.

The provision of women's refuges is best decided by local authorities and other agencies, taking into account such issues as the local supply of housing available for short-term use in emergency situations.

SCOTLAND

Fox Hunting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ban fox-hunting on land under his jurisdiction, and if he will make a statement. [39217]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The Government believe that all field sports are a matter for the conscience and decision of the individual, and we have no plans to introduce legislation to ban fox-hunting.

Fox hunting on land owned by my right hon. Friend and managed by the Forestry Commission is permitted only where it has traditionally taken place or where the right to hunt or to grant facilities to hunt has been reserved in the title. No permissions are currently granted for the hunting of foxes on any of the remaining land owned by my right hon. Friend.

Waste Disposal

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the materials which were licensed for dumping in the Irish sea and North channel, *(a)* within and *(b)* outside the area known as the Beaufort's dyke, in each of the last 20 years giving a brief description of such materials indicating who issued licensing permits for such dumping and the original source of the dumped material. [38590]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 25 October 1995]:* The Scottish Office is responsible for licensing the disposal of materials at sea in Scottish waters.

The majority of licences issued by the Department over the past 20 years in respect of the North channel and Irish sea have related to the dumping of dredge spoil to facilitate the safe passage of vessels, or from engineering works. In addition, licences have been issued covering the disposal of 50 tonnes of nitrocellulose sludge from the ICI/Nobels Ardeer explosives factory in 1974, 3,213 tonnes of creamery waste from the Stranraer creamery in 1978 and 1,890 tonnes of rainwater contaminated with gas liquors from a number of dismantled gas holders in 1985.

Vandalism (Schools)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new measures are being considered to reduce the cases of vandalism in Scottish schools. [37938]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 20 October 1995]:* There is a range of measures which education authorities can consider to reduce vandalism in schools, including for example physical measures such as installation of security lighting and closed circuit television surveillance. However, the most appropriate course of action in each case will depend on local circumstances.

Adam Busby

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Director of Public Prosecutions has to seek the extradition of Adam Busby from the Irish Republic. [38493]

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 16 October 1995 by the Minister of State at the Scottish Office to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Mr. McNamara), *Official Report*, column *16*.

No warrant for the arrest of Adam Busby has been issued in England or Wales, and therefore the question of extradition to this jurisdiction has not arisen.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

AIDS

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects are currently being supported by the Overseas Development Administration to care for people with HIV/AIDS in developing countries. [38780]

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom currently supports some 35 projects in 10 developing countries to care for people with HIV/AIDS. Financial commitments amount to £7.3 million through the bilateral aid programme. A proportion of the UK's contribution to UN organisations, the World Bank and European Commission is also used for HIV/AIDS-related activities, including care for people who are HIV infected. The UK has provided £37.3 million to the World Health Organisation global programme on AIDS since its inception in 1987.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Overseas Development Administration's strategy for addressing the needs of people infected with HIV/AIDS in developing countries. [38781]

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 25 October *Official Report*, columns *644–45*.

Tibet

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of EU funds have been made available to Tibet; for what purposes; and to which organisation. [38621]

Mr. Hanley: The EC is financing two projects in the Tibetan autonomous region. Both are being implemented through the non-governmental organisation "Medecins Sans Frontières". These are: (i) a physiotherapy project aimed at training doctors and assisting people suffering from a crippling illness called "Big Bone Disease", —EC assistance approximately £98,000; and (ii) a health care and hospital refurbishment project in the Lhasa district—EC assistance approximately £315,000.

The EC is also considering a contribution of 7.6 million ecu—some £6.3 million—towards the cost of an integrated rural development project in Pa Nam. If the EC contribution is confirmed, it will focus primarily on support for agricultural extension, rural water supply, education and health services and a special project management unit.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Tom Ikimi

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his officials contacted Mr. Tom Ikimi, Foreign Minister for Nigeria, during his visit to the United Kingdom in September; and if he will make a statement. [39063]

Mr. Hanley: Neither Ministers nor officials had contact with the Nigerian Foreign Minister, who was in Britain on a private visit.

DEFENCE

Tenders (Anonymity)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors underlie the need for anonymity for the organisation that won tender No. 4964A; and if he will make a statement. [38304]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I will write to the hon. Member.

Training, Germany

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has held with the German authorities concerning the availability of *(a)* land areas

and *(b)* airspace over eastern Germany for training use by British forces; and if he will make a statement. [38118]

Mr. Soames: None.

Nuclear Tests (Memorials)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to commission a suitable national memorial to the British veterans of nuclear and atomic tests carried out since 1950; and if he will make a statement. [39221]

Mr. Soames: It has been a long-standing policy of successive Governments that the cost of such memorials is met from public subscription or private donations rather than from public funds.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of *(a)* radioactive wastes and *(b)* surplus conventional explosives his Department has disposed of in the Hurd Deep off Alderney; and if he will place in the Library copies of departmental documents which cover these disposals. [39256]

Mr. Soames: Complete records of past sea dumping of munitions at Hurd Deep are not available. Details of the UK's sea disposal programme for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes, including wastes generated by MOD establishments, some of which was disposed of in Hurd Deep, are contained in a report commissioned by the Department of the Environment titled "Report of the Independent Review of Disposal of Radioactive Waste in the Northeast Atlantic", published in November 1994.

Public Appointments, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the county of South yorkshire, indicating the total annual budget and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years. [39423]

Mr. Soames: None.

Queen's Flight

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what official duty the Duke of York was performing when he made use of an aircraft of the Queen's Flight on 22 July; and if he will make a statement. [39295]

Mr. Soames: The Duke of York attended the British open golf championship at St. Andrews on 22 July at the invitation of the Royal and Ancient. This was an official engagement which was listed in the court circular.

Private Lee Clegg

Mr. Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he gave to funding Private Lee Clegg's referral to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. [39746]

Mr. Soames: In the absence of legal proceedings, it would not be appropriate for the MOD to provide funds. Should a reference to the Court of Appeal be made in future, the MOD would consider the matter.

Mr. Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he gave to treating Private Lee Clegg's application for financial assistance from the Ministry of Defence as if he had been on legal aid. [39747]

Mr. Soames: Like any other United Kingdom citizen, Private Clegg can apply for legal aid; the criteria for eligibility are not a matter for my Department.

Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has initiated a review of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes. [40236]

Mr. Soames: A review of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes, NAAFI, has now begun, and is being led by Mr. Geoffrey Dart on secondment from Marks and Spencer plc.

As a Crown-owned body, the structure and scope of business of the NAAFI will be subjected to the normal prior options tests. Comments and contributions from those with an interest in NAAFI and its work would be welcome and should be sent, by 1 December 1995, to Mr. Dart, independent review of NAAFI, Ministry of Defence, Metropole building, room 4/55, Northumberland avenue, London WC2N 5BL.

Mr. Dart's report is due to be completed by 31 January 1996.

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *360*, on what projects, other than procurement contracts, Mr. David Hart provides advice. [39773]

Mr. Portillo: Mr. Hart offers advice on aspects of the management, efficiency and capabilities of the MOD and the armed forces.

Vehicle Accidents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents involving vehicles transporting his Department's weapons and ammunition have been recorded in each of the past five years; and if he will state in each instance the *(a)* date and time, *(b)* location and *(c)* cause of accident. [37722]

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* My Department's traffic accident database only records loads as being "hazardous" or "non-hazardous"; it does not specifically identify weapons and ammunition. It has, however, been possible to separately identify the following accidents involving vehicles transporting MOD weapons and ammunition in each of the past five years:

1990

(a) 09.30 4 October 1990

(b) Shoeburyness

(c) Other driver error

1991

(a) 12.40 24 April 1991

(b) Hameln, Germany

(c) Driver error

1992

None

1993

(a) 07.45 23 June 1993

(b) Hameln, Germany

(c) Driver error

(a) 09.20 8 September 1993

(b) En route Crombie to Ernesettle

(c) Brake problems

1994

(a) 10.45 25 July 1994

(b) Dean Hill, near Salisbury

(c) Other driver error

(a) 18.00 1 September 1994

(b) Helensburgh

(c) Driver error

(a) 09.30 21 December 1994

(b) J12/J13 of M6

(c) Faulty wheelbearings.

Nuclear Weapons Tests

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *1178*, if he will take action to correct the Blue Book data reference S-0514906 relating to ex-corporal J. D. Wilson's presence at British nuclear tests to include Grapple X with Grapple Y and to exclude reference to Grapple Z; and if he will send amended records to the War Pensions Agency. [37749]

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorists (Early Release)

10. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received in relation to the call for early release of terrorists from prison. [36909]

14. **Mr. Sutcliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking on the early release of prisoners in Northern Ireland. [36913]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: These are not political prisoners but offenders who have committed grave crimes for which they have been sentenced by the courts. Primary legislation enacted by Parliament must continue to govern the proportion of their sentences they serve in prison. In a speech at Queen's university on 25 August, I set out the Government's policy and I shall be introducing a Bill today.

Tourism

11. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further proposals he has to promote Northern Ireland as a tourist venue. [36910]

Mr. Ancram: The Government's responsibilities for tourism are undertaken by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board whose proposals include continued television and press advertising working to encourage new air links to Northern Ireland and stepped-up promotion to the travel trade and conference market.

Peace Process

12. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the peace process. [36911]

15. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest position on the peace process. [36914]

20. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the prospects for a lasting peace in the Province of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [36922]

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the peace process. [36921]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir Thomas Arnold), for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Electricity Interconnector

13. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current position regarding the inquiry into the electricity interconnector to Scotland. [36912]

Mr. Moss: The report and recommendations of the Planning Appeals Commission following its inquiry into the electricity interconnector is expected in early 1996.

Drugs Misuse

16. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures are being taken to counter the problem of drugs misuse in Northern Ireland. [36916]

Sir John Wheeler: I have established the new top-level central co-ordinating group for action against drugs, of which I am chairman. It will drive forward and build upon action emerging from the policy statement of the Northern Ireland Committee on Drug Misuse which will be published shortly.

Road Safety

17. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve road safety in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [36918]

Mr. Moss: In July 1995, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Department of Health and Personal

Social Services joined together to publish a comprehensive road safety plan for Northern Ireland. This covers the three-year period to 1997 and is intended to increase the effectiveness of road casualty reduction measures by providing a more strategic approach to the planning, co-ordination and delivery of road safety activities. The plan will contribute to and support Northern Ireland's road safety target, which is:

"by the year 2000 to reduce the total number of people killed and seriously injured on Northern Ireland's roads by one-third compared with the average of the 1981n to 1985 figures".

Road traffic legislation is being strengthened and brought more closely into line with the rest of the United Kingdom; legislative proposals include the introduction of a penalty points scheme for traffic offences.

Education Administration

18. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the administration of education in Northern Ireland. [36919]

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement I made on 7 September, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Framework Document

19. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in implementing the proposals in the framework document. [36920]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The proposals in the framework document were presented as an aid to discussion and negotiation between the parties and not for implementation by the Governments. We believe that the framework documents identify the issues on which there will need to be agreement if there is to be a political settlement which is acceptable across the community in Northern Ireland.

Cancer Services

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cancer services in Northern Ireland. [26923]

Mr. Moss: My Department has established a cancer working group, under the chairmanship of the chief medical officer, to review the current provision of cancer services in Northern Ireland and to make recommendations by 31 March 1996 as to how the services can be improved. Any major decision on the pattern of cancer services, including new investments, will be taken in the light of the work of that group and my Department's response to it.

Local Authority Waste Disposal Companies

22. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to introduce local authority waste disposal companies in Northern Ireland similar to those in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement. [36924]

Mr. Moss: Most of the district council areas in Northern Ireland are of insufficient size to support the cost of separate waste disposal companies. Accordingly, it is not proposed to make provision for the introduction of such companies.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

23. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for the restructuring of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. [36925]

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to him on 25 May, *Official Report*, column *749*, and 29 June, *Official Report*, columns *777–78*. The Government have since announced that the publication of their detailed proposals on the reform of the tripartite structure will be by way of a White Paper.

Roads Programme

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much is being spent in the current year on new roads; how many miles of roads this covers; and if he will make a statement. [36926]

Mr. Moss: Under the major works programme for roads, covering schemes costing over £200,000 each, approximately £7 million is being spent on 8.7 km—5.4 miles—of new roads during 1995–96. In addition, a further £2 million is scheduled to be spent on land acquisition payments for other schemes to be constructed in subsequent years of the five-year programme and on final payments in respect of schemes completed prior to 1995–96.

Details of new roads to be constructed during 1995–96 under the minor works programme—covering schemes costing under £200,000 each—are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total budget for this programme in 1995–96 is £12 million.

Peace and Reconciliation Institute

25. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received concerning the distribution of funds under the terms of the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation Institute. [36927]

Sir John Wheeler: In recent months, my right hon. and learned Friend has met representatives of voluntary organisations and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) and I have met with delegations led by Northern Ireland Members of the European Parliament to discuss a variety of issues in relation to the European Union special programme for peace and reconciliation. A vast range of written submissions was made as a result of the extensive consultation exercise carried out by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Benefits

26. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of individuals in Northern Ireland live in households receiving one or more means-tested benefits. [36928]

Mr. Moss: It is estimated that approximately 533,000 individuals, or 32 per cent. of the population, in Northern Ireland live in households receiving one or more means-tested benefits.

Economic Conferences

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new investment in Northern Ireland has resulted from the economic conference hosted by the Prime Minister and President Clinton. [36917]

Mr. Ancram: The inward investment gestation period is usually at least 18 months, so no immediate investment has yet been secured. The conference firmly established Northern Ireland on the investment map. The Industrial Development Board has had over 150 US inquiries since the Washington conference and recorded a threefold increase in US companies visiting Northern Ireland in the year since the ceasefire.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been allocated to the Health Education Authority to spend on HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns for 1995–96 and for the four previous financial years. [37753]

Mr. Sackville: The allocation to the Health Education Authority for public education covers work on HIV/AIDS and other aspects of sexual health. The amounts spent since 1991–92 and the estimated spend for 1995–96 are shown in the table. The figures exclude funding for the National AIDS Helpline but include a share of accommodation and other overheads costs.

1991–92: £9.071 million

1992–93: £9.776 million

1993–94: £7.060 million

1994–95: £7.523 million

1995–96: £6.207 million (estimate)

GP Lists

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what sanctions his Department is able to impose upon doctors who remove patients from their list *(a)* without good cause and *(b)* against the patients' interests; [37637]

(2) in what circumstances doctors are permitted to remove patients from their list because the patient has made a complaint against the doctor; [37638]

(3) what action he has taken to prevent doctors from removing patients from their list because the patient is *(a)* too expensive to treat or *(b)* makes an unusually high demand on the doctor. [37640]

Mr. Malone: Where a general practitioner-patient relationship breaks down it is important that there are no more restrictions than are necessary on the freedom of either party to terminate the relationship. Safeguards are in place to prevent discrimination against patients. The General Medical Council issued advice in 1992 to all doctors that it is unacceptable to discriminate against patients on ground of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, religious belief, perceived economic worth or the amount of work they are likely to generate by virtue of their clinical condition. Disciplinary action can be taken against any doctor who acts unethically.

Construction Projects

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* construction projects worth over £25 million and *(b)* IT projects worth over £1 million have commenced in each of the last three years, by region. [37924]

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the tables.

Construction projects of £25 million and over[1]

Region	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
South Thames	0	1	1
North Thames	0	0	0
Anglia and Oxford	0	0	0
North West	3	0	0
West Midlands	0	0	0
Trent	0	0	0
Northern and Yorkshire	0	1	1
South and West	1	1	0

Notes:

[1] Projects included with approved cost at tender excluding Value Added Tax and inflation of £25 million or more which have been reported under Computerised National Capital Intelligence Service and Exchange (CONCISE).

Schemes started on site in the financial years 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95.

IT projects of £1 million or over [1]

Region	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
South Thames	3	4
North Thames	0	0
Anglia and Oxford	1	2
North West	2	2
West Midlands	3	1
Trent	1	1
Northern and Yorkshire	1	1
South and West	2	0

Notes:

[1] Projects included with a whole life cost of £1 million or more.

Schemes started on site in the financial years 1993–94 and 1994–95.

Asthma

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions have been reached by his Department with respect to the links between asthma and poverty, particularly poor housing. [38311]

Mr. Sackville: Risk factors for asthma include: environmental tobacco smoke; maternal smoking; poor fetal nutrition; and modern home environments with central heating, double glazing and reduced ventilation, which may favour increased concentrations of allergens such as house dust mites and moulds. Due to the complex interaction of these factors it is difficult to quantify the effects of any one factor on asthma or to establish causal links between housing conditions and health.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met members of the National Asthma Campaign to discuss air quality reporting and other concerns of the group. [38873]

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met members of the National Asthma Campaign. However, on 23 November the Departments of Health and of the Environment are holding a conference on "Asthma: Possible Causes, Successful Management" in association with the NAC and the Institute for Environment and Health at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. The conference will be addressed by Ministers of both Departments.

Doncaster Health Commission

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much the Doncaster health commission spent on legal fees in each year since 1993; [39005]

(2) how many legal actions were initiated by Doncaster health commission which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court, for each year since 1993. [39006]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach Mr. K. Jones the chairman of Doncaster health authority for details.

Male Fertility

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study his Department has carried out into the risks to male fertility resulting from environmental oestrogen phthalates, polychlorinated biphenyls, bovine oestrogen and urine from contraceptive users; and if he will make a statement. [38874]

Mr. Sackville: The Department of the Environment, in consultation with the Department of Health, commissioned the Medical Research Council Institute for Environment and Health to review the health aspects—including male reproductive disorders—of environmental oestrogens. The institute's report, "Environmental Oestrogens: Consequences to Human Health and Wildlife" found no evidence of a causal link between apparent changes in reproductive health in human beings with exposure to oestrogens and other chemicals in food and the environment. Copies of the report are available in the Library. The report made a number of research recommendations which Departments are considering.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if Doncaster Health Commission has sought from his Department advice as to the most cost-effective and cost-efficient means of providing infertility treatment in its area. [38977]

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of individual health authorities to determine the provision of infertility treatment in the light of local needs. Advice has been made available to all health authorities and national health service trusts through the publication, "Effective Health Care Bulletin on Management of Sub-fertility", copies of which are available in the Library.

Social Services, Dorset

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the increase in Government funding of social services in Dorset and *(b)* the inflation rate since (i) 1979 and (ii) 1990; and if he will make a statement. [38972]

Mr. Bowis: Figures for individual local government services were not available before 1981–82. Funding for personal social services in Dorset increased from £19.7 million in that year to £43.5 million in 1990–91, and £86.5 million in 1995–96. Inflation from 1981–82 and 1990–91 has been 98 and 19 per cent. respectively—as measured by the gross domestic product deflator.

In real terms personal social services resources in Dorset have increased by 121 per cent. since 1981–82, and by 67 per cent. since 1990–91.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has plans to take off the prescribed list medicinal aerosols containing chlorofluorocarbons as a propellant. [38875]

Mr. Malone: No.

Diabetes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department has taken in respect of the statements of patients with diabetes mellitus about their care during the operative period; and if he will make a statement. [38968]

Mr. Sackville: None. It is a matter of good professional practice to ensure that patients are fully clinically assessed before they undergo general anaesthesia and surgery, and that their condition is monitored during and after the operation.

Trent Region

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail, for each financial year since 1990–91, the resource allocation per head of population for each health district in the Trent region. [38976]

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact, Mr. Keith Ackroyd CBE, chairman of the authority for the details.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, for each NHS trust in the Trent region, those trusts that currently have unfilled vacancies for *(a)* chairmen and *(b)* non-executive directors. [38974]

Mr. Malone: Those national health service trusts in Trent region which currently have unfilled vacancies for chairmen or non-executive directors are:

Chesterfield and North Derbyshire royal hospital NHS trust

One non-executive director vacancy.

Sheffield Children's hospital NHS trust

One non-executive director vacancy.

Complaints

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints he has received in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94, *(c)* 1994–95 and *(d)* 1995 to date from patients and organisations representing patients at Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital NHS trust; and what assessment he has made of the working of the patient's charter in respect of this trust. [38978]

Mr. Malone: Collated information on complaints to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about individual trusts is not available centrally. However, for details of complaints made direct to the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital national health service trust, the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. Ray Tonkinson.

South Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many ambulances are currently operated by the South Yorkshire ambulance service; what is their current age; and how many days the ambulances spend on average out of service; [39580]

(2) how many employees of the South Yorkshire ambulance service were dismissed in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95; [39541]

(3) how many maintenance depots the South Yorkshire ambulance service current operates; if he will list their locations; and what the figure was 24 months ago. [39581]

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contract Dr. B. M. Kingston the chairman of South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance and paramedic service national health service trust for details.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish figures for the performance of the South Yorkshire ambulance service in each month from July 1994, showing the percentage of calls responded to within 14 minutes for the *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield health areas; what is the target specified in the patient's charter; and what extra provision is provided for the large rural areas within the county. [39608]

Mr. Sackville: The patient's charter states that a person calling an emergency ambulance—999 call—can expect it to arrive within 14 minutes in an urban area or 19 minutes in a rural area. Individual ambulance services as a whole are classified as being either urban or rural. The South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance and paramedic service NHS trust—SYMAS—is classified as an urban service.

In 1994–95 SYMAS responded to 92.1 per cent. of emergency calls within 14 minutes. More detailed information is not collected centrally and the hon. Member may wish to approach Dr. B. M. Kingston the chairman of South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance and paramedic service national health service trust for details.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by wave the start-up costs for each NHS trust, by region. [39499]

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 18 July *Official Report,* column *1154.*

South Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the extent of his responsibilities for the South Yorkshire ambulance service. [39445]

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has statutory responsibility to provide ambulance services in England such as he considers necessary to meet all reasonable requirements. Subject to this overall responsibility, the operation of ambulance services in South Yorkshire is a matter for the board of the South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance and paramedic service national health service trust.

Tuta Blood Packs

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many blood donations were destroyed after the recall by the National Blood Authority of blood in Tuta blood packs; [36849]

(2) what was the total amount of blood moved between transfusion centres on the evenings of 29 and 30 June to compensate for the loss of donations in Tuta packs. [36851]

Mr. Sackville: I understand from the National Blood Authority that some 7,500 units of blood were withdrawn from use following their first issue of warnings about the use of Tuta bags on 30 June. A further 2,500 were withdrawn following the further warning issued on 4 and 5 July. A daily breakdown is not available, but I understand that some 3,000 units of blood were transferred between centres from the nights of Thursday 29 June and Sunday 2 July, to maintain supplies of blood particularly in the areas most affected by the recall. All centres had adequate stocks to meet hospital demand on 4 July.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Medicines Control Agency will complete its investigation into the use of faulty Tuta blood packs; and if its findings will be published. [36850]

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency has completed its investigation and copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Wessex Information Systems

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the outcome of the legal action by the Wessex regional health authority against Wessex Information Systems; [38267]

(2) what was the sum sought from Wessex Information Systems by the Wessex regional health authority in the recent legal action; and what was the sum agreed in the final settlement; [38269]

(3) if he will list the legal actions taken by the Wessex regional health authority against suppliers and contractors involved in the Wessex RISP project giving the total costs incurred by the regional health authority and the total sum received. [38270]

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the South and West regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Ms Rennie Fritchie, regional chairman, for details.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice was given by his Department to the Wessex regional health authority prior to the settlement of the legal action by the Wessex regional health authority against Wessex Information Systems. [38268]

Mr. Sackville: The Department did not give any advice in relation to this case.

Diseases

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of *(a)* cholera, *(b)* typhoid fever, *(c)* paratyphoid fever, *(d)* dysentery, *(e)* food poisoning and *(f)* diphtheria, were notified in 1993 and 1994. [38536]

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Cases reported in England and Wales

	1993	*1994 (provisional)*
Cholera	23	30
Typhoid fever	175	236
Paratyphoid fever	93	134
Dysentery	6,841	6,961
Food poisoning (total)	68,587	82,587
Diphtheria	6	9

Notification of infectious diseases are published annually in the MB2 Series (Communicable Disease Statistics), copies of which are available in the Library. The latest available publication is Series MB2 No. 20 (1993).

Suicide

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his strategies for the reduction of deaths from suicide in *(a)* adults and *(b)* adolescents. [38537]

Mr. Bowis: A wide range of initiatives are being pursued. The key themes of our suicide prevention work are improving mental health services, increasing public awareness of mental health issues, targeting occupational and demographic groups at particular risk of suicide, and reducing access to means. The overall suicide rate has now fallen in each of the last four years.

In addition, we have a comprehensive strategy to improve child and adolescent mental health. Most recently, public awareness work in support of World Mental Health Day focused particularly on young people.

"Health of the Nation"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to address "Health of the Nation" targets for obesity. [38593]

Mr. Sackville: Measures to address obesity include:

activity by the nutrition task force programme to reduce the proportion of fat in the diet;

proposals from the physical activity task force for helping more people to be more active more often;

a major campaign being developed by the Health Education Authority to promote regular moderate physical activity and to highlight the contribution of physical activity to the prevention of obesity; and

research reviews of effective intervention with regard to the prevention and treatment of obesity.

Deliberate Self Harm

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of deliberate self harm amongst *(a)* adults and *(b)* adolescents, annually from 1987. [38539]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Market Testing

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 6 June to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, column *28*, if he will place in the Library a list of the contacts for hospital and health services awarded so far under competitive tendering process by each NHS trust in England since 6 June. [39650]

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to answers of 13 January, *Official Report*, columns *255–56* and 28 March, *Official Report*, column *568*, which NHS clinical services and which non-clinical services are currently being market tested; and if he will list the companies tendering for business and the location of each market testing operation. [39651]

Mr. Sackville: The only new entry to the list provided in January would cover the market testing of perfusionist services by one trust. The list covers services which one or more NHS trust has market tested in recent years, as notified to the NHS Executive's market testing database. The other information is not available centrally.

Private Patients

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private inpatients and how many private outpatients were seen within the NHS and using NHS facilities by region and in total in *(a)* 1989–90 and *(b)* the latest date for which figures are available. [39386]

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of private patients—finished consultant episodes—treated in national health service hospitals in England by region of treatment for 1989–90 is contained in the annual publication, "Hospital Episode Statistics". Similar information on private outpatient attendances is contained in "Outpatient and ward attenders". The latest year for which figures are available for is 1993–94. Copies of the publications are in the Library.

Hospitals

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information the NHS Executive has on the number of hospitals in each region and in total in England at 1 April; [39387]

(2) what is the Department's definition of a hospital; [39388]

(3) if he will review the decision not to collect centrally the number of hospitals in England. [39389]

Mr. Malone: I refer the right hon. Member to reply I gave her on 16 May *Official Report*, columns *173-76*. There are no plans to collect additional information centrally.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new hospitals were *(a)* begun and *(b)* completed in each year since 1974. [39391]

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. Information is collected on reported major capital projects, and this information is shown in the table.

Capital schemes in the NHS

Calendar year	*Start on site*	*Finish on site*
1980	16	8
1981	34	10
1982	44	15
1983	36	38
1984	51	32
1985	47	44
1986	52	38
1987	60	51
1988	70	65
1989	73	75
1990	56	66
1991	52	81
1992	51	63
1993	20	77
1994	61	55

Notes:
1. Information was first collected for starts on site after 1 January 1980.
2. Prior to 1 January 1986 reporting was on a voluntary basis for schemes with a works cost over £2 million.
3. Returns became mandatory for schemes with a works cost over £1 million from 1 January 1986.
4. With the introduction of the Capital Investment Manual (CIM), reporting thresholds were changed to over £1 million total cost from September 1994.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish an updated list of all hospital closures that have been referred to his Department for decision, including those awaiting a decision, giving the nature of all organisations objecting, the decision, if any, and date. [39390]

Mr. Sackville: An updated list of proposed closures and changes of use considered by Ministers for the period from January 1992 to September 1995 will be placed in the Library. All except Higham Grange rehabilitation centre and Hartford Hall rehabilitation hospital have been contested by the relevant community health council. Other organisations may have objected but full details could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Ministers approved all the proposals except the proposed closure of Ponteland and Lemington hospitals, Newcastle. No decision has been made on Booth Hall children's hospital, Manchester, while the consultation process is subject to judicial review.

Abortions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of abortions were carried out by the NHS in each (i) district health authority, (ii) regional health authority and (iii) in total in each of the last five years; and what was the total number of abortions performed in each year. [39649]

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

The total number of abortions—residents and non-residents—performed in each year are published for the years 1990 to 1992 in "Abortion Statistics 1992" (OPCS Series AB no.19, table 2). The corresponding figures for 1993 and 1994 are published in "Legal abortions in England and Wales 1994" (OPCS Monitor series 95/8, table 1), copies of which are available in the Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of cases of all forms of fraud committed by employees of his *(a)* Department, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental public bodies, for each year from 1991–92 to 1994–95; and for each of these years, what was the total monetary sum (i) misappropriated in such frauds and (ii) subsequently recovered. [39138]

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The details of all forms of fraud committed by employees of the Department, agencies and non-departmental public bodies are as follows:

Total Cases	*Amount Misappropriated £*	*Amount Recovered £*
1991–92		
Department–1	171.50	171.50
Agencies–Nil	Nil	Nil
NDPBs–Nil	Nil	Nil
1992–93		
Department–2	20.80	Nil
Agencies–Nil	Nil	Nil
NDPBs–1	4,700	Nil
1993–94		
Department–3	9,652.45	Nil
Agencies–Nil	Nil	Nil
NDPBs–Nil	Nil	Nil
1994–95		
Department–3	14,388.12	[1]2,869.62
Agencies–1	50.00	50.00
NDPBs–1	300.00	300.00

[1] Not a final figure. Recovery action is being pursued inappropriate cases.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Classroom Assistants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how many classroom assistants were employed in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools for each year since 1988. [39149]

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information is shown in the table.

Full-time equivalents of education support staff[1] *in maintained schools in England 1992–95*
Position in January each year

Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*
1992	32,483	16,969
1993	36,441	17,770
1994	41,117	19,466
1995 (provisional)	46,324	21,463

[1] Nursery assistants, special needs support staff and other support staff including librarians, technicians, medical care staff and child care assistants.

Voucher Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1) if she will list the companies that have been shortlisted to administer the voucher scheme; [39150]

(2) how many companies have submitted bids to run the voucher scheme; [39151]

(3) what estimates she has received from those companies shortlisted to administer the voucher scheme for the cost of administering the voucher scheme; [39152]

(4) when she expects to announce which company will be appointed to administer the a voucher scheme. [39153]

Mr. Robin Squire: Of the 170 companies which expressed an interest in administering the nursery voucher scheme, 10 were invited to tender for the contract. Details of the tenders, including the names of the companies and their proposed fees, are covered by commercial confidentiality. The company appointed to administer the scheme will be announced shortly.

School Reorganisations and Closures

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment which local education authorities have school reorganisation or closure proposals under consideration by her Department; how many surplus places will be removed by each local education authority as a result of their proposals; and which authorities, since the submission of their proposal to her Department, have been waiting for a decision for *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to none months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* in excess of 12 months. [39154]

Mrs. Gillan: The table lists proposals under consideration by the Department for the closure, alteration or establishment of county and voluntary schools; the number of places that it proposed will be removed as result of the proposals, where this is a factor and the number involved is known; and the length of time the proposals have been under consideration.

		Proposals under consideration for				
	Places proposed to be removed where known	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*(e)*
LEA		*Up to 3 months*	*3–6 months*	*6–9 months*	*9–12 months*	*In excess of 12 months*
Avon	—	—	—	—	—	2
Barnet	—	—	2	—	—	—
Bexley	—	2	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	210	1	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—	2	—	—	2
Bury	—	—	1	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	1	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	27	3	6	—	—	—
Croydon	—	—	—	1	—	1
Cumbria	—	6	4	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	2	3	—	—
Dudley	—	1	—	—	—	—
East Sussex	330	3	5	—	—	—
Essex	217	3	2	—	1	1
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	1	—
Greenwich	—	1	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hampshire	60	—	1	—	—	—
Haringey	—	—	—	—	1	—
Harrow	—	—	1	—	1	—
Hertfordshire	350	3	6	2	—	—
Humberside	—	—	1	—	—	—
Kent	103	7	5	—	1	6
Kirklees	160	1	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	1	3	2	1
Lincolnshire	—	—	1	1	—	—
Liverpool	—	1	—	—	—	—
Newcastle	148	1	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	34	—	10	1	1	—
Northamptonshire	19	4	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	1	—	1	1
North Yorkshire	—	3	—	—	—	1
Nottinghamshire	578	—	5	—	2	—
Oldham	218	—	1	—	—	—

LEA	Places proposed to be removed where known	Proposals under consideration for (a) Up to 3 months	(b) 3–6 months	(c) 6–9 months	(d) 9–12 months	(e) In excess of 12 months
Oxfordshire	—	1	—	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	1	—	—	—	1
Salford	177	—	1	—	—	—
Sefton	—	1	—	1	—	—
Solihull	60	2	—	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	—	—	—	1
South Tyneside	128	1	—	—	—	—
Stockport	—	—	4	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	1	—	—	—
Surrey	60	1	7	—	—	—
Tameside	—	—	1	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	—	1	—	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	1	—	—	—
Wandsworth	266	—	1	—	—	—
Warwickshire	203	—	1	1	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	1	—	—	—
Wigan	321	—	—	—	—	2
Wiltshire	107	5	5	1	—	—
Wirral	72	—	1	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	208	—	1	—	—	—

Primary School Class Sizes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what percentage and how many primary school pupils are currently in classes of *(a)* 31 to 35, *(b)* 36 to 40 and *(c)* 40-plus in each local education authority and in total; and what were the equivalent figures in January 1994. [39380]

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Numbers and percentages of pupils in single teacher classes of size in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 to 1995

Position in January each year

	31–35 Number of pupils	31–35 Percentage[1]	36–40 Number of pupils	36–40 Percentage[1]	41+ Number of pupils	41+ Percentage[1]
1994						
City	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Camden	542	6.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Greenwich	2,301	13.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hackney	499	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hammersmith	795	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Islington	892	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	418	8.3	36	0.7	0	0.0
Lambeth	816	5.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lewisham	1,318	7.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Southwark	2,331	12.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tower Hamlets	601	4.6	37	0.3	0	0.0
Wandsworth	1,471	10.5	150	1.1	45	0.3
Westminster	352	4.9	76	1.1	0	0.0
Barking	1,183	8.3	232	1.6	0	0.0
Barnet	2,319	11.1	115	0.6	0	0.0
Bexley	5,838	31.6	72	0.4	0	0.0
Brent	1,819	9.6	338	1.8	0	0.0
Bromley	10,239	46.8	146	0.7	0	0.0
Croydon	4,667	19.6	229	1.0	0	0.0
Ealing	4,001	19.6	145	0.7	0	0.0
Enfield	7,201	35.2	36	0.2	0	0.0
Haringey	657	3.9	75	0.4	0	0.0
Harrow	3,472	22.2	72	0.5	0	0.0
Havering	4,030	21.3	146	0.8	0	0.0
Hillingdon	4,422	24.9	431	2.4	43	0.2
Hounslow	4,570	28.7	749	4.7	0	0.0
Kingston upon Thames	5,299	56.0	185	2.0	0	0.0
Merton	2,783	22.6	268	2.2	63	0.5
Newham	1,201	5.4	116	0.5	0	0.0
Redbridge	8,054	50.3	402	2.5	0	0.0
Richmond upon Thames	869	8.8	112	1.1	153	1.5

Numbers and percentages of pupils in single teacher classes of size in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 to 1995

Position in January each year

	31–35		36–40		41+	
	Number of pupils	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]
Sutton	4,552	38.8	144	1.2	0	0.0
Waltham Forest	3,088	17.8	112	0.6	0	0.0
Birmingham	25,730	26.9	1,373	1.4	61	0.1
Coventry	4,940	19.5	601	2.4	0	0.0
Dudley	6,524	27.1	369	1.5	604	2.5
Sandwell	8,863	32.7	1,312	4.8	0	0.0
Solihull	6,200	34.1	511	2.8	0	0.0
Walsall	5,066	22.8	511	2.3	0	0.0
Wolverhampton	4,774	22.3	381	1.8	0	0.0
Knowsley	5,271	31.0	644	3.8	0	0.0
Liverpool	11,660	24.5	918	1.9	42	0.1
St. Helens	4,586	31.6	851	5.9	0	0.0
Sefton	7,742	31.6	475	1.9	41	0.2
Wirral	5,410	18.8	474	1.6	44	0.2
Bolton	7,010	31.8	1,608	7.3	428	1.9
Bury	5,087	32.6	1,024	6.6	128	0.8
Manchester	8,446	20.5	1,173	2.9	0	0.0
Oldham	7,746	36.9	779	3.7	92	0.4
Rochdale	7,300	39.8	552	3.0	168	0.9
Salford	5,603	25.2	1,127	5.1	87	0.4
Stockport	6,813	28.2	1,265	5.2	101	0.4
Tameside	10,943	51.1	1,136	5.3	0	0.0
Trafford	7,729	41.9	1,340	7.3	82	0.4
Wigan	7,572	29.0	2,380	9.1	45	0.2
Barnsley	5,185	26.0	376	1.9	95	0.5
Doncaster	6,296	23.7	1,252	4.7	0	0.0
Rotherham	2,334	10.4	235	1.1	0	0.0
Sheffield	6,821	18.1	1,460	3.9	0	0.0
Bradford	8,214	25.6	567	1.8	0	0.0
Calderdale	4,942	28.3	326	1.9	0	0.0
Kirklees	8,391	26.8	981	3.1	0	0.0
Leeds	16,686	28.2	2,719	4.6	0	0.0
Wakefield	8,738	32.3	1,258	4.7	0	0.0
Gateshead	1,786	10.8	76	0.5	0	0.0
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,083	24.8	760	3.7	0	0.0
North Tyneside	3,408	22.7	447	3.0	50	0.3
South Tyneside	2,915	20.1	489	3.4	52	0.4
Sunderland	4,022	15.4	222	0.8	0	0.0
Isles of Scilly	31	18.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Avon	25,695	34.1	1,058	1.4	0	0.0
Bedfordshire	7,314	19.7	1,701	4.6	49	0.1
Berkshire	15,220	27.0	1,070	1.9	0	0.0
Buckinghamshire	16,670	29.1	2,310	4.0	92	0.2
Cambridgeshire	13,979	25.2	1,100	2.0	0	0.0
Cheshire	27,187	32.6	2,922	3.5	84	0.1
Cleveland	10,863	18.8	2,523	4.4	0	0.0
Cornwall	12,409	32.4	1,032	2.7	0	0.0
Cumbria	8,568	22.1	732	1.9	85	0.2
Derbyshire	25,613	34.1	4,055	5.4	314	0.4
Devon	19,328	24.9	1,847	2.4	0	0.0
Dorset	17,562	42.6	580	1.4	0	0.0
Durham	13,729	26.5	1,283	2.5	0	0.0
East Sussex	18,862	39.8	435	0.9	0	0.0
Essex	29,961	25.2	768	0.6	0	0.0
Gloucestershire	10,644	25.4	479	1.1	0	0.0
Hampshire	40,820	31.5	3,484	2.7	0	0.0
Hereford and Worcester	9,432	20.1	478	1.0	0	0.0
Hertfordshire	20,658	26.8	600	0.8	86	0.1
Humberside	21,804	28.1	3,973	5.1	137	0.2
Isle of Wight	1,672	23.9	190	2.7	0	0.0
Kent	40,873	33.0	697	0.6	0	0.0
Lancashire	39,104	33.4	5,884	5.0	124	0.1
Leicestershire	13,760	19.2	673	0.9	0	0.0
Lincolnshire	11,975	25.2	667	1.4	0	0.0
Norfolk	10,584	18.5	445	0.8	146	0.3
North Yorkshire	12,653	22.9	965	1.7	84	0.2
Northamptonshire	9,402	20.2	188	0.4	0	0.0
Northumberland	6,301	33.0	1,559	8.2	41	0.2

Numbers and percentages of pupils in single teacher classes of size in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 to 1995

Position in January each year

	31–35		36–40		41+	
	Number of pupils	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]
Nottinghamshire	17,125	20.8	2,658	3.2	164	0.2
Oxfordshire	5,242	13.7	563	1.5	45	0.1
Shropshire	8,530	25.5	555	1.7	0	0.0
Somerset	10,074	28.9	402	1.2	0	0.0
Staffordshire	24,238	27.8	5,720	6.6	780	0.9
Suffolk	5,386	13.2	222	0.5	0	0.0
Surrey	13,064	19.2	635	0.9	42	0.1
Warwickshire	11,984	28.8	756	1.8	0	0.0
West Sussex	10,459	20.6	475	0.9	0	0.0
Wiltshire	11,784	25.7	401	0.9	0	0.0
England	978,995	25.7	92,481	2.4	4,697	0.1
1995 (provisional)						
City	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Camden	569	6.3	36	0.4	0	0.0
Greenwich	2,433	13.8	72	0.4	50	0.3
Hackney	569	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hammersmith	1,294	16.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Islington	1,055	8.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	221	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lambeth	540	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lewisham	1,072	5.8	73	0.4	47	0.3
Southwark	2,446	12.5	37	0.2	0	0.0
Tower Hamlets	728	4.8	0	0.0	50	0.3
Wandsworth	1,238	8.7	221	1.6	0	0.0
Westminster	607	8.8	39	0.6	0	0.0
Barking	994	6.6	271	1.8	52	0.3
Barnet	2,179	10.4	112	0.5	0	0.0
Bexley	7,761	38.9	73	0.4	0	0.0
Brent	2,098	11.2	158	0.8	188	1.0
Bromley	11,305	50.5	291	1.3	0	0.0
Croydon	5,863	23.2	110	0.4	0	0.0
Ealing	4,059	18.9	78	0.4	0	0.0
Enfield	8,156	39.5	36	0.2	0	0.0
Haringey	1,006	5.8	39	0.2	0	0.0
Harrow	4,080	25.0	72	0.4	0	0.0
Havering	4,625	23.9	37	0.2	0	0.0
Hillingdon	4,320	23.6	427	2.3	86	0.5
Hounslow	4,863	29.1	787	4.7	41	0.2
Kingston upon Thames	5,960	61.4	256	2.6	0	0.0
Merton	2,938	23.3	223	1.8	138	1.1
Newham	2,604	11.0	76	0.3	0	0.0
Redbridge	7,902	48.8	435	2.7	0	0.0
Richmond upon Thames	1,980	19.8	0	0.0	60	0.6
Sutton	4,214	34.8	114	0.9	0	0.0
Waltham Forest	3,330	18.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Birmingham	27,064	28.0	1,080	1.1	107	0.1
Coventry	7,016	26.2	784	2.9	75	0.3
Dudley	5,506	22.6	562	2.3	867	3.6
Sandwell	9,902	35.8	871	3.1	42	0.2
Solihull	6,589	35.4	917	4.9	0	0.0
Walsall	5,875	25.5	511	2.2	42	0.2
Wolverhampton	5,220	23.9	626	2.9	0	0.0
Knowsley	5,349	29.4	899	4.9	52	0.3
Liverpool	11,288	24.3	1,023	2.2	230	0.5
St. Helens	4,496	30.6	1,011	6.9	0	0.0
Sefton	7,775	31.0	1,018	4.1	0	0.0
Wirral	5,449	18.6	627	2.1	0	0.0
Bolton	8,190	36.2	1,982	8.8	194	0.9
Bury	5,633	36.0	801	5.1	0	0.0
Manchester	9,026	21.4	1,008	2.4	177	0.4
Oldham	7,853	36.5	782	3.6	188	0.9
Rochdale	7,542	39.0	473	2.4	87	0.4
Salford	6,128	27.0	753	3.3	94	0.4
Stockport	6,962	28.2	849	3.4	47	0.2
Tameside	10,553	48.4	738	3.4	0	0.0
Trafford	8,455	44.6	1,193	6.3	41	0.2
Wigan	8,941	33.6	2,347	8.8	87	0.3

Numbers and percentages of pupils in single teacher classes of size in maintained primary schools in each local education authority area in England 1994 to 1995

Position in January each year

	31–35		36–40		41+	
	Number of pupils	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage*[1]
Barnsley	5,625	28.0	383	1.9	193	1.0
Doncaster	6,692	25.5	1,605	6.1	41	0.2
Rotherham	2,961	13.0	308	1.4	0	0.0
Sheffield	9,467	24.1	1,408	3.6	244	0.6
Bradford	9,500	28.7	1,207	3.7	0	0.0
Calderale	5,558	30.3	108	0.6	0	0.0
Kirklees	10,466	32.5	1,733	5.4	91	0.3
Leeds	18,551	30.6	2,428	4.0	266	0.4
Wakefield	8,420	30.2	2,070	7.4	54	0.2
Gateshead	2,084	12.3	153	0.9	0	0.0
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,854	28.7	756	3.7	134	0.7
North Tyneside	4,467	29.7	413	2.7	50	0.3
South Tyneside	2,766	18.9	747	5.1	103	0.7
Sunderland	3,410	12.8	191	0.7	0	0.0
Isles of Scilly	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Avon	25,550	32.8	1,277	1.6	92	0.1
Bedfordshire	8,288	21.4	1,531	4.0	509	1.3
Berkshire	14,692	25.3	828	1.4	85	0.1
Buckinghamshire	17,591	29.5	2,944	4.9	670	1.1
Cambridgeshire	14,211	25.5	735	1.3	0	0.0
Cheshire	26,906	31.5	3,196	3.7	213	0.2
Cleveland	11,332	19.4	2,527	4.3	0	0.0
Cornwall	12,878	32.8	1,039	2.6	87	0.2
Cumbria	10,374	26.2	968	2.4	110	0.3
Derbyshire	27,071	35.1	5,414	7.0	474	0.6
Devon	21,844	27.5	1,770	2.2	45	0.1
Dorset	17,058	40.4	980	2.3	0	0.0
Durham	14,215	27.2	1,240	2.4	0	0.0
East Sussex	19,221	39.8	470	1.0	0	0.0
Essex	30,666	24.8	979	0.8	230	0.2
Gloucestershire	11,044	25.4	551	1.3	0	0.0
Hampshire	41,963	32.4	1,967	1.5	46	0.0
Hereford and Worcester	10,011	20.7	481	1.0	41	0.1
Hertfordshire	22,320	28.1	692	0.9	42	0.1
Humberside	22,058	27.7	4,393	5.5	445	0.6
Isle of Wight	1,749	24.8	111	1.6	0	0.0
Kent	43,201	33.6	722	0.6	285	0.2
Lancashire	42,290	35.0	6,298	5.2	244	0.2
Leicestershire	15,730	21.1	1,413	1.9	424	0.6
Lincolnshire	13,595	27.7	955	1.9	82	0.2
Norfolk	11,793	20.0	218	0.4	55	0.1
North Yorkshire	16,110	28.4	1,598	2.8	50	0.1
Northamptonshire	10,244	21.2	332	0.7	0	0.0
Northumberland	6,720	34.9	1,269	6.6	41	0.2
Nottinghamshire	19,413	23.4	3,186	3.8	543	0.7
Oxfordshire	5,940	15.2	384	1.0	98	0.3
Shropshire	9,304	27.0	668	1.9	0	0.0
Somerset	10,140	28.3	583	1.6	53	0.1
Staffordshire	25,921	29.4	4,569	5.2	657	0.7
Suffolk	6,142	14.5	254	0.6	0	0.0
Surrey	11,382	16.6	647	0.9	89	0.1
Warwickshire	12,906	30.4	899	2.1	175	0.4
West Sussex	12,219	23.0	660	1.2	0	0.0
Wiltshire	14,007	29.5	696	1.5	0	0.0
England	1,047,741	26.8	97,882	2.5	10,103	0.3

Training for Work

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is *(a)* the average number of training for work leavers who gained a qualification or credits towards a qualification and *(b)* the number of leavers entering employment in 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 (i) nationally and (ii) for each training and enterprise council. [39778]

Mr. Paice: As the information requested contains a large amount of data, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment how much was spent on the training for work programme in each year between 1991 and 1995 and what is the projected account in 1995–96; what was the number of starts and filled places in each year; and what is the projected figure for 1995–96. [39776]

Mr. Paice: In April 1993, training for work replaced employment training and employment action. The information requested is given in the following table.

	1991–92 Outturn (1)	*1992–93 Outturn (2)*	*1993–94 Outturn (3)*	*1994–95 Provisional outturn*	*1995–96 planned*
Expenditure (£ million)	753.7	766.8	760.2	683.0	574.0
Starts (000s)	252	291	292	280	225
Filled places (000s)	119	105	124	95	92

Notes:
1. In the expenditure figures for 1991–92, the ET element relates to England and Wales and the EA element relates to England, Scotland and Wales.
2. In the expenditure figures for 1992–93, the ET element related to England only and the EA element related to England and Scotland

Training Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what was the average amount spent by employers on training each of their employees in 1992 and 1994. [39779]

Mr. Paice: The data requested are not available.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is the budget for each training and enterprise council for 1995–96. [39777]

Mr. Paice: The budget made available to each training and enterprise council in England by the Department for 1995–96 is shown in the following. The responsibility for TECs in Wales lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

TEC budgets 1995–96

	£
South East	
Hampshire	27,323,756
Heart of England	12,535,357
Isle of Wight	3,638,642
Kent	36,282,620
Milton Keynes and North Bucks	11,127,628
Surrey	12,128,689
Sussex	22,550,765
Thames Valley Enterprise	31,720,395
London	
Aztec	12,254,997
Centec	23,865,389
Cilntec	20,391,148
London East	36,266,110
North London	20,674,806
North West London	11,157,405
Solotec	19,115,941
South Thames[1]	33,827,403
West London	18,620,229
Eastern	
Bedfordshire	13,021,470
Cambstec	7,849,613
Essex	31,658,402
Greater Peterborough	11,207,428
Hertfordshire	20,838,636
Norfolk and Waveney	24,523,751
Suffolk	15,019,798
South West	
Devon and Cornwall	43,815,751
Dorset	14,574,980
Gloucestershire	14,241,391
Somerset	12,359,270
Westec	27,879,781
Wiltshire	12,223,966
West Midlands	
Birmingham	34,557,562
Central England	10,400,327
Coventry and Warwickshire	24,665,865
Dudley	9,882,928
Hawtec	12,895,288
Sandwell	12,664,294
Shropshire	11,977,681
Staffordshire	28,901,500
Walsall	8,003,525
Wolverhampton	9,781,984
East Midlands	
Greater Nottingham	18,273,503
Leicester	22,313,670
Lincolnshire	22,918,889
North Derbyshire	10,661,439
North Nottinghamshire	15,957,808
Northamptonshire	12,516,841
Southern Derbyshire	17,104,924
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley and Doncaster	24,942,444
Bradford and District	17,376,587
Calderdale and Kirklees	19,763,424
Humberside	33,126,307
Leeds	20,043,842
North Yorkshire	15,406,306
Rotherham	11,174,354
Sheffield	20,634,318
Wakefield	10,704,117
North West	
Bolton and Bury	15,017,992
Cumbria	17,843,301
Eltec (East Lancs)	19,840,603
Lawtec (Lancs West)	28,822,730
Manchester	43,011,107
Metrotec Ltd. (Wigan)	11,090,965
Normidtec	15,382,978
Oldham	9,109,551
Rochdale	9,539,178
South and East Cheshire	13,971,563
Stockport/High Peak	12,050,452
Merseyside	
Cewtec	20,880,534
Merseyside	52,238,640
Qualitec	8,336,638
North East	
County Durham	25,698,704
Northumberland	14,150,915
Sunderland City	16,478,872
Teeside	31,069,685
Tyneside	37,505,997

[1] South Thames TEC: the figure shown is the 1995–96 allocation which will be reallocated to the receiver and the successor TECs.

"Race for Opportunity"

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if she will make a statement on the launch of the business in the community campaign "Race for Opportunity". [40361]

Mrs. Gillan: The Government warmly welcome the move by major companies to champion "Race for Opportunity". These companies recognise the diverse talents and business opportunities which our multiracial society has to offer. Champions of the campaign will take full account of the ethnic minority community in all aspects of their business, from marketing and purchasing to employment, and they will strive to become good corporate citizens. Such efforts are to be congratulated.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Trials (Media Coverage)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Attorney General how many trials have been stopped in the last three years as a result of media coverage, in how many cases media coverage has been cited by the court as a reason for returning a not guilty verdict; and if he will list the cases. [38319]

The Attorney-General: There is no central record of cases coming within the criteria set out in the hon. Member's question. The two prosecuting authorities for which I have responsibility—Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office—have identified the following cases in which criminal proceedings have been stayed on the grounds of "abuse of process" because the court has held that media coverage has made a fair trial impossible.

Name	*Date*	*Charge*
Anthony Grunwell	June/July 1993: Snaresbrook Crown Court	Theft from motor vehicle
R. *v.* Reade, Morris and Woodwiss	15 October 1993: Central Criminal Court	Conspiracy to pervert the course of justice
R. *v.* Hassan and Caldori	24 July 1995: Isleworth Crown Court	Conspiracy to distribute counterfeit currency
R. *v.* Geoffrey Knights	24 October 1995: Harrow Crown Court	Causing grievous bodily harm
R. *v.* Zaheer and Others	11 October 1995: Harrow Crown Court	Violent disorder

The table is compiled from individual recollection and is not necessarily exhaustive.

The inquiries referred to above have identified two cases where media coverage has been a factor, but not the only factor, in a decision to quash convictions. Those cases related to proceedings against Michelle Taylor and Lisa Taylor (11 June 1993) and Vincent Wood (6 July 1995).

Barings Bank

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Attorney General (1) if all information requested by the Serious Fraud Office from the Singapore authorities has been handed over; [38400]

(2) what action he is taking in respect of the decision of judicial managers and prosecutors in Singapore with regard to access for Serious Fraud Office investigators to documentation in Singapore relating to Barings. [38401]

The Attorney-General: Baring Futures (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. is under the control of judicial managers appointed by the Singapore High Court to which the Serious Fraud Office made an application for an order that the judicial managers disclose certain company records. That application was not granted and the SFO is currently appealing the decision to the Court of Appeal of Singapore.

I have myself corresponded with my counterpart in Singapore.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Minimum Wage

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Secuirty (1) what assessment he has made of the number of people who would claim to be entitled to specific benefit if a national minimum wage was introduced at £3.50 per hour, £4 per hour and £4.50 per hour for all employees aged 18 years and over; [36765]

(2) what estimates he has made of the effect on the level of expenditure on specific benefits if a national minimum wage was introduced at *(a)* £3.50 per hour, *(b)* £4 per hour and *(c)* £4.50 per hour for all employees aged 18 years and over. [36766]

Mr. Roger Evans: No assessment has been made.

National Insurance Numbers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will sanction the use of national insurance numbers as a means of reference by *(a)* the Student Loans Company and *(b)* the universities and colleges admission system. [37066]

Mr. Heald: We have a policy of restricting the use of national insurance numbers to national insurance, tax and social security benefit-related purposes.

State Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the amount of *(a)* the widow's payment and *(b)* the Christmas bonus in the year 1996–97 if they had been uprated (i) in line with earnings and (ii) in line with prices since the date when they were announced and the date when they were introduced. [38161]

Mr. Heald: The information is not available in the format requested. Since 1988, benefit upratings have been based on movement in the retail prices index over the preceding September to September period. Data on earnings growth in the period September 1994 to September 1995 are not yet available. The available information is in the table.

Column 1 Benefit/allowance	*Column 2 Date introduction announced*	*Column 3 Date introduced*	*Column 4 Rate at announcement*	*Column 5 Rate when introduced*	*Column 6 Current rate*	*Column 7 Rate at April 1996 if amount at Column 4 uprated by prices since date at Column 2*	*Column 8 Rate at April 1996 if amount at Column 5 uprated by prices since date at Column 3*
			£	£	£	£	£
Christmas bonus	November 1972	December 1972	10.00	10.00	10.00	69.75	69.75
Widow's payment	December 1985	April 1988	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,584.65	1,473.20

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 pence.
2. The retail prices index (all items) up to September 1995 as published by the Central Statistical Office has been used for uprating.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage change in the real value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus since it was first paid; to what amount it would have to be changed to restore its original value; and if he will increase it this Christmas. [39653]

Mr. Heald: If the £10 Christmas bonus had been uprated in line with prices since it was first paid in December 1972, it would be £67.15 at December 1995. The £10 bonus represents about 15 per cent. of this figure. We have no plans to increase the bonus.

Notes:

1: Figures rounded to nearest 5 pence.

2: The retail prices index (all items) up to September 1995 as published by the Central Statistical Office has been used for prices uprating.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to pay the state retirement pension from the actual birthday of the claimant; and if he will make a statement. [39392]

Mr. Heald: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *715*.

National Insurance

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the national insurance yield in a full year from extending employers' class 1A national insurance contributions to all non-cash or dividend remuneration currently defined as income for income tax purposes but not for national insurance purposes. [39111]

Mr. Heald: The estimate is £250 million based on 1994–95 figures.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the social security spending as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1978. [38820]

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *342*.

Fraud

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the savings made by his Department in tackling organised method of payment fraud in 1993–94 and 1994–95; what were the reasons for any changes in savings; and what new policies his Department intends to take to increase substantially the savings by tackling organised method of payment fraud. [37591]

Mr. Heald: We have adopted a number of preventative measures as key elements of our strategy for tackling fraud. The redesign of the order book has dramatically reduced the incidence of counterfeiting and manipulation, and the use of secure delivery arrangements for order books to post offices has significantly reduced losses in transit. This has meant a reduction in the Benefits Agency's organised fraud teams' detected savings from £54.8 million for method of payment fraud in 1993–94 to £20.3 million in 1994–95.

We intend to continue the policy of enhancing preventive measures such as the electronic stop notice system in the south-east of England and the incentive scheme for post offices to identify fraudulent encashments. The benefit payment card which is scheduled to begin roll-out in 1996 will replace payment by order books and giro cheques. It is estimated it will help eliminate fraud of £140 million a year.

Alongside this preventive work, organised fraud teams will continue to examine new organised fraud trends that may emerge and develop their intelligence and operational capabilities to detect and investigate this type of fraud.

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in how many cases children have had an increase in child support maintenance and how many have had a decrease, as a result of being assessed by the Child

Support Agency; and if he will provide a breakdown of these statistics; [37594]

(2) what is the proportion of Child Support Agency cases assessed at *(a)* zero to £2.35, *(b)* £2.36 to £4.99, *(c)* £5 to £9.99, *(d)* £10 to £19.99, *(e)* £20 to £29.99, *(f)* £30 to £39.99, *(g)* £40 to £49.99, *(h)* £50 to £59.99, *(i)* £60 to £69.99, *(j)* £70 to £79.99 and *(k)* £80 or more who were previously paying no maintenance, excluding those which are new separations. [37596]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the subject of maintenance payments.

Whilst it is not possible to exclude new separations, an estimated figure for Income Support cases only is available and is set out in the table below. This is produced based on five per cent. samples of Income Support and Child Support Agency cases, carried out in February 1993 and August 1995 respectively.

Most of the cases included in these samples will be Income Support taken on in the first year of the Agency, when it was estimated that around 50 per cent. of those cases taken on were not already receiving maintenance. This proportion has increased to an estimated 77 per cent. since April 1994, so we would expect the percentage assessed who were not previously receiving maintenance (38.95 per cent.) to increase in future samples.

You also asked for information on how many cases children have had an increase in child maintenance and how many have had a decrease, as a result of being assessed by the Child Support Agency. This information is not available.

Maintenance assessed at August 1995 for parents with care who received no maintenance whilst on Income Support in February 1993	*Number of cases: (000's)*	*As a percentage of the 333,500 cases assessed at August 1995 who were in receipt of Income Support in 1993*
(a) £0 to £2.35	60	17.97
(b) £2.36 to £4.99	1	0.30
(c) £5 to £9.99	2	0.60
(d) £10 to £19.99	4	1.20
(e) £20 to £29.99	5	1.50
(f) £30 to £39.99	6	1.80
(g) £40 to £49.99	7	2.10
(h) £50 to £59.99	8	2.40
(i) £60 to £69.99	4	1.20
(j) £70 to £79.99	3	0.90
(k) £80 or more	29	8.69
Total	130	38.95

Notes:

1. The table may include some instances where maintenance was paid to the DSS in respect of the claimant and/or dependant(s) at February 1993 and some cases where there was no entitlement to maintenance at February 1993.
2. Number of cases includes interim and full maintenance assessments.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many cases have been cleared without assessment by the Child Support Agency in the last six months, with a breakdown of the reasons; [37597]

(2) if he will give a breakdown of all cases cleared by the Child Support Agency in the last six months showing *(a)* those where the absent parent is unnamed, *(b)* other cases which were cleared without assessment, *(c)* cases where a category A interim assessment was issued and *(d)* cases where the absent parent was assessed to pay (1) zero to £2.35, (2) £2.36-£4.99, (3) £5-£9.99, (4) £10-£19.99, (5) £20-£29.99, (6) £30-£39.99, (7) £40-£49.99, (8) £50-£59.99, (9) £60-£69.99, (10) £70-£79.99 and (11) £80 or over and to express these figures as numbers of cases cleared during that period and as percentages. [37607]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss. Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss. Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about cases cleared by the Agency.

You asked for a breakdown of cases cleared in the last six months without a maintenance assessment. As data for September is not yet available, I have based the reply on the first 5 months of the financial year.

During this period, the Agency cleared 128,726 cases of which 44,357 were full maintenance assessments and 8,618 were category A interim maintenance assessments. A further 75,751 cases were cleared without an assessment. As we have no business need to record more specific reason for clearance we cannot provide a more detailed breakdown of these cases.

A breakdown of the full maintenance assessments by amount and as a proportion of cases cleared is attached.

You also asked about cases in which the absent parent was not named. Since April 1995, there have been 35,223 cases in which the absent parent may not have been named. This includes 15,054 cases in which "good cause" for not naming the absent parent was accepted, and 20,169 in which it was not accepted. In cases in which "good cause" was accepted, the person with care may have identified the absent parent, but because of the possible threat to the person with care, or child, the case was not pursued. In some cases, the parent with care may subsequently have named the absent parent and the Agency has pursued maintenance.

Full assessments by amount and as a proportion of cases cleared: 1 April 1995 to 31 August 1995

Weekly maintenance	*Full assessments (000's)*	*Per cent. as a proportion of cases cleared*
£0 to £2.35[2]	20.7	16.08 per cent.
£2.36 to £4.99	0.5	0.39 per cent.
£5 to £9.99	0.9	0.70 per cent.
£10 to £19.99	2.7	2.10 per cent.
£20 to £29.99	3.3	2.56 per cent.
£30 to £39.99	3.5	2.72 per cent.
£40 to £49.99	3.8	2.95 per cent.
£50 to £59.99	3.4	2.64 per cent.
£60 to £69.99	2.5	1.94 per cent.
£70 to £79.99	2.5	1.94 per cent.
£80 or more	2.4	1.86 per cent.
Total	[1]46.0	35.73 per cent.

Notes

[1] Data extracted from a 5 per cent. sample of cases. As a result, total differs slightly from that recorded by clerical system (44,357).

[2] Includes absent parents on income support.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the total staff employed by the Department of Social Security's liable relatives unit at the time of its abolition, *(b)* the total staff currently employed by the Child Support Agency, *(c)* the average amount of maintenance collected per employee by the Department of Social Security's liable relatives unit in the last year of its operation, weighted for 1995 prices and *(d)* the average amount of maintenance collected per employee by the Child Support Agency in the last year. [37600]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 23 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the Child Support Agency and the Liable Relatives Unit.

You asked for a comparison of the average amount of maintenance collected per employee between the DSS Liable Relative Unit in its last year of operation, and the CSA. I am afraid that it is not possible to provide information in this form. We do not know how much maintenance was paid direct between parents during the operation of the Liable Relative Unit, and other Department of Social Security staff were involved in the work (e.g. on finance, visiting and training) who were not in the Unit itself. As far as this Agency is concerned, our staff are solely responsible for all child maintenance work, but by no means all of them are directly involved in maintenance collection duties.

Such comparisons between the two systems are misleading, as the nature and organisation of the work the Agency does has greatly changed in comparison with the previous system.

As at 31 March 1995, the CSA employed 6,393 staff. During the 1994/95 year the Agency was involved in the payment of over £187 million in maintenance collected for Child Support assessment.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many former income support claimants were lifted off this benefit due to maintenance paid by the Child Support Agency in each month since January 1994. [37601]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 20 October 1995:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State concerning the number of former income support recipients who no longer receive income support as a result of maintenance payments.

Since January 1994, almost 11,800 claimants have ceased to claim Income Support because the maintenance assessment exceeded the amount of Income Support in payment. A table showing the monthly breakdown is attached.

I hope this is helpful.

	Number of claimants
1994	
January	643
February	491
March	1,191
April	614
May	403
June	905
July	1,378
August	655
September	560
October	451
November	975
December	552
1994 total	8,818
1995	
January	546
February	628
March	511
April	317
May	265
June	212
July	219
August	241
1995 total	2,939
1994–95 total	11,757

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give an account for the cases investigated by the Child Support Agency under the requirement to co-operate which are not explained by good cause accepted, absent parent named or reduced benefit directive imposed; [37602]

(2) how many cases were investigated by the Child Support Agency during 1994–95 under the requirement to co-operate; and if he will provide a month-by-month breakdown showing in how many cases good cause was accepted, in how many a reduced benefit directive was imposed and in how many the absent parent was named; [37604]

(3) if he will provide an explanation of the cases investigated by the Child Support Agency under the requirement to co-operate which are not accounted for by good cause accepted, absent parent named or a reduced benefit directive; and if he will provide a breakdown of these statistics. [37605]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning parents with care and the requirement to co-operate with the Child Support Agency in arranging maintenance.

You asked for a monthly breakdown of the outcome of requirement to co-operate investigations completed during 1994/95 and details of such investigations. The attached table shows the information requested.

Of the 38,573 cases where good cause was not accepted, a reduced benefit direction was appropriate in 17,451 cases. In the remaining 21,122 cases, either the Child Support Officer, having had regard for the welfare of the parent with care or any children living with her, decided that a reduced benefit direction was not appropriate, or the parent with care later chose to co-operate with the Agency.

I hope this is helpful.

Requirement to Co-operate Decisions 1994–95

Month	*Good cause accepted*	*Absent parent named*	*Good cause not accepted*	*Reduced benefit direction issued*	*Investigations completed*
April	3,335	1,073	2,705	205	7,113
May	3,915	1,191	2,904	258	8,010
June	4,018	1,200	3,071	892	8,289
July	3,682	944	2,831	1,143	7,457
August	3,636	864	3,306	1,726	7,806
September	3,187	792	2,545	2,846	6,524
October	3,006	844	2,449	3,791	6,299
November	3,465	937	3,554	2,969	7,956
December	2,269	609	2,854	1,285	5,732
January	3,177	770	4,399	973	8,346
February	3,839	958	3,699	922	8,496
March	4,137	993	4,256	441	9,386
Total	41,666	11,175	38,573	17,451	91,414

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many complaints have been received by the Child Support Agency in each month since its launch. [37603]

Mr. Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 25 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the number of complaints the Child Support Agency has received since its launch.

From the launch of the Agency in April 1993 to August 1995, over 52,500 written complaints have been received by the Agency. Monthly figures are available from April 1994, and are shown in the table attached.

Many of these complaints are from persons who are opposed to the legislation but not actually affected by it. The number of letters received that contain complaints specifically about the Agency's performance is not separately identified, but it is considerably less than the overall figure shown above.

I hope this is helpful.

	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
April		1,465	3,025
May		1,984	2,481
June		1,881	3,113
July		1,992	2,281
August	Monthly	1,131	3,160
September	breakdown	2,536	—
October	unavailable	2,579	—
November		3,070	—
December		2,458	—
January		1,483	—
February		3,121	—
March		3,948	—
Total	10,846	27,648	14,060

Benefit Uprating

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will *(a)* list, for each benefit which is not being uprated and each capital or income limit which is not being raised, the reasons for not doing so and *(b)* list the current value of each such benefit or limit and the value that would have resulted from increasing it in line with prices and average earnings since it was (i) last increased or (ii) introduced when announcing benefit rates for 1996–97. [39660]

Mr. Burt: The information is not available. Details of the benefit uprating from April 1996 will be released as part of the Budget.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current rates of remuneration of chairpersons and members of *(a)* social security, *(b)* medical, *(c)* disability and *(d)* child support tribunals. [39658]

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table. Members of social security and child support appeal tribunals are not paid but can claim loss of earnings.

Position	*Appeal tribunal*	*Daily rate £*
Chairman	All	250
Medical member	Medical	228
Medical member	Disability	186
Lay member	Disability	115

Child Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the combined value of *(a)* child dependency increase and child benefit for the child of a widow and *(b)* children's allowance and child benefit for the child of a war widow at current and April 1995 prices and as a percentage of average earnings, in November 1979 and at each subsequent uprating date. [39654]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The information is in the tables:

Table 1: Widows benefit

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus child dependency increase for first child £	Gross adult weekly average earnings £	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1995 prices £
November 1979	11.10	100.60	11.0	27.45
November 1980	12.25	120.20	10.2	26.27
November 1981	12.95	132.40	9.8	24.80
November 1982	13.80	142.40	9.7	24.87
November 1983	14.10	156.70	9.0	24.24
November 1984	14.50	167.00	8.7	23.75
November 1985	15.05	178.70	8.4	23.38
July 1986	15.15	189.10	8.0	23.15
April 1987	15.30	198.90	7.7	22.39
April 1988	15.65	218.40	7.2	22.04
April 1989	16.20	239.70	6.8	21.12
April 1990	16.90	263.10	6.4	20.13
April 1991	17.95	284.70	6.3	20.09
October 1991	18.95	294.70	6.4	20.90
April 1992	19.40	304.60	6.4	20.83
April 1993	19.80	316.90	6.2	20.98
April 1994	20.00	325.70	6.1	20.67
April 1995	20.25	336.30	6.0	20.25

Table 2: Widows benefit

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus child dependency increase for subsequent children £	Gross adult weekly average earnings £	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earning	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1995 prices £
April 1991	17.95	284.70	6.3	20.09
October 1991	18.20	294.70	6.2	20.07
April 1992	18.65	304.60	6.1	20.02
April 1993	19.05	316.90	6.0	20.19
April 1994	19.25	325.70	5.9	19.89
April 1995	19.50	336.30	5.8	19.50

Notes:

1. Gross adult weekly earnings have been rounded to the nearest 10p.
2. From October 1991 the combined rate of child benefit and child dependency increases for the first child and subsequent children diverged. Table 2 reflects the rate in payment for subsequent children from that point.

Table 3: War widows benefit

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus child dependency increase for first child £	Gross adult weekly average earnings £	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1995 prices £
November 1979	14.00	100.60	13.9	34.62
November 1980	15.35	120.20	12.8	32.92
November 1981	16.10	132.40	12.2	30.84
November 1982	17.10	142.40	12.0	30.82
November 1983	17.45	156.70	11.1	30.00
November 1984	17.90	167.00	10.7	29.32
November 1985	18.55	178.70	10.4	28.82
July 1986	18.65	189.10	9.9	28.50
April 1987	18.85	198.90	9.5	27.59
April 1988	19.25	218.40	8.8	27.11
April 1989	19.85	239.70	8.3	25.88
April 1990	20.65	263.10	7.8	24.60
April 1991	21.90	284.70	7.7	24.52
October 1991	22.90	294.70	7.8	25.26
April 1992	23.40	304.60	7.7	25.12
April 1993	23.85	316.90	7.5	25.27
April 1994	24.10	325.70	7.4	24.90
April 1995	24.40	336.30	7.3	24.40

Table 3: War widows benefit

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus child dependency increase for first child £	Gross adult weekly average earnings £	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1995 prices £
April 1990	20.65	263.10	7.8	24.60
April 1991	21.90	284.70	7.7	24.52
October 1991	22.90	294.70	7.8	25.26
April 1992	23.40	304.60	7.7	25.12
April 1993	23.85	316.90	7.5	25.27
April 1994	24.10	325.70	7.4	24.90
April 1995	24.40	336.30	7.3	24.40

Table 4: War widows Benefit

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus child dependency increase for subsequent children £	Gross adult weekly average earnings £	As a per cent. of gross adult weekly average earning	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1995 prices £
April 1991	21.90	284.70	7.7	24.52
October 1991	22.15	294.70	7.5	24.43
April 1992	22.65	304.60	7.4	24.31
April 1993	23.10	316.90	7.3	24.48
April 1994	23.35	325.70	7.2	24.13
April 1995	23.65	336.30	7.0	23.65

Notes:

1. Gross adult weekly earnings have been rounded to the nearest 10p.
2. From October 1991 the combined rate of child benefit and child dependency increases for the first child and subsequent children diverged. Table 4 reflects the rate in payment for subsequent children from that point.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the effect on an early leaver's pension rights if his period of employment was too short to qualify for a pension under the employer's pension scheme and the employer fails to pay a contributions equivalent premium within the prescribed time limit. [39659]

Mr. Heald: A contributions equivalent premium is payable to the state if someone leaves a contracted-out salary-related occupational pension scheme before state pension age with less than two years' pensionable service with his employer. Payment of a CEP means that the employee's rights under the state earnings-related pension scheme are restored as if he had not been in contracted-out employment. Where a CEP is not paid within the prescribed time limit the employer's pension scheme remains liable to provide a guaranteed minimum pension and is notified accordingly by the Contributions Agency. There is no liability to pay a CEP which does not exceed £17.00. In this situation, the amount payable is treated as having been paid and the earner's SERPS rights restored as if he had not been in contracted-out employment.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual change in the amount of income support payable to a single pensioner with savings of £5,000, £8,000 or £8,100 in 1995–96 if the capital limits had been raised since 1986 in line with *(a)* prices and *(b)* average earnings. [39656]

Mr. Rogers Evans: The information is not available in the format requested. However, we are able to give figures showing the change in the amount of tariff income brought to account, as a result of the capital limits being uprated by *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* average earnings since 1988. The estimated changes in tariff income are set out in the table:

Amount of capital held £	*Change in tariff income under capital limits uprated by (a) prices* £	*Change in tariff income under capital limits uprated by (b) earnings* £
5,000	5	7
8,000	5	7
8,100	16	14

Notes:

1. The capital limits of £3,000 and £6,000 have been uprated by *(a)* the retail prices index, and *(b)* average earnings from 1988 to 1995–96 prices, and not 1986. The question has been answered in this form because income support was not in place until 1988. No account has been taken of governmental increases to the limits since 1988.
2. For cases on income support with capital held below the current upper limit of £8,000 the change in their weekly tariff income is equivalent to the gain in income support.
3. Those with capital of £8,100 might become entitled to income support under the upper capital limit, depending upon their underlying entitlement to income support, reduced by the tariff income indicated in the table.

Widow's Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change in the £1,000 widow's payment would be required in April 1996 in order to restore it to its value in relation to *(a)* prices and *(b)* average earnings in 1985. [39655]

Mr. Heald: The information is not available in the format requested. Since 1988, benefit upratings have been based on movement in the retail prices index over the preceding September to September period. Data on earnings growth in the period September 1994 to September 1995 are not yet available. If the widow's payment had been uprated in line with prices since December 1985, it would be £1,584.65 at April 1996.

Notes:

1. Figures rounded to nearest 5 pence.
2. The retail prices index (all items) up to September 1995 as published by the Central Statistical Office had been used for prices uprating.

Households Below Average Income

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to publish any amendment to "Households Below Average Income: a statistical analysis 1979–1992/93". [40237]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I have today placed in the Library of the House an addendum to the publication "Households Below Average Income: a statistical analysis 1979–1992/93" published on 2 June 1995. This sets out the minor corrections necessary in a number of places in the document, as a result of two data errors. Both errors are well within the margins of error which were set out in the original publication.

I have written to the hon. Members correcting replies to parliamentary questions based on the incorrect data. Details of these parliamentary questions are in the table.

Name	*Constituency*	*Date answered*	*Hansard reference*
Mr. Mark Robinson	Somerton and Frome	19 June	Vol. 262 col. 16
Mr. John Battle	Leeds West	27 June	Vol. 262 col. 584
Mr. John Battle	Leeds West	27 June	Vol. 262 col. 584
Ms Jean Corston	Bristol East	18 July	Vol. 263 col. 1089–90
Ms Jean Corston	Bristol East	18 July	Vol. 263 col. 1089–90
Ms Jean Corston	Bristol East	18 July	Vol. 263 col. 1091–94
Mr. John McAllion	Dundee East	19 July	Vol. 263 col. 1484–85

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 27 October 1995

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid Budget

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations his Department has received from *(a)* members of the general public, *(b)* hon. Members and *(c)* non-governmental organisations on the size of the overseas aid budget since 1 September; and what were the figures for the same period last year. [39083]

Mr. Hanley: Since 1 September 1995, FCO Ministers have received over 1,000 letters from members of the public and over 800 letters from hon. Members and non-governmental organisations about the size of the overseas aid budget. This far exceeds the number received during the same period in 1994.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Grant-giving funds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department for what grant-giving funds his Department is responsible, requiring a private sector contribution, where the use of national lottery funds is not allowed to count towards that private sector portion. [38603]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department is not responsible for any grant-giving funds.

The chief executives of the Court Service and of the Public Trust Office will write to the hon. Member on the matters for which they have responsibility.

Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mr. Chris Smith, dated 24 October 1995:

PQ 95/807: GRANT-GIVING FUNDS REQUIRING PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTION

The Parliamentary Secretary has asked me to reply to your question about grant-giving funds requiring a private sector contribution.

The Court Service is not responsible for any organisations or bodies that award grants. This question will be answered in detail by the Secretary of State for the Department of National Heritage.

Letter from Julia C. Lomas to Mr. Chris Smith, dated 24 October 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary has asked me to reply to you as part of the Lord Chancellor's Department's response to your Parliamentary Question, listed on 19 October 1995, regarding grant-giving funds requiring a private sector contribution.

The Public Trust Office is not responsible for any grant-giving funds.

DEFENCE

Pay Delegation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staff in each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38284]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Ministry of Defence delegation plan in respect of pay for non-industrial staff breaks the Department down into three groupings—first, those agencies that already hold delegated pay authority for non-industrial staff; secondly those agencies planning to assume such authority from 1 April 1996 and thirdly, the main core Department, including non-departmental public bodies, agencies and candidate agencies which have not yet assumed their own delegations.

The figures in parts *(a)* of the answer include figures for industrial staff for completeness although responsibility for negotiating the pay of these staff was accepted by the Ministry of Defence as a whole in 1994 and a number of agencies and other organisations within the Department have since assumed delegated responsibilities for their pay. Figures for non-industrial staff exclude staff who will form part of the new senior civil service to be formed on 1 April 1996.

Trade union recognition and negotiating machinery are in respect of non-industrial staff representation only.

1. Those agencies already holding delegated authority for non-industrial staff are as follows:

MET OFFICE

(a)

Non-Industrial staff—2,250.5

(Industrial staff—23)

(b)

Unions recognised—IPMS, NUCPS, CPSA

Negotiating Machinery—Single table "Met Office Pay Negotiating Forum"

SERVICE CHILDRENS SCHOOLS (NORTH WEST EUROPE)

(a)

UK domiciled Teachers—633

Professional Support staff—29

Administrative grades—14

(b)

For teachers:

Unions recognised—NUT, NASUWT, ATL, NAHT, SHA, PAT

Negotiating Machinery—Single table bargaining

For Support and Admin staff:

Unions recognised—FDA, NUCPS, IPMS, CPSA, AEP, NAIA

Negotiating Machinery—Single table bargaining

DERA

This agency, previously DRA, was expanded on 1 April 1995. Figures for non DRA staff therefore reflect those joining the expanded DERA who will only be covered by DERA bargaining arrangements from April 1996 onwards.

(a)

Non-Industrial Staff—7,431 DRA 1,629 Non-DRA

(Industrial Staff—1,131 DRA 1,221 Non-DRA)

(b)

Unions recognised—IPMS, NUCPS, CPSA

Bargaining Machinery—Single table bargaining

2. Those agencies planning to assume delegated authority from 1 April 1996 are:

HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE

(a)

Non-Industrial Staff—754

(Industrial Staff—35)

(b)

Proposed TU recognition—IPMS, NUCPS, CPSA, FDA, Retired Officers Association (ROA)

Proposed Negotiating Machinery—Single table bargaining

RAF MAINTENANCE GROUP

This agency plans to take partial delegation to be applied in one area only, that is No 16 Maintenance Unit, RAF Stafford. Details refer to this unit only, therefore, and not to the whole agency, the remainder of which is subsumed into the final part of this Answer covering the remainder of the Department.

(a)

Non-Industrial Staff—269.5

(Industrial Staff—432)

Service personnel—648 (not affected by delegation)

(b)

Proposed TU recognition—CPSA, NUCPS, IPMS

Proposed Negotiating Machinery—To be discussed with TUs

3. The remainder of the Ministry of Defence—that is, the core headquarters and those non-departmental public bodies, agencies and candidate agencies who have not yet accepted pay delegation—is made up as follows:

(a)

Non-Industrial Staff—64,244—Core Department

—19,733—Agencies

—9,431.5—Candidate Agencies

—1,176—NDPBs

(Total Industrial Staff—35,678)

(b)

Proposed TU Recognition—CPSA, NUCPS, IPMS, FDA, Retired Officers Association (ROA), MOD Staff Association (MODSA), Defence Police Federation.

Proposed Negotiating Machinery—Arrangements for 1996 under discussion with TUs. Long term arrangements to be developed in the light of Departmental pay and grading review now under way.

Cash and Operating Costs Limits

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the class I cash limits and Defence operating costs limit for 1995–96. [40629]

Mr. Soames: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

Class I cash limits

£000s

Vote	*Current cash limit*	*Change*	*Revised cash limit*
1	10,616,956	180,000	10,796,956
3	6,145,325	–180,000	5,965,325

These changes allow for increased expenditure on class I, vote 1 to reflect revised expectations of receipts from the planned sale of married quarters. The increase will be offset by lower expenditure on class I, vote 3 and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure. There is no change to the block Defence cash limit.

As a result, the Ministry of Defence operating costs limit will be increased by 180 million from £16,587,218,000 to £16,767,218,000.

Indonesia (Aircraft Exports)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Hawk 100s, and how many Hawk 200s, are to be delivered to Indonesia under current arrangements; and when deliveries will start. [37710]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Details of the commercial arrangement for the supply of 24 Hawk aircraft are confidential between the supplier and the customer.

Compensation Claims

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has paid in compensation claims in each of the last five years. [37777]

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 19 October 1995]:* The amounts are as follows:

£ million

Financial year	*Amount paid*
1990–91	16
1991–92	14
1992–93	16
1993–94	19
1994–95	57

[1] Includes compensation expenditure relating to service women dismissed on grounds of pregnancy (£5 million in 1993–94 and £35 million in 1994–95).

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *525*, what was the number of sorties flown from RAF Chivenor as part of its own training task, in addition to those sorties originating from RAF Valley, during the last two weeks of weapons task training from RAF Chivenor. [36961]

Mr. Soames: None.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Education Authorities (Grants)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of each local education authority's budget is covered by central Government grant. [38330]

Sir Paul Beresford: The information has been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Finance

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of revenue support grant paid to West Sussex county council in each of the last five years to the latest convenient date, indicating the percentage movement in each year. [38581]

Mr. Curry: The available information is as follows:

West Sussex county council

	RSG paid into general fund £	*Percentage movement from previous year*
1993–94	126,131,000	Not available[1]
1994–95	153,329,000	21.56
1995–96	142,811,000	(6.86)

Note:
[1] Before 1993–94, the revenue support grant was paid into the constituent districts' collection funds.
Source:
Revenue account returns (RA95 and RA96).

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the amount top sliced for area cost adjustment as a percentage of standard spending assessment for each financial year since 1988–89. [38917]

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The total of the area cost adjustment is not pre-determined as a top slice from the total of standard spending assessments. It is determined principally from the differentials in earning.

The contribution of the area cost adjustment factor in the standard spending assessment was given in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton, (Mrs. Winterton) on 20 October 1995, *Official Report*, columns *383–84*. Standard spending assessments were not introduced until 1990–91.

Eland House

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding progress on the refurbishment of Eland house. [38896]

Sir Paul Beresford: Eland house is currently being constructed by Land Securities, which expects to be able to hand over the building within the next three weeks.

Fitting-out works for Department of the Environment occupation will commence shortly thereafter.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what methods English Nature uses to calculate the numbers of sites of special scientific interest damaged in England each year. [39241]

Mr. Clappison: English Nature's fourth annual report, a copy of which is in the Library, sets out its methods. The report also confirms that the categories of damage to SSSIs in England are based on the "Common Standards for Monitoring" report by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (1993).

Abandoned Mine Workings (Pollution)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to monitor *(a)* mine water pollution and *(b)* methane emissions from abandoned mine workings in South Yorkshire. [39033]

Mr. Clappison: The answers are as follows:

(a) *Mine Water pollution*

The Coal Authority monitors mine water levels at 11 sites in south Yorkshire, and the National Rivers Authority monitors mine water discharges. The two authorities are working together closely, in the light of results from monitoring, to develop a clearer understanding of the mine water situation in the area and a strategy for the prevention of future problems.

(b) *Methane emissions*

The Coal Authority carries out regular monitoring for methane at 15 sites in south Yorkshire. It is also working with Rotherham and Barnsley borough councils to monitor and address methane problems in these areas.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all test bore holes sunk in south Yorkshire in each year since 1990 to monitor mine water flows. [39034]

Mr. Clappison: Neither the National Rivers Authority nor the Coal Authority is aware of any test bore holes sunk in south Yorkshire since 1990 specifically for the monitoring of mine water flows. However, a number of mine shafts and boreholes sunk for other purposes in the past are used by the Coal Authority to monitor the mine water situation.

Major Fires (Reports)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if he will seek a meeting with the chief inspector of HM factory inspectorate on the matter of liaison between HMFI and the fire brigade in preparing reports on major fires at installations covered by the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, with regard to restrictions placed on fire service personnel in respect of disclosure of information received in the course of duty, to outside bodies. [39261]

Sir Paul Beresford: I am satisfied with liaison arrangements between the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate and fire brigades in respect of incidents at major hazard sites and have no plans to meet HM chief inspector of factories to discuss this matter.

Disclosure of information received by fire service personnel in the course of duty is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column 29, what information he has about the source of the drums containing radioactive uranium waste found at Chelveston in January; and if he will make a statement. [40164]

Mr. Clappison: Investigations by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are still under way, but are now nearing completion.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet discovered the source of the depleted uranium found at Poplar farm, Chelveston on 13 January; and what action he has taken against the land owner, the source of the material and the carrier of the material. [40217]

Mr. Clappison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) earlier today.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment (1) what has been the response of the Cabinet Environment Committee to the findings of the House of Lords Select Committee on Sustainable Development in paragraph 6.31 of its recent report, HL 72; and whether the Committee had integrated environmental concerns with energy policy; [38204]

(2) what is his response to the recommendations in paragraph 6.15 of the report from the House of Lords Select Committee on Sustainable Development, HL 72, that there should be a clear and prompt re-statement of the functions and purposes of the Government's own internal integrating mechanisms. [38205]

Mr. Clappison: The Government published their full response to the Lords Select Committee Report on Sustainable Development (HL 72) on Thursday 12 October as Cm 3018. Paragraphs 66 to 68 of the response set out the position on the Energy Saving Trust—paragraph 6.31 of the report. Paragraphs 81 to 84 of the response restate the functions and purposes of the Government's own internal integrating mechanisms.

Cable Laying (Damage to Trees)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment what representations and evidence he has received on the damage done to trees by cable television companies; and what action he is taking. [38206]

Mr. Clappison: In the light of widespread public concern about the effects on tree roots of cable and utility companies trenching activities, guidelines to help minimise damage were published by the National Joint Utilities Group in April. To help inform a review of the guidelines, after six months' experience of their operation, the Government have invited local authorities in particular to submit comments on how well the guidelines are working by the end of October.

HSE Offshore Safety Division

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are employed with the Health and Safety Executives offshore safety division in Scotland on *(a)* a full-time and *(b)* a part-time basis. [39665]

Sir Paul Beresford: At 1 April 1995, 116 full-time staff and six part-time staff were employed in the Health and Safety Executive's offshore safety division in Scotland.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to change his Department's cash and running costs limits for 1995–96. [40637]

Mr. Gummer: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the following cash limit changes will be made.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 1 (housing and construction, England), covering sections B, C, D and G of that vote, will be increased by £425,000 from £111,990,000 to £112,415,000. This change reflects a transfer of provision from the Department of Social Security in respect of additional rent officer service costs arising from housing benefit changes.

The cash limits for regeneration, and countryside and wildlife, will be increased by £12,283,000 from £1,482,233,000 to £1,494,516,000. The changes reflect the payment of £12,033,000 on capital projects which slipped from previous years for the city challenge programme within the single regeneration budget, the docklands light railway, Central Manchester development corporation, Plymouth development corporation, coalfield areas fund and the Victoria arena, Manchester. The increase is covered in full by take up of part of the entitlement to capital end year flexibility announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on July 13, 1995—*Official Report*, columns *776–82*. A transfer of £250,000 from the Department of Health in respect of urban programme payments also is necessary following an excess transfer in the main estimates.

There will be associated increases to external financing limits for urban development corporations, by £15,775,000 from £243,739,000 to £259,514,000; and by £12,000,000 from £143,898,000 to £155,898,000 for the Urban Regeneration Agency (English Partnerships).

The Department of the Environment/European Regional Development Fund cash limit will be increased by £9,000,000 from £184,219,000 to £193,219,000 through the take-up of part of the entitlement to end year flexibility on the DOE Regeneration, and Countryside and Wildlife cash limit announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on July 13, 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*. Of this, £3,000,000 is for supplementary credit approvals for local authority capital projects and £6,000,000 for other payments.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 3—Environmental Protection and Water—will be reduced by £91,000 from £311,535,000 to £311,444,000. The change reflects a transfer of provision for storage and distribution of energy efficiency publicity materials to vote 5 and a token

supplementary estimate to take on expenditure on pneumoconiosis compensation and awareness of workplace health issues from class V, vote 1 as a result of machinery of government changes.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 5 (Administration) will be increased by £91,000 from £226,009,000 to £226,100,000 to reflect the transfer of Energy Efficiency Office provision from class VII, vote 3 (Environmental Protection and Water) for the storage costs of publicity material. In addition, the Department will receive payment of £543,000 from class V, vote 1 (Department for Education and Employment: programmes and central services) in respect of staff and other support costs relating to liaison with the Health and Safety Executive, which is offset by an equivalent increase to running costs.

Overall, the Department's gross running costs limit will be increased by £634,000 from £228,220,000 to £228,854,000.

Following the announcement on 5 July of the creation of the new Department for Education and Employment and the consequent machinery of government changes, the Department of the Environment is now responsible for class V, vote 3 (Health and Safety Commission—previously entitled Health and Safety Commission and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service). To effect this change in responsibility, a token increase of £1,000 is sought for this cash-limited vote.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 6 (Office for Water Services) will be increased by £819,000 from £8,146,000 to £8,965,000 in order to take-up end year flexibility on running costs, announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on July 13, 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*.

All increases will be offset by savings or charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider the policy of claiming rent back from the landlord, as opposed to the tenant, in cases where the tenant has received housing benefit subsequent to acquiring a job. [39267]

Mr. Roger Evans: I have been asked to reply.

The circumstances in which local authorities seek recovery of overpaid housing benefit are varied. Regulations are sufficiently flexible to enable authorities to exercise discretion in doing this and they are encouraged to exercise this discretion fairly. Authorities cannot recover overpaid housing benefit from landlords if the benefit has been paid to the claimant. Recovery may, however, be made from the landlord if the benefit has been paid directly to him, although local authorities are required to make landlords aware that they may be liable to repay any overpayment before any such direct payment arrangement is introduced. There are no current plans to change these arrangements.

PRIME MINISTER

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if there are any proposals to change the 1995–96 cash limit or running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Service vote. [40635]

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Services (class XIX, vote 1) will be increased by £2,999,000 from £37,749,000 to £40,748,000. At the same time the running costs limit will be increased by £2,772,000 from £40,895,000 to £43,667,000.

The increases reflect the residual transfer of running costs provision for central services previously funded by Her Majesty's Treasury: administration (class XVII, vote 1) (£272,000) following the machinery of government changes announced on 16 December 1994.

The vote is eligible for an increase of £2,747,000 in respect of end-year flexibility for running costs expenditure as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*. The supplementary estimate gives effect to £1,500,000 of this increase.

The vote is also eligible for a cash limit increase of £1,227,000 in respect of end year flexibility arrangements for capital expenditure as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1995, *Official Report*, column *776–82*. This supplementary estimate gives effect to the increase.

Some £1,000,000 will be transferred from capital into running costs.

All the increases are either offset by inter-departmental transfers or have been charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Appointments (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary. [39538]

The Attorney-General: There are none.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Office makes appointments in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating the total annual budget and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years [39428]

The Attorney-General: There are none.

Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on whether the CPS and the SFO should become executive agencies. [40585]

The Attorney-General: I announced on 6 December 1993 that consideration was to be given to whether the CPS and the SFO should become executive agencies under the Government's next steps initiative. Following a prior options study by an interdepartmental group, I announced on 22 September 1995 that I had concluded that it would not be right to restructure either the CPS or the SFO as an executive agency. The special character of the CPS and the SFO as independent prosecuting authorities and their well-established relationship with me as Attorney-General, which is enshrined in the statutory concept of superintendence, are best maintained by retaining their present status.

However, both organisations will be introducing the principles of next steps, such as clarity of objectives, the determining of suitable performance targets, and the delegation of management responsibilities. These principles will provide the basis for further improvement in the management of the work of the CPS and the SFO in line with the approach set out in the recent civil service White Papers. Work to bring this about is under way.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Nursery Voucher Scheme

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what are the implications of the introduction of the proposed nursery voucher scheme for the local management of schools formula. [38159]

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department is considering the implications of the nursery voucher for LMS schemes. However, since LMS schemes vary, the implications will be different for each scheme.

Child Care

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment when the evaluation of the out-of-school child care grant will be published. [38741]

Mrs. Gillan: I hope to publish the report during the winter.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what is her intention with regard to future support for school-age child care; and if she will make it her policy to continue actively to support school age child care and enable local and national agencies to do the same. [38742]

Mrs. Gillan: Any decision on future support for school age child care will be based on a full assessment of our current out-of-school child care initiative, including costs and benefits, and on wider Government policy for public expenditure.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Employment what changes will be made to the cash limits or running costs limits of her Department for 1995–96. [40638]

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the supplementary estimate the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class V, vote 1—Department for Education and Employment: Employment programmes and central services—will be increased by £853,000 from £2,121,711,000 to £2,122,564,000.

The cash limit for class V, vote 2—Department for Education and Employment: Employment Service—will be reduced by £848,000 from £907,800,000 to £906,952,000.

The cash limit for class V, vote 1—Department for Education and Employment: Schools, research and miscellaneous services—will be increased by £12,639,000 from £722,844,000 to £735,483,000.

The cash limit for class X, vote 2—Department for Education and Employment: higher and further education and student support—will be increased by £185,000 from £5,908,377,000 to £5,908,522,000.

The cash limit for class X, vote 3—Department for Education and Employment: administration—will be reduced by £45,000 from £340,000 to £90,295,000.

The running costs limit for class V, vote 1 will be £294,401,000, the running costs limit for class V, vote 2 will be £1,023,060,000, the running costs limit for class X, vote 3 will be £86,455,000. Therefore, the overall running costs for the Department for Education and Employment will be £1,403,916,000.

The cash limit increase on class V, vote 1 is as a result of a net transfer from the Employment Service to the Department for Education and Employment in respect of personnel functions and premises costs.

The cash limit reduction on class V, vote 2 is as a result of a net transfer of £887,000 to the Department for Education and Employment in respect of personnel functions and premises costs. This decrease is offset by a net transfer of £5,000 from the Welsh Office, class XV, vote 3, in respect of the accommodation costs of an office in Lampeter and a net transfer of £34,000 from class V, vote 2 in respect of manual giro reconciliation work.

The increase on class X, vote 1 is in respect of the take up of the capital end-year flexibility entitlement of £1,796,000 announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 13 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*, and provision of £10,900,000 for specialist schools which was within the Department's cash plans but held outside the vote until further information on the participating schools was available. This increase is offset by a contribution of £57,000 from the Welsh Office towards the funding of the special needs tribunal.

The cash limit on class X, vote 2 is to be increased by £185,000 to provide for an increase of that amount to the Higher Education Funding Council to cover the costs of students attending diploma in social work conversion courses as part of the probation officer training. This increase is offset by a reduction in the cash limit of class VIII, vote 1.

The cash limit for class X, vote 3, will be reduced from £90,340,000 to £90,295,000 to reflect the transfer of £45,000 to the Privy Council, class XIX, vote 3, to support the running costs of its central drugs co-ordination unit.

The running costs limit reduction is a result of transfer of provision to DTI (Class VI, vote 1), of to DoE (Class VII, vote 5) and of to CSO (class XVII, vote 12) as part of the machinery of government change, and as a result of a transfer of £45,000 to the Privy Council (class XIX, vote 3).

There will be an increase of £2,100,000 in the non-voted cash limit DFEE/LACAP for local authority capital for specialist schools. That amount was within the Department's cash plans but not added to the cash limit until further information on the participating schools was available. The local authority capital cash limit will be increased from £44,798,000 to £46,898,000.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Promotion Services, North-West

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of export promotion services in the north-west. [39607]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: All companies in the north-west have access to the full range of Government export promotion services. This support includes:

access to national network of export development and export promoters with specific country experience;

generic and specific export market intelligence;

identify potential overseas business partners;

on-the ground help in overseas markets;

award schemes to encourage good export practice.

Complementary services are available through local chambers of commerce and other private sector organisations. Export services are increasingly accessible through business links as the network expands throughout the region.

Industrial Death and Retirement Fund

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what occasions *(a)* the National Coal Board and *(b)* the British Coal Corporation have identified the industrial death and retirement fund separately within their annual report and statement of accounts; what interest has accrued on the assets of the industrial death and retirement fund since 7 June; what is the protected level of benefit to be paid from the fund in (i) 1996 and (ii) 2000; and on what occasions (1) the National Coal Board and (2) the British Coal Corporation had a liability to pay benefit if there were insufficient money in the fund. [40098]

Mr. Page: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure that businesses consuming less than 100 Kw of electricity per annum enjoy similar refunds to those which have been negotiated for domestic consumers of electricity. [39965]

Mr. Eggar: The regional electricity companies have agreed that, subject to the listing of the National Grid becoming effective, each of their domestic customers will received a discount of £50, inclusive of VAT.

Electricity prices have fallen by an average of 6.5 per cent. in real terms since vesting to commercial and industrial customers. All customers will benefit from the further reductions in the pipeline thanks to the new distribution price control, the reduction of the fossil fuel levy when the nuclear industry is privatised and lower generation and supply costs.

Export Licences

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of export licences are processed by his Department *(a)* in less than two weeks, *(b)* from two weeks to one month and *(c)* longer than two months; and what representations he has received over delays in processing. [39263]

Mr. Nelson: The code of practice of the Export Control Organisation commits the ECO to aim to process licence applications within certain time scales.

Where an application has to be sent to other Departments for advice, to achieve completion within 20 working days ("circulated cases");

Where the application does not have to be circulated, to achieve completion within 10 working days ("non-circulated cases").

These targets are based on the exporter having supplied all the necessary information in support of the application, the details of which are readily available both in the ECO's notes for guidance and other awareness material. Statistics are kept to monitor performance against these targets. The compilation of other, ad hoc, statistics would involve a search of individual licence records which would divert valuable resources away from the essential task of processing export licence applications.

Performance against the targets in the last three years are as follows:

	Circulate Cases Percentage	*Non-circulated cases Percentage*
1992	67	68
1993	61	56
1994	68	69

However, the performance in respect of cases requiring consultation with other Departments—about three-quarters of the total—has fallen in recent months, dropping to an average of 49 per cent. Ministers and senior officials have received some representations from exporters on the matter, both directly and via hon. Members. There have been a number of reasons. The discovery of circumstances where export controls seem to have failed in the past has sharpened even further the need to ensure that such controls are properly enforced. The staff in the licensing units have been reminded that while industry can expect that applications are dealt with expeditiously, there remains a need to ensure that all export licence applications are properly supported by the necessary documentation and other information. Many delays are caused by proper documentation not having been provided. In parallel with this, long-planned introduction of improved system and procedures designed, among other things, to ensure proper rigour in the consideration of applications, has tended to lengthen the process.

I am mindful of the need to process applications as expeditiously and thoroughly as possible. Every effort is being made to do so.

Departmental Work

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the work of his Department since 1990. [38076]

Mr. Lang: Throughout this period, the work of the Department of Trade and Industry has been to help United Kingdom business compete successfully at home and abroad. Since machinery of government changes in July 1995, the DTI also aims, through the Office of Science and Technology, to strengthen the UK's science, engineering and technology capability and to maximise its contribution to national economic performance and quality of life.

The DTI's activities and achievements since 1990 have included:

a continuing dialogue to identify business needs and ensure that these are taken into account by Government and within the European Union;

a leading role in the Government's effort to enhance the UK's international competitiveness, described in detail in two White Papers "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win" in 1994 and "Competitiveness: Forging Ahead" in 1995;

the promotion of trade liberalisation world-wide. The UK played a major part in the successful conclusion in December 1993 of the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the subsequent establishment of the World Trade Organisation. Estimates from GATT/WTO suggest that potential gains in world income from implementation of the Uruguay round will build to $510 billion in the year 2005 and in each subsequent year. As the world's fifth largest trading nation, the UK is set to be one of the largest beneficiaries;

export promotion activities directed at ensuring that UK business is able to take full advantage of overseas market opportunities;

the promotion of UK business interests in an expanding EU. The DTI has taken a leading role in the negotiation of market-opening legislation, for example in the insurance and telecommunications sectors, and in maximising the business benefit from the EU;

widening choice and stimulating enterprise by promoting competition and privatisation. For example, liberalisation of the telecommunications market has provided a steadily growing range of new services. Some 100 new licences have been issued since the ending of the BT/Mercury duopoly in domestic services in 1991. Over 4 million homes are now passed by cable companies. Prices have fallen for business and domestic consumers. British Telecom's main prices have fallen by over 35 per cent. since privatisation in 1984;

development and delivery of a wide range of programmes to support business, including programmes to promote innovation; to foster small firms, and to respond flexibly to the needs of different regions and areas with special difficulties. A network of business links has been established which bring together all the most important local sources of help for business, particularly small firms;

policies directed to ensuring that the nation's energy needs are met cost-effectively. Privatisation and liberalisation of energy markets have brought clear benefits. Average industrial gas prices have fallen by about 25 per cent. in real terms in the last five years, and industrial electricity prices by 6 per cent. Competition for supply in the domestic sector will not begin until 1998, but prices have already fallen by 13 per cent. in real terms for gas and by 6 per cent. for electricity (excluding VAT in both causes). Further reductions are expected as full competition begins;

encouraging inward investment from all over the world. The Invest in Britain Bureau, funded by the DTI, acts as a single point of contact in the UK for potential investors, and markets the UK abroad as an investment location. The UK attracts the highest share of Japanese and US investment in the EU;

maintaining confidence in markets by fair, proportionate and effective regulation. The DTI's regulatory responsibilities include competition policy; consumer affairs; company investigations; insurance regulation; management of the radio spectrum; telecommunications regulation and offshore exploration licences.

A detailed account of the work of my Department has been published annually since 1990 as part of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans:

	Command Number
1990	
The Government's Expenditure Plans 1991–92 to 1993–94 Trade and Industry	Cm 1504 of February 1991
1991	
The Government's Expenditure Plans 1992–93 to 1994–95 Trade and Industry	Cm 1904 of February 1992
1992	
The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993–94 to 1995–96 Trade and Industry	Cm 2204 of February 1993
1993	
Trade and Industry 1994. The Government's Expenditure Plans 1994–95 to 1996–97	Cm 2504 of March 1994
1994	
Trade and Industry 1995. The Government's Expenditure Plans 1995–96 to 1997–98	Cm 2804 of March 1995

These reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Martyn Gregory

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the result of the writ issued by Mr. Martyn Gregory received by his Department; and if he will make a statement. [38716]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The matter was settled on 28 July 1995 when the Department apologised to Mr. Gregory in open court and agreed to make a payment of £55,000 to him in respect of both damages and his legal costs. It was made clear that while it had not been its intention to question Mr. Gregory's integrity, the Department did not accept allegations of Government connivance contained in his television programme and was satisfied that no contravention of export controls had occurred in respect of such matters.

Mobile Telephone Equipment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number and types of *(a)* analogue a*(b)* digital mobile cellnet telephone stations or part equipments which have been stolen or lost in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) Europe and (iii) elsewhere, if these incidents have occurred (1) at the manufacturer's premises, (2) in transport or (3) at proposed or operational

sites; and what software relevant to mobile cellnet telephones has been lost, stolen or mislaid. [40143]

Mr. Ian Taylor: This information is not held by my Department. These are matters for the enforcement authorities, the telecommunications operators and the manufacturers concerned.

British Geological Survey (Petroleum Division)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are employed by the British Geological Survey's petroleum division in Scotland on *(a)* a full-time and *(b)* a part-time basis. [39667]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Petroleum activities within BGS are carried out within the survey's petroleum geology, geophysics, and offshore surveys division. In Scotland, 51 full-time personnel who are Edinburgh-based undertake work that relates directly and indirectly to petroleum.

Technology Foresight Programme

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much additional money has been made available from his Department's budget for projects under the technology foresight programme. [38869]

Mr. Ian Taylor: In announcements made earlier this year, additional funds were made availble to underpin foresight dissemination and implementation as follows:

£3 millons to take forward foresight through the LINK mechanism;

A £40 millions foresight challenge fund spread over the next three years, all of which would be matched by industry;

£70 millions, spread over the next four years, for the rest of DTI to support innovation and foresight, part of which would be matched by industry.

Including matching sums from industry this package is worth approximately £170 million.

Export Licence Applications

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who ordered the destruction of the records of export licence applications for goods on the military list made during the years *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1981, *(c)* 1982, *(d)* 1983, and *(e)* 1984. [39285]

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 25 October 1995]:* The public records, Board of Trade eighth schedule, submitted to both Houses of Parliament in June 1950, gave notice in the disposal schedule for all export licence application papers to be automatically destroyed after six years. The Public Records Act 1958 removed the need to comply with this schedule, but the then Board of Trade continued to follow the practice of destruction after six years. This continued until July 1991 when it was decided not to destroy any existing application papers. That practice has continued to date.

Temazepam

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to impose upper limits on the *(a)* manufacture, *(b)* import and *(c)* export of the drug Temazepam based upon the current and projected levels of required legitimate use within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [39191]

Mr. Maclen: I have been asked to reply.

None. Additional controls to prevent diversion from the legitimate trade in Temazepam, including import and export licences, will shortly be introduced.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Organophosphate Products

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department proposes setting up training programmes for those using organophosphate products for the control of cattle warbles, and if he will make a statement. [38690]

Mrs. Browning: My Department has no plans for setting up such a course. The National Proficiency Test Council already offers a certificate of competence in the safe use and handling of veterinary medicines. This covers the safe use and proper disposal of all veterinary medicines. A copy of a leaflet about the certificate is being placed in the Library of the House.

Common Agricultural Policy Budget

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the draft CAP budget expenditure published by the EU for 1996; what is the legal limit of such expenditure; and what was the actual expenditure in each of the past 10 years. [37631]

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply, 20 October 1995, Official Report, c.408]:* The 1996 draft budget for common agricultural policy expenditure has been set at the level of the guideline—the legally binding ceiling on CAP expenditure—of 40,828 million ecu or £34,069 million. Initial indicators are that 1995 expenditure will be about 35,000 mecu—about £28,000 million—some 3,000 mecu—£2,418 million—below the guideline. Expenditure in 1994 was 32,970 mecu—£25,264 million—some 3,495 mecu—£2,678 million—below the guideline. Details of expenditure on the common agricultural policys in previous years are contained in the annual financial reports on the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guarantee section, copies of which have been deposited in the Library of the House. The latest available report relates to 1993.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes are proposed in his Department's cash limits for 1995–96. [40630]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class III, vote 4 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: departmental research, advisory services and administration, executive agencies and certain other services) will be increased by £8,338,000 from £322,070,000 to £330,408,000. The vote 4 supplementary estimate will give effect to the end year flexibility entitlement of £6,778,000 for running costs and £60,000 for capital announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 13 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns*776–82*. The supplementary estimate also reflects a £3,000,000

reduction in appropriations in aid and a £1,500,000 reduction in running costs for the Meat Hygiene Service due to transitional relief given to fresh meat plants.

The Intervention Board executive agency is eligible for an increase of £2,791,000 in respect of end year flexibility arrangements for running costs expenditure. At this stage it is proposed to take up £1,266,000 of this entitlement and increase the agency's running costs limit from £32,400,000 to £33,666,000.

Agriculture Council

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 24 and 25 October; and if he will make a statement. [40632]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council adopted by qualified majority an amended Commission proposal enabling member states to pay national aids, under defined conditions, to farmers who had experienced considerable income losses as a result of significant currency depreciation in other member states. The original proposal was opposed by the United Kingdom, Italy and Sweden—comprising 24 votes—which meant it could not be adopted if a member state invoked the Council decision reflecting the agreement reached at Ioannina in Greece on 27 March 1994. I invoked this decision, thereby requiring the Council to seek a basis for agreement involving at least 65 votes, that is with fewer than 23 votes opposing or abstaining. As a consequence of this, the proposal was amended, in particular to require aid payments to be reduced or cancelled if currency depreciations were subsequently reversed. Although this was a significant and welcome improvement, it went less far than I would have liked. I therefore abstained on the vote. Italy voted against and Sweden in favour.

The Council also discussed reform of the rice regime and held a first discussion of the Commission's proposal to reform the fruit and vegetables regime. On the latter, I welcomed the proposed steps towards reducing the role of intervention and urged the Council to commit itself to eventual abolition of intervention in this sector. I stressed the importance of focusing support on a wider range of organisations than the narrowly defined traditional producer co-operatives proposed by the Commission.

Under other business, I expressed concern about the Commission's decision to reduce malt exports refunds and effectively shorten the period for which export certificates were valid. Several other Ministers supported. The Commissioner undertook to reflect and if necessary adjust the measures in the light of experience.

I also pressed the Commission to retain provision for guaranteed set-aside, so that the important environmental benefits of these arrangements could be preserved. I argued that any proposal setting limits of nitrate in lettuce must reflect the scientific advice. I drew attention to the lack of any health risk to UK consumers, the need to promote consumption of vegetables and the devastating effect which unduly restrictive rules would have on the UK glasshouse industry. I therefore argued that there was no justification for the setting of such limits.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Cash Limits

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for changes to the 1995–96 cash limits within his responsibilities. [40680]

Mr. Howard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class VIII, vote 1 (Home Office administration, police, probation and other services, England and Wales) will be increased by £3,419,000 from £4,436,657,000 to £4,440,076,000. The increase is the net effect of: a transfer £38,000—running costs—from the Department of Environment in respect of section 11 grant administration; a transfer of £250,000 from the Welsh Office in respect of expenditure related to police force reorganisation in the Rhymney valley; a reduction of £1,160,000 in the local authority non-voted HO/LACAP cash limit from £116,333,000 to £115,265,000 for the development of the national probation service information systems strategy and police information technology; a transfer from offender programmes of £275,000 to the Department for Educationa and Employment and Welsh Office in respect of additional cost of places for Home Office sponsored students; a transfer from equal opportunities and general of £4,000—running costs—to the Department of Environment in respect of transfer of responsibility for countryside byelaws; the take-up of £250,000 from the reserve—running costs—for special constables; and the take up of £2,000,000 from the reserve for temporary protection for war victims from former Yugoslavia. There is also a diminution of police and probation capital grants by £1,740,000.

In consequence of these changes, the Home Office gross running cost limit will increased by £284,000 from £1,740,331,000 to £1,740,615,000.

The increase will be offset by savings, transfers or charges to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Amusement Machines

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to present to the Deregulation Select Committee proposals under the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 relating to amusement machines with cash prizes. [39976]

Mr. Kirkhope: We hope to present a draft order containing our proposals shortly.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the Lord Chief Justice; and what issues he will seek to discuss with him. [39756]

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the Lord Chief Justice from time to time to discuss issues of mutual concern. The next such meeting has not yet been arranged.

Dorset Police (Expenditure)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been *(a)* the increase in Government funding for the police in Dorset and *(b)* the inflation rate since (i) 1979 and (ii) 1990; and if he will make a statement. [38971]

Mr. Maclean: Expenditure on the police in Dorset has increased since 1978–79 by 515 per cent. and since 1989–90 by 46 per cent. Estimated rates of inflation over the periods in question are:

(i) 1978–79 to 1995–96: 200 per cent.

(ii) 1989–90 to 1995–96: 29 per cent.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy on the provision of after-care services for women leaving refuges; which services are being provided with national coverage; and what funding has been made for after-care services for women leaving refuges in each of the last five years and the current financial year; [38464]

(2) how many women are taken care of by women's refuges; and what estimates he has made of the extent of unmet need. [38470]

Mr. Maclean: I understand from my right hon. Friends at the Departments of Health and of the Environment that the information requested is not currently available. Consideration is, however, being given by the official and ministerial groups on domestic violence to improving the collection of data on the range of services and facilities available to those suffering from the consequences of domestic violence.

Departmental Work

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of his Department since 1990. [38075]

Mr. Howard: A wide range of actions have been taken:

to strengthen the police service in England and Wales;

to tackle crime through legislation, crime prevention, action on juvenile crime, and improving the efficiency of the probation service;

to enable the Prison Service to meet the demands on it;

to improve immigration control;

to develop co-operation with other European Union members.

The police service in England and Wales has undergone a major programme of reform since 1990. The main vehicle for the reforms is the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994. Its aim is to bring up to date the management, organisation and funding of the police service. The Act also introduced reforms to promote effective police performance and increase local accountability. It set up new free-standing police authorities which now include independent members. I have given up detailed controls over police staffing numbers and capital expenditure, and within cash limits it is now for police authorities and chief constables to decide how to spend their money. I set key objectives for policing in England and Wales to focus on major public concerns. Police authorities are required to consult the local community about the priorities for policing in their area, and to report back each year on how their force has performed. Police rank structure and remuneration have been revised and adapted to support the new structures.

A Metropolitan police committee consisting of a chairman and 11 members was established this year to advise and support me in my role as police authority for the Metropolitan police.

The number of police officers in England and Wales increased to 127,222 in March 1995, and the service is expected to grow by a further 500 officers this year. The number of officers of constable rank in the service has increased by 1,825 since 1990. Additional funding will be provided to enable chief constables to recruit an additional 5,000 officers over the next three years. Action has been taken to reduce administrative burdens on the police to free police time for core duties, and since 1990 some 3,500 officers have been released for operational duties through civilianisation.

A new police national computer has been installed to deal with increasing numbers of transactions. It was enhanced in May this year by the launch of Phoenix, the criminal justice record service, giving the police instant computer access to the national collection of criminal records. The police national network, a state of the art telecommunications highway of the police service, has been set up and the first ever national strategy for police information systems adopted.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 provided for the setting up of a computerised database of DNA samples taken from persons charged or reported for a recordable offence. The database went live in April 1995.

The Criminal Justice Acts 1991 and 1993 strengthened the range and effectiveness of community penalties and provided a new statutory framework for sentencing. Courts are able to take into account previous convictions when passing sentence, and to impose longer sentences where necessary to protect the public from dangerous offenders. Powers have been introduced to enable unduly lenient sentences to be reviewed and increased. Maximum penalties have been increased for many offences including causing death by dangerous or drink driving, possession or distribution of prohibited weapons and making obscene or malicious telephone calls. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained a wide range of measures designed to tackle crime and protect the public, including restrictions on bail and allowing the courts to draw inferences from the silence of defendants in certain circumstances. Comprehensive national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community by probation and social services in England and Wales were introduced in 1992 and revised in 1995. A Green Paper "Strengthening Punishment in the Community" was published in March 1995 proposing that sentencers should have greater choice and flexibility in community sentencing, through the creation of a single, integrated community sentence. Separate programmes of action have also been taken to develop, implement and co-ordinate policies for tackling drugs misuse and domestic violence.

Legislation has also been passed to enable the United Kingdom to participate more effectively in international co-operation against crime; to combat money laundering and confiscate the proceeds of crime; to ratify the United

Nations convention against the illicit traffic in drugs; to improve extradition arrangements within the European Union and between our Council of Europe partners.

Legislation has been passed to strengthen the law on obscenity, child pornography and video classification and to provide measures for dealing more quickly and effectively with squatters; to deal with so called "joyriders"; to improve the efficiency of the magistrates courts; to strengthen the powers of the Courts of Appeal in England and in Wales; to establish a Criminal Cases Review Commission to investigate and refer possible miscarriages of justice to the courts; and to give courts jurisdiction over offences of murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide committed as violations of the laws and customs of war in Germany or German-occupied territory, during the second world war, by those who at the time of their offences were not British, but who subsequently became citizens or residents in the United Kingdom. A bill has also been introduced to pave the way for a new scheme for compensating the blameless victims of crimes of violence.

There have been important developments in crime prevention. In 1993, the Home Office issued a practical guide to crime prevention for local partnerships which helps local communities to develop their own strategies for tackling crime. In September 1994, the Government launched the partners against crime campaign to increase the contribution of individuals in the fight against crime through membership of neighbourhood watch and the special constabulary. In September 1995, I announced a new grant fund for the special constabulary to help forces to increase their numbers of special constables.

The Government have encouraged the greater use of closed circuit television in the prevention and detection of crime. In 1994–95, £5 million in Government money levered in a further £13.8 million to fund over 100 new CCTV schemes across the country. In October 1995, the Government announced further financial support for CCTV schemes to provide 10,000 new cameras over three years.

In October 1995, I announced the establishment of a national crime prevention agency to bring together the key bodies in the promotion of crime prevention.

Steps have been taken to combat juvenile crime. Legislation has been passed to give the courts wider powers to deal with serious and persistent juvenile offenders, including provision for a new secure training order which will be available for 12 to 14-year-olds who persistently offend. Action is in hand to establish five secure training centres in which those sentenced to the order will serve the first half of their sentence. We have also acted to stop the inappropriate use of cautioning. In October 1995, I announced plans to set up a ministerial group on juveniles to consider ways of strengthening measures to prevent those children who are most at risk of offending from becoming involved in crime.

An efficiency scrutiny of probation service in-house training began in 1991 has been completed and implemented, and new arrangements for qualifying training and the recruitment of probation officers were announced this year. A major efficiency programme, backed by the introduction in 1994 of key performance indicators and the establishment of a national information system strategy, is on-going and will produce significant cash savings while maintaining a high quality of service delivery.

In addition, action has been taken to secure better co-operation among all criminal justice agencies and the legal professions. Acting on the recommendations of the Woolf report into the prison disturbances in 1990, the Criminal Justice Consultative Council was established in January 1992 and 24 local area criminal justice liaison committees some months later.

In the Prison Service, the largest new prisons building programme this century has continued with 13 new prisons opening since 1990. Competition has been introduced as a stimulus to better performance in the Prison Service, with four prisons now being operated by the private sector. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 put industrial relations in the Prison Service on a new footing by clarifying the legal position of prison officers and governors under employment law, confirming that these groups of staff have the same employment rights as other crown servants, while also confirming that it is illegal for them to be induced to take industrial action. The Act also allows for associated changes to be made to pay determination arrangements for the staff affected.

Since the Prison Service became an executive agency on April 1993, it has reduced the rate of escapes by 76 per cent., ended the practice of holding three prisoners in cells designed for less than that number; provided 24-hour access to sanitation for 95 per cent. of prisoners; and increased the amount of purposeful activity being undertaken by prisoners. A new system of release on temporary licence which came into force on 25 April 1995 has reduced temporary release failures by over 75 per cent. compared with the same period last year. A programme of mandatory drug testing in prisons and a new national framework of incentives and earned privileges, linking incentives to prisoners' behaviour, have both been introduced during 1995.

There have been a number of important improvements to the immigration control. The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 has enable the average decision time for the asylum applications to be halved; further proposals for dealing with undeserving applications will be announced shortly.

The extension of visa regimes to nationals of a number of countries, the development of Carriers' Liability Act procedures, the increase in forgery detection rates and the introduction of a computerised suspect index have all strengthened the control. Revised shift patterns and the introduction of service standards at ports of entry have enabled the Immigration Service to cope with significant increases in both casework and passenger arrivals which rose from 47 million in 1990 to 63 million in 1994. Since November 1993, some 240 additional places have been provided in purpose-built accommodation for immigration detainees and a further 125 places will shortly be made available at a new centre at Gatwick.

Since 1990, close co-operation has continued with our partners in the European Union in tackling a range of common problems in the area of justice and home affairs. Before 1992, such work took place in a number of working groups such as those on immigration, the Trevi groups on police co-operation, the European committee to

combat drugs and the judicial co-operation working group. This work resulted in a significant body of agreements and, particularly in the areas of police and customs work, the development of highly effective procedures for operational co-operation by member states. The third pillar of the treaty on European Union, which came into force in November 1992, brought this work within a unified framework and has enabled the tradition of intergovernmental co-operation on justice and home affairs issues to continue successfully. Four major conventions have been signed, covering extradition arrangements, fraud against the Community budget, Europol and the customs information system, together with a large number of important instruments particularly in immigration and asylum policy.

Crime Statistics

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* violent crimes and *(b)* sexual assaults took place against (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) in total for (1) 1993 and (2) 1994 at major railway stations and on London Underground. [37526]

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 23 October, *Official Report*, column *467*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he discussed the new boundaries for Northern Ireland constituencies with the Southern Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Dick Spring, on 17 October. [38576]

Mr. Ancram: No

Irish and Ulster–Scots Languages

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people answered the Irish language question in the affirmative at the last census; if he will arrange that in the next census the questions on the Northern Ireland census form relating to speaking and understanding the Irish language are printed in Irish and that it will require a positive written answer in the Irish language for an adult individual or family to be counted as Irish speaking; and if he will consider a similar question for speakers of the Ulster-Scots language. [38484]

Sir John Wheeler: The number of people who answered the Irish language question in the affirmative at the last census was 142,003. The number and form of questions to be included in the 2001 census has not yet been determined. Those finally decided on will be as a result of consultation, testing and review. The suggestions put forward by the hon. Gentleman will be considered as part of this process. A census order including the proposed questions will be laid before Parliament in 1999.

Staff Attitude Surveys (Civil Service)

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the staff attitude surveys carried out in the Northern Ireland civil service over the last five years, the particular topic investigated, which consultants were employed and at what cost in consultants fees and civil service expenditure. [38481]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Organisation*	*Survey topic*	*Consultants*	*Cost consultant fees (ex VAT)* £	*Civil service expenditure* £
1991	NICS Service-Wide	Current management practices and how they are perceived by staff	KMPG Management Consulting	43,530	12,000
1992	Industrial Development Board (IDB)	Internal areas of strengths and weaknesses	PA Consulting	13,500	10,300
1992	Social Security Agency (SSA)	Staff attitudes in relation to four key business themes of SSA	Design Partnership	13,900	—
1992	DHSS	Gauging staff attitudes across a wide range of Personnel Issues	Development Partnership	5,131	—
1993	DOE	Staff attitudes in to: communication, performance management, career development, line management, stress, organisation	Research and Evaluation Services and Queen's University	9,400	5,500
1994	Industrial Development Board	Internal areas of strengths and weaknesses	PA Consulting	9,600	8,500
1994	DHSS	Standards of service provided by Personnel management branch	Price Waterhouse	7,469	—
1994	NICS Service-Wide	Research into the organisational culture in the senior grades in the NICS	KPMG Management Consulting	25,832	—

Year	Organisation	Survey topic	Consultants	Cost consultant fees (ex VAT) £	Civil service expenditure £
1995	Child Support Agency (CSA)	Organisation climate survey to gauge feelings of staff about structures and workings of CSA	Research and Evaluation Services	6,000	—
1995	Social Security Agency (SSA)	Research to identify the underlying causes of sick absence in the Agency	The Industrial Society (Survey not yet completed)	10,000	—

Chief Constable's Certificates

Mr. Robert McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by district council area those apparently sectarian attacks necessitating the issue of Chief Constable's certificates, or requests for same, since 1 January 1990 made upon *(a)* Catholic Church property, *(b)* Protestant Church property, *(c)* state schools, *(d)* Catholic schools and *(e)* Orange halls. [38485]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people pay the cost of their nursing home care *(a)* in full and *(b)* in part; and how many have their costs entirely met through (i) income support and (ii) their local authority. [40186]

Mr. Moss: At 31 March 1995, health and social services boards, under their community care responsibilities, were meeting the care costs of 2,822 nursing home residents.

Information about the numbers of nursing home residents in receipt of the preserved rights rate of income support or who are self-financing is not readily available.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the present £8,000 capital disregard for nursing home fees. [40190]

Mr. Moss: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of people who have had to sell their homes to fund the cost of their long-term stay in *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes in each of the last five years. [40178]

Mr. Moss: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time a person spends in full-time nursing care. [40182]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what telephone call rates for people living within the area served by Kingston Communications are charged when using the Child Support Agency's advice telephone service; what monitoring of these rates is conducted by his Department; and in what circumstances his Department will pay compensation for telephone users that have been charged at a higher rate than for local telephone call service. [38729]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne dated 27 October 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the Child Support Agency's telephone advice service.

The Agency offers several enquiry and advice lines, and provides customers with a reduced—rate-calls service to its six Centres. All these services are provided by means of the British Telecommunications "Link-Line" facility. The numbers, all prefixed 0345, are charged at the BT local call rate. This applies to all calls no matter who the subscriber is billed by. This means that an 0345 call made in Hull is charged at the same rate as a call from anywhere else within the UK.

I understand from Kingston Telecommunications that their local call charge is different to BT's. It may be this disparity that is causing the misunderstanding about the charges made for calls to the Agency from Hull. Although an 0345 call made in Hull costs more than a local call within the Kingston Telecommunications network, it is still cheaper than a direct dialled long distance call from Hull to any of the Agency's Centres.

The Agency in conjunction with the Departmental Information Technology Authority constantly monitor the rates and tariffs of our telecommunications suppliers so that the maximum discounts can be achieved for our customers.

As with all matters, the Agency will consider a compensation payment where a clear and unambiguous error by the Agency has resulted in a financial loss to a client. Each such case is decided on its own merits.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will revise the guidance given to family credit claimants in the claim form and information leaflets to ensure that they are aware of the circumstances in which delaying their claim for the purpose of obtaining pay slips or other documents will result in loss of one or more weeks' benefit. [39657]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Paul Flynn dated 26 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about revising the guidance given to Family Credit (FC) claimants in the claim form and information leaflets to ensure that they are aware of the circumstances in which delaying their claim for the purpose of obtaining pay slips or other documents will result in loss of one or more weeks benefit.

Since the introduction of FC in April 1988, the claim form (FCI) has been regularly updated. The current version has been designed to take account of comments made by customers, in an annual customer Opinion Survey, regarding the guidance on the claim form about delaying their claim.

From April 1996, the FCI will include eight separate, highlighted statements informing the customer that sending in a claim should not be delayed in order to obtain any relevant documents.

I hope that you find this reply useful.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to decide on the legal responsibility for paying housing benefit to tenants of the Greenwich hospital. [38582]

Mr. Roger Evans: The issue of the status of Greenwich hospital, for housing benefit purposes, is being reviewed.

Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will relate the £1.4 billion a year cost of social security fraud he announced in July to the annual total of £558 million published by his Department in January 1994; and if he will make a statement. [39076]

Mr. Heald: The figure of £1.4 billion refers to the estimated annual loss to income support from fraud, indicated by the results of a survey into the extent of benefit fraud and error on income support and unemployment benefit undertaken in late 1994. These results were announced in July 1995. The figure of £558 million is the amount of fraud detected and stopped in 1992–93. The amount of fraud detected and stopped has risen to £717.6 million in 1994–95.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many reduced earnings allowance claims are currently outstanding for each of the benefit offices covering the Doncaster and Mexborough postal districts; [39038]

(2) what is the average time taken to process a PD4 claim at *(a)* each of the disability benefit centres covering the Doncaster and Mexborough postal districts and *(b)* nationally. [39039]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available and could be obtainable only at disproportionate cost.

Cash Limits

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to change the cash limits of his Department for 1995–96. [40211]

Mr. Roger Evans: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 3 will be increased by £14,566,000 from £403,139,000 to £417,705,000.

The revision takes account of the new scheme for private sector tenants from 2 January 1996 and provides for subsidies to local authorities in respect of discretionary spending on rent allowances—£2.5 million—above the maximum rent; for subsidies to housing and local authorities towards the cost of administering the housing benefit scheme and for subsidies to charging and levying authorities towards the costs of administering the council tax benefit scheme—£12,066,000.

The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Independent Living Fund

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the ILF were outstanding on 1 September; and how many of these had been outstanding for more than six months. [38110]

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: The information requested is not available in the format requested and can be provided only at disproportionate cost. I am informed by the director of the independent living funds that there are currently 455 applications to the independent living (1993) fund outstanding where no decision has been made. Nine of these have been waiting for more than six months.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of asylum seekers receiving income support at the discounted rate of 90 per cent. for the latest available date and for the equivalent date in 1992, 1993 and 1994. [39878]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

	Number of cases
November 1993	40,000
November 1994	42,000

Note:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Figures for November 1992 are not available.
3. Figures prior to November 1994 include about 2 to 3 thousand cases which, although still recorded as asylum seekers, were in fact no longer being paid at the 90 per cent. rate.

Source:

Income support statistics quarterly enquiries November 1993 and 1994.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to the national insurance fund of allowances given in respect of private pension insurance for each of the last five years. [39879]

Mr. Heald: The information is in the table.

Paid in the year	*Contracted-out rebate*	*2 per cent. incentive*	*2 per cent. addition*	*Total £ millions*
1990–91	1,462	512	—	1,974
1991–92	1,739	598	—	2,337
1992–93	1,897	644	—	2,541
1993–94	2,051	690	—	2,741
1994–95	1,719	17	220	1,956

Note:
Figures relate to Great Britain.
This table shows the expenditure on contracted-out rebates and incentive payments for appropriate personal pensions in each of the last five years for which published figures are available. Figures for 1994–95 are estimates.
Source:
Government Actuary's Department.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total subsidy paid to the national insurance fund for each of the past five years. [39880]

Mr. Heald: The treasury grant to the national insurance fund was £7,589 million in 1993–94 and £6,280 million in 1994–95. There was no such payment into the national insurance fund for the preceding three years.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Union Flag

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the Government's policy on flying the union flag from Government and other public buildings. [39847]

Mr. Sproat: The regulations for flying flags on Government buildings are issued by the Department of National Heritage in consultation with the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Under Her Majesty's command, flags are flown on 20 appointed dates. Flags may also be flown additionally by special command of Her Majesty. There are no regulations for the flying of flags on other buildings.

Football (Financial Dishonesty)

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions she has had with Government legal officers on the status of the Football Association report into financial dishonesty in football. [39795]

Mr. Sproat: None. This is an internal matter for the football authorities.

Drug Testing Programme

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the annual cost of the drug testing programme run by the Sports Council. [39785]

Mr. Sproat: In 1994–95, the Sports Council's expenditure on doping control was £819,301. In addition, the Sports Councils in Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland spent a total of £87,952 on doping control.

Sports Coaching

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans her Department has for the development of sports coaching at national level and school level. [39790]

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage will continue to assist in the development of sports coaching at national and school level through its funding of the GB Sports Council. In particular, the Government's sports policy statement, "Sport: Raising the Game", published on 14 July, also outlines the Sports Council's intention to spend an additional £1 million on providing opportunities for trainee and serving teachers to gain coaching qualifications.

Cash Limits

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes she proposes to make to her Department's cash limits for 1995–96. [40636]

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XI, vote 1 will be increased by £23,776,000 from £993,273,000 to £1,017,049,000. This is to increase provision for assets accepted in lieu of tax, for the British library St. Pancras project and for compensation payments in respect of the concessionary television licence scheme. The increase will be met partly by recovery of overpayment of compensation payments made in previous years under the concessionary television licence scheme, by a reduction in the capital provision for the Historic Royal Palaces agency, from savings on provision made for commemorations to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of world war 2, and by a charge to the reserve. The increase will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Cusworth Hall, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assistance her Department is giving to the restoration of the 18th century chapel at Cusworth hall, Doncaster; and if she will make a statement. [39073]

Mr. Sproat: Government funding for repairs to historic buildings is channelled through English Heritage, which contributed £25,000 towards repairs to Cusworth hall, including its painted chapel, between 1988 and 1993. Further repairs to the chapel may be eligible for additional grant aid from English Heritage.

Historical Building Renovation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will list, by location, buildings of historical importance that are currently being renovated in Humberside and in each of the three counties of Yorkshire; and if she will make a statement. [39001]

Mr. Sproat: This information is not held centrally and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of grade I and II buildings in these counties in receipt of repairs grants from English Heritage, for instance, number in excess of 100 in 1994–95 and 1995–96 to date.

Merchant Taylor's School, Rickmansworth

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action she is taking to save from demolition the world war pill-box attached to the grade II listed structure Great hall at Merchant Taylor's school, Rickmansworth; and if she will make a statement. [38963]

Mr. Sproat: None. I understand that, following an application from the owners, consent for the demolition of this grade II listed pillbox has been granted by the local planning authority, Three Rivers district council. Arrangements have been made for the structure to be recorded.

National Lottery

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if she will list the guidelines which determine the exclusion of projects receiving lottery money from access to the public funds they would normally receive. [38346]

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) pursuant to her answer of 27 June to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North, (Mr. Howarth) *Official Report*, column *598*, what further guidance has been issued with respect to matching national lottery awards with public funds; [39145]

(2) what principles govern the definition of partnership funding from the public sector that is eligible to match awards of funding from the national lottery. [39122]

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The Government have always made it clear that the partnership funding required for national lottery-supported projects could come from any source. We have also made it clear that applicants for lottery support who intend to seek partnership funding from other public sector sources, be they central Government, local authority or European funds, should ensure that the scheme in question allows for other funds toward the project to come from other public sector sources. There are a number of grant schemes which are specifically designed to lever funds from non-public sector sources. Lottery proceeds are clearly public sector funds and could not, therefore, count as private sector partnership funding to such grants.

WALES

Organophoshorus Sheep Dips

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will encourage initiatives in Wales in parallel with those of the National Farmers Union and the British Medical Association in running seminars on the hazards of organophosphorus toxicity; and if he will make a statement. [38620]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Farmers Union and the British Medical Association arranged a conference earlier this year to discuss organophosphorus sheep dips. I understand that they have no plans for any further seminars on this subject. Advice on the safe handling and disposal of sheep dip is available in various forms, including a leaflet produced jointly by the Health and Safety Executive, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment. This was distributed to all farmers in the United Kingdom.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what methods the Countryside Council for Wales uses to calculate the number of sites of special scientific interest damaged in Wales each year. [39240]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The definitions used in categorising damage to sites in Wales are set out in the annual report of the Countryside Council for Wales, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish information on the cost on the series of conferences organised by the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation for Wales for head teachers and chairs of governors on grant-maintained status between September 1995 and June 1996. [38541]

Mr. Richards: The cost of these seminars is a matter for the foundation.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people pay the cost of their nursing home care *(a)* in full and *(b)* in part; and how many have their costs entirely met through (i) income support or (ii) their local authority. [40184]

Mr. Hague: Nursing homes in Wales reported that of their 10,661 residents on 31 March 1994:

1,845 were wholly privately supported;

5,128 were supported in whole or in part by the Department of Social Security;

1,322 were supported in whole or in part by both the local authority and the Department of Social Security;

933 were supported in whole or in part by the local authority;

45 were supported by the health authority;

1,388 residents did not disclose their means of financial support.

Separate figures are not collected centrally to show the proportions of fees that are met by individuals. Almost all residents placed in nursing homes by local authorities will make some contribution towards the costs from their income, such as pensions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the present £8,000 capital disregard for nursing home fees. [40188]

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is his estimate of the number of people who have had to sell their homes to fund the cost of their long-term stay in *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes in each of the last five years; [40176]

(2) what is the average length of time a person spends in full time nursing care. [40180]

Mr. Hague: This information is not available centrally.

Class Sizes

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage and how many primary school pupils were in classes of 40 or more in each local education authority in Wales and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers from January 1994 in each Welsh local education authority and in total; [39983]

(2) what percentage and how many primary school pupils were in classes of 36 or more in each local education authority in Wales and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers from January 1994 in each Welsh local education authority and in total; [39984]

(3) what percentage and how many primary school pupils were in classes of 31 or more in each local education authority in Wales and in total; and what was the actual and percentage change in numbers from January 1994 in each Welsh local education authority and in total. [39985]

Mr. Richards: Information about class sizes in Wales is collected centrally only in respect of the number of classes, not the number of pupils in classes.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available the latest 1995–96 indicative standard spending assessments and disaggregated budget figures for unitary authorities. [40631]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The figures, along with those issued by the Welsh Office on 19 July, are set out as follows. They show the funding the new authorities would have received if they had taken up their responsibilities on 1 April 1995. The figures will be discussed by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 16 November.

	Position at July 1995			*Position at October 1995*		
	Indicative SSA £ million	*Disaggregated budget requirement £ million*	*Implied band D council tax £*	*Indicative SSA £ million*	*Disaggregated budget requirement £ million*	*Implied band D council tax £*
Anglesey	58.5	59.3	341	59.1	59.3	320
Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire	101.0	107.7	466	102.9	107.7	422
Aberconwy and Colwyn	86.9	86.6	300	86.6	85.9	292
Denbighshire	76.9	80.5	418	75.4	81.4	491
Flintshire	111.9	115.4	378	109.7	115.6	426
Wrexham	95.8	97.9	371	95.4	97.5	367
Powys	110.4	112.8	370	111.4	112.8	348
Cardigan	57.7	63.6	561	57.2	63.8	590
Pembrokeshire	96.9	98.6	369	96.4	98.3	372
Carmarthenshire	142.9	151.2	473	144.8	151.3	443
Swansea	190.3	191.2	324	188.5	191.2	348
Neath and Port Talbot	115.4	125.9	558	117.2	125.9	515
Bridgend	105.6	109.5	408	106.2	109.5	392
The Vale of Glamorgan	93.9	94.2	316	92.5	94.2	346
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	199.3	214.4	530	202.0	214.4	490
Merthyr Tydfil	53.1	56.2	500	54.2	56.2	435
Caerphilly	139.8	145.7	433	140.9	145.7	407
Blaenau Gwent	61.7	67.1	591	63.0	67.1	524
Torfaen	75.5	77.3	370	76.0	77.3	351
Monmouthshire	62.4	59.7	231	62.0	59.7	242
Newport	115.3	111.5	226	114.4	111.5	246
Cardiff	243.7	245.1	325	238.9	245.1	371
Wales	2,394.6	2,471.5	392	2,394.6	2,471.5	392

Notes:
1. Indicative SSAs and disaggregated budgets relate to county and district services only.
2. Estimated council tax levels include the element for police services.

Cash Limits

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits for his Department and the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales for the current financial year. [40633]

Mr. Hague: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit on class XV, vote 1 will be reduced by £5,000,000 from £29,557,000 to £24,557,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 2 will be increased by £14,481,000 from £645,453,000 to £659,934,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 3 will be increased by £7,749,000 from

£553,941,000 to £561,690,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 6 will be reduced by £2 million from £2,266,342,000 to £2,264,342,000 and the cash limit on class XV, vote 7 will be increased by £275,000 from £8,471,000 to £8,746,000.

Running costs limits for the Welsh Office and the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools which were not spent in 1994–95 have been carried forward under the normal end-year flexibility arrangements into 1995–96, increasing the running costs limits by £486,000 from £75,412,000 to £75,898,000 and £250,000 from £3,281,000 to £3,531,000 respectively.

The local authority capital cash limit—WO/LACAP—will be increased by £15,019,000 from £500,514,000 to £515,533,000. The Housing for Wales cash limit WO/HFW will be increased by £2.3 million from £103,210,000 to £105,510,000.

The decrease in the cash limit for vote 1 arises from lower forecasts of the amount required to meet claims for agricultural grants and measures.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 2 is mainly in respect of (i) an additional £11,009,000—including £6,247,000 take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement—to meet additional demand for payments of regional selective assistance; (ii) an increase in the Welsh Development Agency's grant in aid and public dividend capital of £1,400,000 (offset by a corresponding decrease in WDA's non-voted provision); (iii) an additional £750,000 for grant maintained schools—take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement—for essential backlog maintenance.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 3 allows mainly for the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement for the central Government road programme—£2,288,000—the National Library of Wales—£1,700,000—and secure accommodation—£3,250,000.

The decrease in the cash limit for vote 6 reflects mainly a reduction in the provision for shadow authorities' special grant in respect of the proportion of the grant that will not be claimed until 1996–97. Of the £2,000,000 decrease, £1,750,000 has been transferred to WO/LACAP and the remaining £250,000 has been transferred to class VIII, vote 1 as a contribution towards the costs involved in the reorganisation of police authorities in Wales.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 7 results mainly from the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement—£250,000—and a transfer of £25,000 from class XV, vote 2 in respect of payments to the Welsh Joint Education Committee for examination data.

The increase in the non-voted cash limit WO/LACAP comprises (i) £1,750,000 transferred from class XV, vote 6, and (ii) the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement of £13,269,000—mainly for information technology for local government reorganisation and the strategic development scheme.

The increase in the Housing for Wales cash limit reflects the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement.

None of the proposed changes will add to the planned total of public expenditure.

HEALTH

Pay Delegation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide in respect of his plan for pay delegation submitted to the Treasury *(a)* a description of the staffing each bargaining unit covered by the plan, distinguishing staff in headquarters functions, agencies and agency candidates, and in other identifiable business units and *(b)* proposals for trade union recognition in each bargaining unit and the negotiating machinery to be put in place in each bargaining unit. [38276]

Mr. Sackville: The Department plans to take pay delegation as a single bargaining unit. Delegation will cover all administrative and professional staff at grade 6 and below. A procedure agreement detailing arrangements for trade union recognition and for the negotiating machinery is under discussion.

Management Costs

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the management costs *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* as a proportion of their total income for each district health authority and each family health services authority in England in (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95. [38381]

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the per capita expenditure of each (i) district health authority and (ii) family health services authority on *(b)* the management costs for each authority for each year since 1993–94; and what are the planned costs for the current and next financial years. [38108]

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State shall publish information on district health authority and family health services authority costs shortly.

North Thames Region

Sir Michael Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the extent to which the private finance initiative has progressed within the North Thames region; and if he will list those projects that have received outline business case approval. [38692]

Mr. Sackville: The private finance initiative has made good progress within the North Thames region. Projects in the North Thames region approved under the private finance initiative are available in the Library. Business cases are not dealt with centrally at the outline stage.

District Health Commissions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by regional health authority and by name, the number of district health commissions currently in operation; what are their management statements; and what is the estimated annual cost of each one. [38979]

Mr. Malone: Health commissions exist only as management arrangements to promote joint working between authorities, and have not separate existence. In all cases, the statutory bodies—district health authorities and family health services authorities—remain the accountable authorities.

Details of the management structures of health authorities are not held centrally. Information on the costs of health authorities and family health services authorities will be published shortly.

Water Charges

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will encourage the water companies to agree universal flat rate charges for the water consumed by each hospital within a region for budgeting and hygiene purposes. [39010]

Mr. Sackville: No. General policy is to encourage the suppliers to relate water charges to costs incurred, including the volume of consumption, without cross-subsidy. This provides an incentive to national health service and other customers to negotiate the best available terms of supply and to ensure economies in use.

Temazepam

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his latest estimate of the number of people who have had one or more of their limbs amputated as a result of injecting the gel formulation of the drug Temazepam during each of the past five years; [39185]

(2) what is his latest estimate of the number of deaths in each of the past five years which were related to the abuse of the drug Temazepam; what estimate he has made of the percentage of these which involved the gel formulation, and if he will make a statement. [39197]

Mr. Bowis: Because of the covert nature of its misuse, information on the precise extent to which Temazepam is misused and on the precise extent of the physical injury or damage which may result when Temazepam soft gelatin gel-filled capsules are injected is not available centrally.

However, the scientific and medical literature record a number of limb amputations following misuse of the capsules by injection. Other serious health complications reported which can cause lasting physical damage or injury include thromboses, gangrene, ischaemia, cellulitis, tissue necrosis and abscesses.

The number of deaths certified as due to abuse of Temazepan—ICDs[1] 304.1, 304.7, 304.8, 305.4, 305.9—alone or with other drugs for the years 1989–1993 in England and Wales is

1989: 7
1990: 12
1991: 13
1992: 15
1993: 15

The available data do not differentiate between the different formulations of Temazepam that may be available in any one year.

My right hon. friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 17 October a ban on general practitioners prescribing Temazepam capsules under the national health service from 1 January 1996. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced on 12 September increased controls on all formulations of Temazepam under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985.

Needles (Safe Disposal)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision exists for the safe disposal of needles by diabetics. [39065]

Mr. Sackville: People with diabetes who self-administer insulin by injection within their own homes may be prescribed needle clipping devices. When full, the device should be appropriately sealed and left with the used syringes at an agreed collection point.

Departmental Appointments South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary. [39448]

Mr. Sackville: The public appointments in South Yorkshire for which the Department is responsible, and the dates on which new appointments are due and the rates of remuneration will be placed in the Library. The appointments are made for periods of up to four years.

Solihull Hospital

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will intervene to ensure that Solihull hospital continues as an independent hospital. [39620]

Mr. Malone: The provision of health services for the residents of Solihull and the decision on how and where these are provided are matters for Solihull health authority, and I refer my hon. Friend to the adjournment debate on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns 991–98.

Dental Students

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many British dental students have been accepted by each dental school in the United Kingdom for each year since 1985. [38115.]

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

British Dental Students Accepted Each Year By UK Dental Schools since 1985

Dental Hospital	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Birmingham	75	76	77	75	62	65	68	66	66	68
Bristol	36	47	45	46	45	49	51	54	61	62
Cardiff	47	47	46	47	49	53	55	55	53	59
Guy's UMDS	87	84	84	84	90	91	86	85	93	89
King's College	52	61	54	54	54	56	54	54	57	59
Leeds	53	53	53	53	50	53	52	54	50	52
Liverpool	55	54	53	56	57	57	52	55	46	54
The London	55	55	52	50	53	56	53	54	61	58

British Dental Students Accepted Each Year By UK Dental Schools since 1985

Dental Hospital	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Manchester	62	60	59	61	64	59	55	67	60	67
Newcastle	70	71	67	65	69	65	63	67	69	71
Sheffield	46	45	43	41	48	49	48	46	47	56
University College	48	47	46	48	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee	41	36	47	44	54	53	54	56	45	51
Edinburgh	40	41	38	42	41	—	—	—	—	—
Glasgow	65	63	65	63	70	62	69	77	67	83
Belfast	36	37	35	31	29	27	26	25	27	29

Blood

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many date expired units of donated blood were destroyed at the end of August 1993, 1994 and 1995. [38098]

Mr. Sackville: Most National Blood Service blood centres operate a rolling programme of destruction of units of blood which have become date expired, rather than waiting until the end of the calendar month. The following figures therefore relate to the number of date expired units of donated blood destroyed throughout the month of August in the years in question: 1993—2724 units, 1994—2230 units, 1995—2668 units; this represented 1.35, 1.15, and 1.18 per cent. respectively of total units of blood collected in the previous month in each case.

Oral Cancer

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will take to improve early detection of mouth cancer. [38102]

Mr. Sackville: The chief dental officer is chairman of the National Advisory Group on Screening for Oral Cancer, a group recently formed to co-ordinate work in the detection and prevention of oral cancers. This will enable dentists to be provided with information needed to examine the oral health of their patients more effectively.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients with mouth cancer were first seen by their dentist in each of the past 10 years prior to referral to hospital for treatment. [38103]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of free dental check-ups on the incidence of mouth cancer patients who are referred to hospital only when the oral cancers are already large. [38104]

Mr. Sackville: Regular dental inspections offer ideal opportunities for dentists to check for oral cancer as a routine part of an oral examination. The latest information shows that the number of examinations is at approximately the same level as it was before the introduction of charges for examinations. Some 25 per cent. of adult courses of national health service treatment get full or partial relief from charges. All children are treated free of charge.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will institute a survey of the evidence regarding the relationship between the availability of free dental check-ups and the early detection of mouth cancer. [38105]

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to improve public education about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of mouth cancer. [38106]

Mr. Sackville: Oral cancer can result from smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol. Both areas are highlighted in general health education initiatives and health education. Dentists and doctors advise patients of the dangers of tobacco and alcohol.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department has provided for oral cancer work. [38109]

Mr. Sackville: Diagnosis of oral cancer is provided through the general and community dental services and treatment through the hospital dental service. The Department has commissioned research into oral health education.

Dental Register

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new registrations on the dental register have been made for each year since 1985. [38111]

Mr. Malone: The total number added by new registrations to the dental register from 1985 is in the table.

Registered for	*Total*
1985	1,103
1986	1,036
1987	1,083
1988	1,038
1989	1,047
1990	1,206
1991	1,075
1992	1,141
1993	1,254
1994	571

The drop in the numbers added to the register in 1994 is due to the effect of the extension in 1990 of the British dental undergraduate course from four years, one term to five year.

Queen Charlotte's Hospital

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about services for women with post-natal depression at Queen Charlotte's hospital, London; and if he will make a statement. [38114]

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received one such letter. The post-natal depression clinic at Queen Charlotte's hospital provides a valuable consultant-led service.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people pay the cost of their nursing home care *(a)* in full and *(b)* in part; and how many have their costs entirely met through (i) income support or (ii) their local authority. [40187]

Mr. Bowis: Figures published by Laing and Buisson in "Care of Elderly People: Market Survey 1995" suggest that in February 1994 an estimated 41,000 elderly or physically handicapped people in nursing homes in Great Britain were "self-payers".

The total number of nursing home residents with preserved rights to the higher levels of income support was 85,000, in November 1994, of whom around 1,000 were wholly dependent on income support.

At 31 March 1994, local authorities in England were supporting, in whole or in part, a total of 25,200 adults in nursing homes. Some residents placed in nursing homes through arrangements made by local authorities will also receive income support. Almost all residents placed by local authorities will make some contribution towards the costs from their income such as pensions. Some residents of nursing homes have been placed there and paid for by local health authorities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the present £8,000 capital disregard for nursing home fees. [40191]

Mr. Bowis: It would depend on the total capital disregard threshold and the rate of tariff income between that and the upper figure.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what is his estiamte of the number of people who have had to sell their homes to fund the cost of their long term stay in *(a)* residential and *(b)* nursing homes in each of the last five years. [40179]

Mr. Bowis: No such estimate has been made.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what is the average length of time a person spends in full-time nursing care. [40183]

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Unregistered Childrens Homes

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will make a statement on the numbers of proprietors of unregistered children's homes, based on social services inspectorate study published in August who had convictions relating to *(a)* fraud, *(b)* sexual abuse and *(c)* physical abuse. [38188]

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* We received reports of two proprietors having convictions for fraud and one having convictions relating to sexual abuse. The homes are now closed.

Nuclear Industry (Health of Workers)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what follow-up monitoring programmes exist in respect of the health of workers who have retired from employment in the nuclear industry. [39257]

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The nuclear industry, including the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels plc and Nuclear Electric, carry out or commission epidemiological studies of their current and former, including retired, employees. Through these programmes, data are assembled on the mortality record of the current and past workforce. Detailed mortality studies using this data undertaken by independent researchers have been published. These compare overall mortality, and mortality from individual diseases, between radiation workers, including those who have left the industry, and both non-radiation workers and the general public.

Employers in the nuclear industry also contribute data to the National Registry for Radiation Workers operated by the National Radiological Protection Board. A first analysis of the data held on the NRRW covering more than 95,000 nuclear industry employees and former employees in the UK has been published. This showed that deaths from all causes amongst these employees and former employees were 85 per cent. of those expected from national statistics for the general population, while deaths from all cancers were 86 per cent. of those expected. A second analysis is expected to be carried out in the near future. In addition, data on the mortality record of workers in the UK nuclear industry have been included in a study published by the International Agency for Research into Cancer which studies the health of nuclear industry workers in a number of countries.

TREASURY

Hourly Average Earnings

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will detail full-time and part-time hourly average earnings, inclusive and exclusive of overtime, and annual percentage increases in earnings, inclusive and exclusive of overtime, for *(a)* all workers formerly covered by wages councils, *(b)* workers formerly covered by the clothing manufacture, licensed residential and licensed restaurant, licensed non-residential, hairdressing, retail food wage councils allied trades and retail trades non-food and *(c)* all worker using the matched samples from the 1994 and 1995 new earnings surveys. [37608]

Mrs. Angela Knight *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The new earnings survey records for 1995 are due to be combined with the database of employees formerly covered by wages councils within the next two months. Once that has been done, we shall know whether the results are statistically reliable.

I shall write to the hon. Member when this has been done.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of new jobs, created in the last year, have been taken by *(a)* women, *(b)* people with disabilities and *(c)* ethnic minorities. [39377]

Mrs. Angela Knight *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The available information from the labour force survey shows that between spring—March to May—1994 and spring 1995 the number of people of working age in employment in Great Britain rose by 249,000. Over the same period, the number of women in employment rose by 75,000, and the number of people in employment from ethnic minorities increased by 38,000.

The latest available information on people whose work is affected by long-term health problems or disability, shows that between winter—December to February—1993–94 and winter 1994–95, the number in employment fell by 41,000.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of new jobs, created in the last year, have been taken by people aged *(a)* between 16 to 19 years, *(b)* 19 to 25 years, *(c)* between 25 to 30 years, *(d)* over 30 years and *(e)* over 40 years. [39378]

Mrs. Knight *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The available information from the labour force survey is shown in the table following.

Net changes in the level of employment of persons of working age Great Britain spring (March to May) 1994 to spring 1995

Age	*Net change*
All in employment	249,000
16–19	15,000
20–24	–101,000
25–29	–40,000
30+	374,000
40+	104,000

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of new jobs have been taken, in the last year, by people with *(a)* national vocational qualifications, *(b)* no qualifications, *(c)* first degrees and *(d)* other professional qualifications. [39375]

Mrs. Knight *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The available information from the labour force survey is shown in the table following.

Net change in the level of employment of persons of working age, by highest qualification held in Great Britain, spring (March to May) 1994 to spring 1995

	Net change
All in employment	249,000
With no qualifications	–302,000
Whose highest qualification is:	
First degree	136,000
Higher degree	45,000
Professional qualification	–66,000
Other qualification	436,000

There was a net increase of 267,000 between spring 1994 and spring 1995 in the number of people in employment of working age in Great Britain who said they had a national vocational qualification.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of unemployed *(a)* men and *(b)* women have (i) no qualifications, (ii) a vocational qualification, (iii) five GCSE's or equivalent, (iv) two A-levels and (v) a degree. [39775]

Mrs. Knight *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The available information from the labour force survey is shown in the table following.

Proportions of ILO unemployed persons of working age, by highest qualification Great Britain: spring 1995

Percentage

	Men	*Women*
All of which	100	100
No qualifications	28	27
Vocational qualifications below degree level	23	13
GCSE or equivalent academic qualification of which	14	24
Five or more GCSE's (A–C) or equivalent	6	9
A-levels or equivalent academic qualification	5	7
of which two or more A levels or equivalent	4	4
Degree or equivalent, or higher	6	6
All other qualifications	22	23

Treasury Industry Group

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed with the Treasury's industry group in Scotland on *(a)* a full-time basis and *(b)* a part-time basis. [39662]

Mrs. Angela Knight: There is no group of this name within the Treasury.

Tax Inspectors (Guidelines)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the review of the guidelines for tax inspectors in respect of section 313 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. [37289]

Mr. Jack: I understand that representations have been made to the Inland Revenue about the application of section 313 of the Act to situations where certain undertakings are given by employees as part of a financial settlement upon termination of their employment. The Revenue are discussing these with the representative bodies concerned.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the costs in a full year of increasing the threshold for capital gains tax by *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000, *(c)* £3,000, *(d)* £4,000 and *(e)* £6,000; and how many people would be taken out of capital gains tax as a result of each of these measures. [39090]

Mr. Jack: The estimated full-year costs of increasing the indexed capital gains tax threshold by the specified amounts, and the associated reductions in taxpayer numbers, are given in the following table:

Raise CGT threshold by	*Full year cost (1996–97) £ million*	*Full year cost (medium term) £ million*
£1,000	10	20
£2,000	20	40
£3,000	30	60
£4,000	50	80
£6,000	70	110

Raise CGT threshold by	*Number of taxpayers taken out of tax*
£1,000	around 10,000
£2,000	around 20,000
£3,000	25,000–30,000
£4,000	30,000–40,000
£6,000	40,000–50,000

The estimates given take account of the likely effect of changes on the volume of disposals in a full year, caused by changes in taxpayer behaviour.

Mr. Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the likely revenue consequences in a full year due to *(a)* straightforward revenue loss and *(b)* behavioural effects of the introduction of a maximum rate of capital gains tax of 25 per cent. [39155]

Mr. Jack: The full year costs of introducing a maximum rate of capital gains tax of 25 per cent. are shown in the table. Estimates are given before and after taking into account the likely effect of changes on the volume of disposals in a full year, caused by changes in taxpayers' behaviour.

Introducing a maximum CGT rate of 25 per cent.	*Full year cost (1996–97) £ million*	*Full year cost (medium term) £ million*
Without behavioural effects	450	600
With behavioural effects	300	450

The figures exclude gains made by companies which are charged to corporation tax.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for repayments of corporation tax for the year 1995–96. [39094]

Mr. Jack: Corporation tax repayments in 1995–96 are expected to be about £2.35 billion.

Mortgage Interest Tax

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he consulted the Secretary of State for Social Security on the review of tax on mortgage interest. [38816]

Mr. Jack: I consult my right hon. Friend on all matters in which he has an interest.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the net effect on public expenditure of the nationalised industries in *(a)* 1978–79 and *(b)* 1994–95. [39343]

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1979, the nationalised industries' net cost, in terms of public expenditure, measured by their total external financing requirement, was £2.3 billion. The estimated outturn for their total EFR in 1994–95 was £2.9 billion.

EDS

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 October, *Official Report*, column *7*, when he expects to have the information requested on savings to the Inland Revenue from its contract with EDS; and if he will publish it when it is available. [39796]

Mr. Jack: It is expected that updated estimates of savings will be available within the next two months when publication will be considered in association with other information about the Inland Revenue's contract with EDS.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Agencies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times in each month of the current year he has met personally the heads of the agencies which report to him to discuss the work of those agencies. [39850]

Mr. Hanley: The FCO has two executive agencies, Wilton Park and the Natural Resources Institute. The Foreign Secretary has not met personally with the chairman of either in the current year.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department has given the inhabitants of the Pitcairn Islands in respect of the series of French nuclear tests; and if he will make a statement. [39480]

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 16 October 1995, *Official Report*, column *18*.

Public Appointments, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary. [39447]

Mr. Hanley: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ODA are not responsible for making any public appointments in the county of South Yorkshire.

Public Bodies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating the total annual budget and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years. [39490]

Mr. Hanley: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ODA are not responsible for making any appointments to non-departmental public bodies in the county of South Yorkshire.

Former Yugoslavia

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will estimate *(a)* how many residents of the former Yugoslavia became refugees between January and between January and May, *(b)* how many refugees resulted from the Croatian military offensive in Krajina in May and *(c)* how many refugees have been created since 31 August. [39995]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The only figures available from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimate that approximately 3,300 refugees went from northern Bosnia to Croatia between January and April.

The UNCHR estimates that approximately 11,000 refugees moved from sector west into northern Bosnia following the Croatian military offensive in May.

In August, approximately 200,000 Croatian Serbs fled from sectors north and south and some 25,000 Bosnian Muslims left the Bihac pocket for Croatia.

Since 31 August, approximately 127,000 Serbs have been displaced within north-west Bosnia; more than 20,000 Croat and Muslim minorities have been expelled from Banja Luka.

Sudan

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on monitoring human rights conditions in the Sudan. [38107]

Mr. Hanley: The Sudanese Government are withholding permission for the UN special rapporteur and for Amnesty International to enter Sudan. Some other human rights groups have been given access. Despite some recent improvements in northern Sudan, the overall human rights situation remains grave.

Burma

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has received about human rights abuses in Burma. [38112]

Mr. Hanley: We have received representations about human rights abuses in Burma from a wide variety of sources including church groups, non-governmental organisations and members of the public.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the EU partners concerning the use of chemical weapons against the Karen people in Myanmar. [38113]

Mr. Hanley: We discuss the plight of Burma's ethnic groups, including the Karen, and the human rights situation in Burma in our regular contacts with our EU partners. There have not, however, been any discussions specifically about the alleged use of chemical weapons against the Karen with our European Union partners.

The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment has analysed samples of equipment allegedly used to transport bacteria against the Karen. No conclusive evidence was found. We deplore any use of bacteriological and chemical weapons and are willing to consider carefully any new evidence of their use in Burma.

Antarctic Treaty

Mr. Corbyn : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions have been held with other signatory states to the Antarctic treaty regarding the siting of the secretariat; and if he will make a statement; [39877]

(2) what representations have been received from fellow signatories to the Antarctic treaty concerning the siting of the proposed secretariat: and if he will make a statement. [39881]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 24 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *378*.

The question of the location of the Antarctic treaty secretariat is raised periodically as part of our regular bilateral meetings with other Antarctic treaty parties.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by his Department to control tourist access to Antarctica since the passage of the Antarctica Act 1994; and if he will make a statement. [39883]

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: We have continued to monitor the activities of all British expeditions, including tourist cruises, as required under article VII(5) of the Antarctic treaty.

Also, the necessary steps have been taken to bring into force from 1 November the provisions of the Antarctic Act 1994, with the exception of sections 3 to 7. We have made the Antarctic Regulations 1995, which will also come into force on 1 November. These regulations provide details for the issue of permits under the Act.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Edward Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the 25 to 26 September and 3 October meetings of the study group preparing for the intergovernmental conference. [40099]

Mr. David Davis: The eighth and ninth meetings of the study group took place on 25 to 26 September in Brussels and on 3 October in Luxembourg. I attended both meetings as the Foreign Secretary's representative, though I was delayed by other Government business on 25 September and was represented for part of the meeting by the head of European union department, Internal.

The 25 to 26 Septenber meeting covered topics 4 and 5 of the interim report, which deal with European citizenship and justice and home affairs.

On citizenship, we repeated our concerns that the concept was associated in the public mind with statehood, and therefore created anxiety about the long-term evolution of the EU. Such concerns, and those related to potential duties of citizenship, did not emerge clearly enough from the chairman's interim report. We also warned against the temptation to develop citizens' rights and non-discrimination clauses in the EU treaty in a way that duplicated rights already protected in national law. We maintained our opposition to EC accession to the European convention on human rights and to the suggestion of a bill of rights in the EU treaty.

The study group has not yet received the study which it commissioned from the Council secretariat into how the treaty might be simplified without altering its substance. The representatives from the European Parliament, however, circulated a study which the Parliament had commissioned separately, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

On justice and home affairs questions, I said that the interim report was unbalanced in its failure to acknowledge what had been achieved so far, in a very short time, in the third pillar. Britain was determined to improve the operation of the pillar, but did not believe that this would be achieved by compromising its essentially intergovernmental character.

The 3 October meeting was concerned with the common foreign and security policy and with defence questions.

There was some discussion of creating a CFSP Secretary-General to give impetus to the preparation and implementation of policy and to help with the growing external representational burden. I said that it was essential that any such figure was the servant of the presidency and of member states. I agreed, however, that CFSP needed a strengthened capacity for policy formulation and planning.

On decision-making, I continued to insist on the retention of consensus in CFSP as the basic rule. Unanimous decisions gave strength to the EU, as they engaged all member states. If the CFSP ceased to be a common policy and became a majority one, it would be less effective. Would dissenters be free to pursue an independent policy? How could they be prevented from doing so?

On defence questions, I said that the interim report was confused, and needed to be substantially revised. NATO was the essential basis of Europe's defence, and strengthening of the Western European Union/NATO relationship should be the first priority. The WEU/EU relationship was a subsidiary question. An essential element of the British approach was that the WEU should not be made subordinate to the EU, not least because not all member states were bound by article 5 of the WEU treaty.

It would be wrong for the latter to be involved in decision-making on the so-called Petersberg tasks—peacekeeping, humanitarian missions and crisis management. Some of these would carry a risk of escalation in which the absence of guarantees of mutual assistance between participating states would be a severe disadvantage. In addition only those bound by WEU's article V could judge whether secondary tasks could be undertaken without jeopardising their ability to fulfil their mutual defence commitments.

Iraq

Mr. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions the United Kingdom supplied *(a)* cultures and *(b)* chemical agents for the Iraqi biological weapons programmes between 1974 and 1990. [40096]

Mr. David Davis: Comprehensive information on relevant exports to Iraq is not available because many items were not subject to export licence procedures. Lists of export licences issued for Iraq between the years 1987 and 1990 were supplied to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry in November 1991.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will seek further information from the United Nations special commission on Iraq on the involvement of British companies in Iraq's *(a)* chemical, *(b)* nuclear and *(c)* biological warfare programmes. [40097]

Mr. David Davis: We are in regular communication with UNSCOM and follow up any evidence that British companies have supplied materials relevant to Iraqi programmes to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

TRANSPORT

Oil (Dumping at Sea)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents of tankers dumping oil at sea have been recorded by his Department in the last five years; and how many incidents have resulted in the prosecution of the companies owning the tankers. [39338]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. Elliot Morley, dated 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as the question deals with an operational matter, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

The Coastguard Agency does not record incidents of illegal discharge by vessel type. However, details of significant incidents in which the Agency's Marine Pollution Control Unit has been directly involved show that between 1990 and 1994 (53 incidents) there were 37 incidents involving tankers. Most of these related to collisions, groundings, breakdowns and machinery malfunctions, not all of which involved spilled oil. One case was successfully prosecuted for a MARPOL offence, three were referred to Flag states (outcome awaited) and two were referred for Port State Control Inspections and subsequently cleared.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which legislation regulates the dumping of oil at sea by tankers carrying either bilge oil or crude oil. [39336]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Elliot Morley dated 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about regulations on the dumping of bilge oil or crude oil from tankers.

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973 Annex I, (Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Oil), as amended by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78 Annex 1) to that Convention applies.

The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulations 1983, as subsequently amended, give effect to this Convention and Protocol to United Kingdom (UK) ships, wherever they may be, and to other ships in UK waters.

Dock Labour Force

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was paid in 1989 to reduce the dock labour force nationally; and if he will make a statement. [38535]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* I have been asked to reply.

Figures for payment made under employment protection legislation in 1989 are not readily available. Payments by Government and port employers in respect of redundancies of registered dock workers under the Dock Work (Compensation Payments Scheme) Regulations 1989 in the financial year 1989–90 totalled £150,077,500 nationally.

Aircraft Procedure Trials

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the proposed reduced departure wake vortex separation trials at Heathrow airport have been the subject of a full safety audit by the Safety Regulation Group's air traffic services standards department; and if he will make a statement. [39278]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The proposed trial is currently in the final stages of the Safety Regulation Group's approval process.

The trial procedures have been the subject of a full audit by the air traffic services standards and the flight operations departments of SRG. A full safety assessment has been carried out by the CAA's national air traffic services.

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the reduced final approach separation trial conducted at Heathrow airport earlier this year had been the subject of a full safety audit by the Civil Aviation Authority Safety Regulation Group's air traffic services standards department; if all the pilots involved in the trial were aware of their participation; and what representations he has received from the airlines involved in respect of the trial. [39274]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 October 1995]:* The procedures associated with this initial trial were evaluated by the air traffic services standards department of the Civil Aviation Authority's Safety Regulation Group.

All the pilots involved were fully aware of their participation.

My Department has received no representations from the airlines involved.

Passenger Ships (Evacuation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which countries have registered ships carrying passengers whose vessels do not meet the international provisions of evacuation of all personnel; and if he will make a statement. [38622]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Martin Redmond, 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the international provisions for evacuation of all personnel from ships carrying passengers.

Provisions for the evacuation of ships are contained in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS 1974), to which 128 states are signatory. The combined fleets of these contracting states constitute approximately 98% of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant fleet. Ships registered in those signatory states must comply with the provisions of the Convention. Ships registered in other states will be given no more favourable treatment by states which are party to the Convention.

Driving Tests

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Driving Standards Agency to clear the back log of driving test applications on the agency's credit-card booking line; and if he will make a statement. [39075]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driving Standards Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from B. L. Herdan to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to the question you raised about the Agency's Credit Card telephone booking lines and backlogs of driving test applications.

It is recognised that there are currently short-term problems with telephones, and also that there are longer waiting times for tests than might be desired. With respect to the credit card telephone booking service, DSA is obviously wanting to ensure that candidates are aware of the alternative methods for booking a test by Credit Card. Candidates who wish to book by credit card can do so in three ways. They can telephone the credit card line, post their applications quoting their credit card details or fax their application to the appropriate DSA Booking Office. The addresses and Credit Card telephone numbers are included on Driving test application forms obtainable from Driving Test Centres.

Following the outcome of a Market Test the Agency is in the process of restructuring its Driving Test Booking service which has caused some temporary disruption but which in the longer term will yield a better service at lower cost. Increased use has been made of the popular Credit Card booking facility—up to 60% of business in some Booking Offices is now by telephone. Additional Credit Card facilities are being made available nationally by introducing more telephone lines, Credit Card processing machines and the recruitment of extra staff. Telephone calls to the Agency are dealt with on a queuing system and new technology systems have been procured for automated call distribution within booking offices.

With the increased resources the Agency is devoting to the Credit Card facility, customers should receive a greatly improved service within the next 3–6 months.

With regard to test waiting times, the service standard is a 6 weeks average across the country, but this is not currently being achieved—the current average is just over 7 weeks. This is due to temporary staff shortages and a temporary rise in demand for driving tests by those seeking to pass the test before the introduction of the new theory test next July. This situation can be expected to pertain until July 1996 although the backlog will be reduced with recruitment of extra driving examiners which is currently in hand.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of people taking driving test pass after the *(a)* first, *(b)* second, *(c)* third, *(d)* fourth, *(e)* fifth, *(f)* sixth and *(g)* seventh and subsequent attempts. [39832]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driving Standards Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from B. L. Herdan to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the numbers of attempts people take to pass their driving test. We do not routinely collect this information as it does not directly affect the operation of the Agency.

For consistency of testing, and in fairness to the candidate, it is preferable if the examiner is not made aware of the number of previous attempts a candidate has made at a test. The overall pass rate on driving tests in the last two financial years was:

1993/94: 48%

1994/95: 47%

As part of our third Customer Survey, completed in March this year—the results of which were published in July, we asked a random sample of all our customers whether it was their first test or a repeat attempt. Of 1,187 people in the sample who had recently taken their driving test, 837 (71%) had just passed and of these passes, 252 (30%) were at the first attempt, 280 (33%) at the second, 158 (19%) at the third, 86 (10%) at the fourth, 24 (3%) at the fifth and 35 (4%) were at their sixth or subsequent attempt.

Heathrow (US Airline Access)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the recent talks in Washington aimed at clarifying US airline access to Heathrow. [39759]

Mr. Norris: A very limited and balanced deal on new transatlantic services at Heathrow and/or Gatwick was one of the items on the agenda for discussion. Despite a UK offer of four new opportunities for passenger flights to London, two at Heathrow and two at Gatwick, the US broke off negotiations on 20 October. We stand ready to resume them as soon as the US Government wish to do so.

Ministerial Information System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what system his Department has corresponding to MINIS; and what arrangements are made for hon. Members to access it. [39617]

Mr. Norris: My Department is pursuing the 20 per cent. efficiency gains plan announced by the then Secretary of State to the House on 9 May 1994, *Official Report*, column *58*. My Department is currently working to develop a new resource planning and management system consistent with that envisaged in the efficiency unit report: "Resource Management Systems" and meeting the plans in the White Paper: "Better Accounting for Taxpayers Money" (Cm 1929).

My Department will continue to place an annual transport report before Parliament.

Alternative Fuels

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is he doing to promote alternatives to petrol-driven vehicles. [39768]

Mr. Norris: The Government are currently considering the role that alternative fuels might play in minimising road transport emissions. To that end, they are continuing to sponsor studies, including the £1.2 million collaborative field trials of alternative fuels announced last year. Results should be available in late 1996.

Keep Right Sign

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of progress on implementing the new regulation drafted by the Automobile Association on the use of the keep right sign. [39622]

Mr. Norris: We are preparing updated regulations on the signing of temporary obstructions, which will take account of the AA's proposal, and we expect to publish a draft statutory instrument for public consultation soon.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Drivers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce the number of accidents caused by tiredness in drivers of heavy goods vehicles. [39772]

Mr. Norris: We have recently issued new research-based advice to drivers of all vehicles on how best to avoid the dangers of driver fatigue. We are continuing to enforce the regulations which limit driving time of HGV drivers and set minimum requirements for breaks and rest periods.

Crossrail

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the new crossrail project in London. [39794]

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) asked for a study on several aspects of the crossrail project, including its structure and ownership under the railway privatisation arrangements, central London employment forecasts, and the advantages and disadvantages of possible small-scale alternatives to it. Ministers will be considering the results of the study when it has been completed.

Fatal Crash, Settle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the mechanical digger involved in the fatal road crash with a coach at Settle, North Yorkshire, on 23 August carried a current vehicle excise licence enabling it to be driven on public highways; and if he will make a statement. [39456]

Mr. Norris: The vehicle was appropriately licensed.

Public Bodies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the public appointments for which his Department is responsible in the county of South Yorkshire, indicating in each case the duration of the appointment, the date when a new appointment is due, and the salary. [39471]

Mr. Norris: The answers are as follows.

(1) My right hon. friend is responsible for the appointment of the north-eastern traffic commissioner and deputy traffic commissioners. The north-eastern traffic area includes the county of South Yorkshire. The present traffic commissioner was appointed in 1992, and a new appointment will be due in 2007 when the present incumbent retires. The current standard salary of a traffic commissioner is £43,836 per annum.

(2) Three deputy traffic commissioners have been appointed to assist the north-eastern traffic commissioner. The appointments are for a fixed term of three years and are due for review in November 1996, December 1996 and April 1997 respectively. Deputy traffic commissioners are paid a daily rate of £186.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for *(a)* the financial year 1994–95 and *(b)* the estimated figures for the financial year 1995–96, for each executive agency for which he is responsible. [39497]

Mr. Norris: Estimated outturn for 1994–95 and plans for 1995–96 for civil service manpower and pay bill are set out in my Department's annual report (Cm 2806), copies of which are in the Libraries of the House. A breakdown by grade and individual agency could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the non-departmental public bodies to which his Department makes appointments in the county of South Yorkshire, with the total annual budget for each body and the number of appointments made or renewed for each body in each of the last four years. [39436]

Mr. Norris: The answers are as follows:

(1) My right hon. friend is responsible for the appointment of the north-eastern traffic commissioner and his deputies whose functions as tribunals classify them as non-departmental public bodies. The north-eastern traffic area includes the county of South Yorkshire. Traffic commissioners do not have a budget but the annual administrative budget for the office which supports the north-eastern traffic commissioner and his deputies in their work is £1.18 million.

(2) Four appointments have been made within the last four years. The present north-eastern traffic commissioner was appointed in October 1992, and deputy traffic commissioners were appointed in January 1994, April 1994 and October 1995.

(3) My right hon. Friend is also responsible for the appointment of the chairman of the north-east rail users consultative committee, after consultation with the rail regulator.

(4) The RUCCs were set up under the Railways Act 1993. They are sponsored by the rail regulator. Budgeting for the RUCCs is managed centrally, the total provision for 1994–95 was £1.119 million. The Secretary of State has appointed one chairman to the NERUCC, in 1995.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times in each month of the current year he has met personally the heads of the agencies which report to him to discuss the work of those agencies. [39864]

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has met the chief executive of the Highways Agency on 11 occasions to discuss matters relating to the work of the agency and the chief executive has attended departmental meetings on five occasions when my right hon. Friend has been present. He has discussed the work of the Transport Research Laboratory with its chief executive on two occasions (July and September); and on one occasions he has discussed with the relevant chief executive the work of the Driving Standards Agency (July), the Marine Safety Agency (July), the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (September) and the Coastguard Agency (September). To date, he has not discussed the work of the vehicle inspectorate or the Vehicle Certification Agency with their chief executives.

Vehicle Pollution Levels

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which agencies are charged with controlling and enforcing vehicle pollution levels; and what assistance they receive from his Department. [39904]

Mr. Norris: The Department's Vehicle Certification Agency is responsible for ensuring that new motor vehicle types conform with pre-registration type approval requirements, which include the internationally agreed standards relating to emissions.

After a vehicle has entered into service, the Department's Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency enforces emissions standards both at annual roadworthiness tests and at the roadside. The agency's own personnel carry out annual tests on heavy vehicles and also carry out compliance checks on all types of vehicle at the roadside. Annual emissions checks on light vehicles are carried out under the MOT testing scheme, which is supervised by the agency.

The agencies' approval and testing activities are financed by fees paid by applicants although a public expenditure survey allocation is made to them each year to finance their enforcement activities.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicles were tested on emission standards as a percentage of the total in 1994; and how many of them were *(a)* prohibited and *(b)* prosecuted. [39902]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mr. Graham Allen, dated 27 October 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning emission standards testing of heavy goods vehicles during 1994.

Every heavy goods vehicle (HGV) is tested for emission standards at annual test. In the financial year 1994/95, the Vehicle Inspectorate tested 447,660 HGVs. Of those that failed, 1.6% failed because of excess emissions. In the same period, the Inspectorate inspected 128,116 vehicles at the roadside. All were examined at least visually for excess emissions. 16,000 were put through an instrumented check. The roadside checks resulted in the issue of 450 prohibitions for excess emissions and one prosecution.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what course of action his Department advises motorists to take if they see gross emissions from other vehicles and wish to report it in order that authorities can take appropriate action. [39895]

Mr. Norris: Members of the public are encouraged to report excessively smoky heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles to the Vehicle Inspectorate. The procedure for doing so is explained in detail in a leaflet we published originally in August 1993 and re-launched in March this year. I have placed copies of the up-to-date leaflet in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to allowing local authorities to stop vehicles in order to carry out emissions tests. [40059]

Mr. Norris: There are no plans to change the law which only permits police officers to stop vehicles. Enabling regulations could, however, be made under the provisions of section 87 of the Environment Act 1995 to permit local authorities, with police support, to carry out emissions checks on vehicles using the road. We are currently consulting with interested parties on how this might be done in practice.

Buses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secrtary of State for Transport what is the current trend in ownership for United Kingdom bus services. [40168]

Mr. Norris: Most bus services are now run by operators in the private sector. The trend is towards larger groupings although the number of operators providing local services continues to increase year on year.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the establishment of a statutory regulator for the deregulated bus industry in the United Kingdom. [40084]

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to establish a regulator for the bus industry.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is proposing to counter the problems caused by conflicts between bus companies. [39769]

Mr. Norris: The Office of Fair Trading has powers to deal with anti-competitive behaviour between bus companies, and traffic commissioners can act where operators intentionally interfere with the services of other operators or operate services in a manner dangerous to the public.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of buses are more than 12-years-old; and what was the figure in 1986. [40166]

Mr. Norris: Of those public service vehicles in the bus taxation class having nine or more seats, 36 per cent. were 12-years-old or more at the end of 1994. The corresponding figure at the end of 1986 was 19 per cent.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to set up a regulator for the bus industry. [40057]

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to establish a regulator for the bus industry.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of bus services are controlled by the five largest bus companies in the United Kingdom. [40167]

Mr. Norris: Owing to the complexity of the structure of the bus and coach industry it is difficult to give an exact figure. However it is estimated that between 40 and 45 per cent. of local bus mileage is run on services controlled by the five largest bus companies in the UK.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the change in percentage terms *(a)* in the number of passengers carried and *(b)* in the revenue generated in real terms since bus deregulation to date. [40029]

Mr. Norris: Bus deregulation in Great Britain only affected bus operations outside of London. Figures obtained from annual surveys of public service operators show that passenger journeys on local bus services in Great Britain excluding London declined by 22 per cent. between financial years 1986–87 and 1994–95. Comparable passenger receipts on local bus services, which include concessionary fare reimbursement for groups such as disabled people, the elderly and children, declined by 7 per cent. in real terms over the same period.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he intends to take in response to the recent Office of Fair Trading report in respect of the problems of anti-competitive behaviour in the deregulated bus industry; [40088]

(2) what is his response to the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into bus deregulation. [40083]

Mr. Norris: The general recommendations of the recent MMC report are being considered by the bus working group that I set up earlier this year.

SCOTLAND

Sheltered Housing

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider giving statutory effect to the NHBC (Scotland) code of practice for sheltered housing. [37930]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: My right hon. Friend welcomed the introduction by the National House Building Council (Scotland) of the code on a voluntary basis in 1991. We are pleased to see the building industry regulate itself and give protection to its customers, and we do not believe action by the Government to regulate such activity is required at present.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what control he at present exercises over companies owning sheltered housing in Scotland which *(a)* fail to hold meetings with residents, *(b)* fail to publish accounts justifying their service charges and *(c)* appoint wardens with access to residents' property without consultation. [37928]

Mr. Robertson: My right hon. Friend has no powers over how sheltered housing companies manage the properties they own. However, problems encountered within some sheltered housing developments are being considered by the Scottish Law Commission in the context of its work on reviewing property law in Scotland. The need for legislation will be considered in the light of the commission's reports and recommendations.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sites of special scientific interest in Scotland have been denotified since 1981 on the grounds of decline in their scientific interest. [38356]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Information on the number of sites of special scientific interest which have been denotified is published in the annual reports of Scottish Natural Heritage, and the former Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct the corporate communications department of Scottish Nuclear Ltd. to refrain from using company resources to promote the case for privatisation. [38752]

Mr. Kynoch: The Government have announced their intention to privatise the advanced gas-cooled reactor and the pressurised water reactors power stations currently owned by SNL and Nuclear Electric.

Scottish Nuclear is a limited company governed by the Companies Acts and bound by its memorandum and articles of association. The directors of the company are obliged by law to act in the best interests of Scottish Nuclear and it is for them to decide the company's corporate communications policy.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the transfer of responsibility for nuclear safety of Scottish Nuclear from Mr. Richard Killick to Mr. John McKeown between 30 August and 7 September; and what assessment he has made of what transition period is sufficient for the transfer of responsibility for safety at nuclear power stations. [38750]

Mr. Kynoch: Staff changes within Scottish Nuclear below board level are a matter for that company's management. However I can confirm that Dr. McKeown was the director of safety at Scottish Nuclear prior to Mr. Killick's appointment and has long experience of nuclear safety issues. Scottish Nuclear has an excellent safety record.

Anti-social Neighbours

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation to penalise anti-social neighbours who are *(a)* public sector tenants, *(b)* private sector tenants and *(c)* owner-occupiers; and if he will make a statement. [29216]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: My right hon. Friend recently announced his intention to take action to suspend the right to buy of tenants who are subject to eviction proceedings for anti-social behaviour. The Scottish Office has consulted recently on the effectiveness of existing neighbour noise controls, any changes to which would affect both tenants and owner-occupiers. We have also consulted on the introduction of probationary tenancies for public sector tenants. The comments received on both these issues are currently under consideration.

Apiculture Industry

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to develop the apiculture industry in Scotland; what plan he has to encourage the marketing of Scottish honey elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas; and if he will make a statement. [39218]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: While we have no specific plans to develop the apiculture industry in Scotland, there is a wide range of marketing and export support measures provided by the Scottish Office, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and the network of local enterprise companies in support of the agri-food industry in Scotland from which the apiculture industry could benefit. The Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department, processing and marketing branch—0131-244-6386—would be happy to advise industry representatives of the most appropriate sources of support.

Student Allowances

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if student allowances are available for the purchase of course and class manuals which course organisers consider compulsory for the completion of university classes. [38881]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: For students in full-time higher education, provision for the purchase of books and so on forms an integral part of the overall package of maintenance support provided through maintenance grants and student loans. This enables students to determine their own priorities in terms of expenditure.

Resit Examinations

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for the latest year available, the average number of resit examinations for students attending each higher education institution in Scotland. [38880]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The information requested is not available.

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits and running costs provision for 1995–96 within his responsibility. [40586]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, I intend to make changes to nine voted cash limits and nine running costs limits:

The cash limit element of class XIV, vote 1, agriculture and fisheries, Scotland will be decreased by £1,500,000 from £132,667,000 to £131,167,000. The decrease takes account of slower than expected take-up of measures aimed at providing support in special areas.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 2, training programmes, roads and transport services, industrial and regional support, Scotland, will be increased by £21,659,000 from £941,222,000 to £962,881,000. The increase includes an additional £4.7 million in capital grant towards investment in new shipping by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd., balanced by a corresponding reduction in the non-voted element of the company's external financing limit; a reduction of £630,000 in the repayment of voted loans—capital—by Scottish Enterprise to be accompanied by a similar reduction in the provision of grant in aid; and the take-up of £16,961,000 capital end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 13 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*, for regional assistance and motorways and trunk roads.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 5, housing and environmental services, Scotland will be decreased by £364,000 from £417,068,000 to £416,704,000. The decrease takes account of a reduced requirement of £1,721,000, under departmental administration, environment and central services, which is being transferred to class XIV, vote 8; and a net increase of £1,357,000 covering an increase of £1,606,000 in gross running cost provision for Historic Scotland from £14,215,000 to £15,821,000 reflecting the take-up of end year flexibility entitlements—£151,000 capital and £1,206,000 running costs—further increases in provision for this agency of £400,000 for running costs and £496,000 for capital expenditure which are offset fully by increased appropriations in aid. In addition, there is an increase in provision for the Local Government Staff Commission (Scotland), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and establishes provision for the Local Government Property Commission (Scotland) and for the Monklands inquiry, all of which is offset fully by savings within the vote.

The cash limit for class XIV vote 10, law, order, miscellaneous health and social services, Scotland, will be increased by a net total of £3,883,000 from £311,890,000 to £315,773,000. Provision for running costs on this vote will be increased by £1,290,000 from £149,619,000 to £150,909,000. This includes a transfer of £58,000 from class XIV, vote 18. The changes include the take-up of the end year flexibility entitlement for the Scottish Prison Service, increasing its running cost provision by £1,028,000 and capital provision by £354,000; for the Scottish Office Pensions Agency, increasing its running cost provision by £204,000 and capital provision by £418,000; and the social work residential accommodation for children capital provision by £1,271,000. A number of other minor transfers have taken place, within the vote itself, from within other votes in the Scottish Office block and from the Department of Social Security vote, in respect of consequences of changes in housing benefit arrangements.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 12, hospital, community health (part) and other health services, Scotland, will be increased by a net total of £29,839,000 from £3,131,164,000 to £3,161,003,000. This increase includes £48,482,000 reflecting the partial take up of the end year flexibility entitlement announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 13 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *776–82*, a transfer of £840,000 from class XII, vote 1 in respect of the Scottish contribution to the Prescription Pricing Authority's administration costs in connection with the assessment of claims under the Scottish low income scheme; a transfer of £246,000 from class XII, vote 1 to cover the costs of services previously funded directly by the Department of Health; a transfer of £17,000 from class XIV, vote 10 to meet the maintenance, repair costs and insurance premiums from invalid three-wheelers, the responsibility for which has transferred to the CSA; a transfer of £1,000 from class XIV, vote 10, in respect of income from insurance claims from invalid three-wheelers; a transfer of £180,000 to class XIV, vote 10 to meet the costs of a merit award given to a member of the Mental Welfare Commission. In addition, there is a reduction in provision of £19,554,000 as a result of a revision of NHS trusts' external financing limit; some adjustments between subheads to reflect revised requirements and changes to anticipated appropriations in aid.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 15, education, arts and libraries, Scotland will be increased by £2,101,000 from £965,655,000 to £967,756,000. The increase reflects the full take up of end-year flexibility of £2,000,000 as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 13 July 1995, *Official Report*, columns *777–78*, for further education capital—£1,250,000—and National Library of Scotland building programme—£750,000; also a transfer of £101,000 from class XIV, vote 18 for the Student Awards Agency, Scotland—£36,000 for administrative costs in respect of additional responsibilities and £65,000 in respect of end year flexibility. Running cost provision on this vote will increase by £101,000 from £2,840,000 to £2,941,000.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 18, Scottish Office administration is being increased by £5,745,000 to £174,607,000. Within this total, the running cost limit for Scottish Office administration is being increased by £3,391,000 from £149,729,000 to £153,120.000 as a result of the take-up of end-year flexibility—£3.5 million—predominantly to fund staff early departure costs, less inter-vote transfers of £144,000. In addition there is a transfer of £35,000—running costs—from the Department for Education and Employment. The capital provision is also being increased, as a result of the take-up of £720,000 of end-year flexibility and inter-vote transfers. The additional capital provision is to cover information technology costs associated with agricultural grants.

The overall running cost limit for the Scottish Office, together with its agencies, is being increased by £6,521,000 from £333,087,000 to £339,608,000. This

results from the take-up of end-year flexibility, increased provision for Historic Scotland being covered by increased income, and a transfer from the Department of Employment in respect of European social fund work.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 19, Scottish Record Office, is being increased by £996,000 to £5,459,000. Within this total, the SRO running cost limit is being increased by £782,000 from £4,804,000 to £5,586,000 and results from the take-up of end-year flexibility to cover increased costs associated with water and sewerage charges, contributions in lieu of rates and other running costs of the new repository. The increase in capital provision results from the take-up of end-year flexibility to meet costs arising from slippage in the construction of the Thomas Thomson house repository.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 20, General Register Office (Scotland), is being increased by £337,000 to £5,372,000. Within this total, the GRO(S) running cost limit is being increased by £100,000 from £7,158,000 to £7,258,000, resulting from the take-up of end-year flexibility to compensate for cost increases. The capital increase results from the take-up of end-year flexibility to cover costs of the refurbishment of Ladywell house and New Register house.

The increases will be offset by savings on other votes within my responsibility or by transfers from other Departments. There will not therefore be any addition to the planned total of public expenditure.

Agri-environment Schemes

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the expenditure for *(a)* environmentally sensitive areas and *(b)* other agri-environment schemes in (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95. [39750]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The information is set out in the table:

£ million

	Expenditure		
	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Environmentally sensitive areas	1.086	0.963	1.044

The other agri-environment schemes were not launched until 1994–95 and there was no expenditure in that year.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the allocated budget for *(a)* environmentally sensitive areas and *(b)* other agri-environment schemes in (i) 1995–96 and (ii) 1996–97. [39751]

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* There is no allocated provision for individual environmentally sensitive areas. Supply estimate provision for 1995–96 and current planned provision for 1996–97 for *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme and *(b)* other agri-environment schemes are set out in the table.

Financial provision: £ million

	Supply estimate 1995–96	*Planned provision 1996–97*
Environmentally sensitive areas	5.5	8.074
Other agri-environment schemes	1.697	4.098

Rating Revaluation (Appeals)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of state for Scotland how many appeals have so far been lodged in each valuation area in Scotland against the valuation of business premises; how many appeals have been dealt with; how many appeals have been successful; and what was the average amount of time taken to resolve these appeals. [39400]

Mr. Kynoch *[Holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The information requested is not yet available. It is planned to gather regular statistics on the progress of appeals resulting from the 1995 rating revaluation, from 15 December, the date by which such appeals must be lodged.

Housing

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent in respect of each development corporation in Scotland in transferring their housing stock to other landlords during the wind-up. [39414]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The information requested is shown in the table. Expenditure includes consultants' fees to tenants' advisers, support to housing associations, conduct of the ballot and registration of title.

Development Corporation	*Expenditure to 30 September 1995* £
Cumbernauld	286,400
East Kilbride	359,000
Glenrothes	856,300
Irvine	476,100
Livingston	443,400

New Water Authorities

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money so far has been paid to the members of the new water authorities in their capacities as members of the boards of these organisations. [39412]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* Since the establishment of the three water authorities on 17 July 1995, 32 members, excluding chief executives, have received a total of £45,048.59 by way of remuneration and £5,833.82 in reimbursement of expenses incurred on water authority business.

The chief executives of the water authorities, who are also members, have since 17 July received a total of £25,851.29 by way of salary and £1,384.61 in expenses.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money the new water authorities have been granted by his Department to cover the cost of their operations during their shadow period. [39411]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* A total of £9.7 million has been allocated for grant in aid to the new water authorities in 1995–96. This represents less than 2 per cent. of the estimated current expenditure on water and sewerage services this year. The allocations to the individual water authorities is shown in the respective grant in aid tables at chapter 4 of the Scottish Office departmental report—published as Cm 2814.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money his Department spent in commissioning consultants Babtie Shaw to draft the proposed water asset transfer schemes for the existing regional and islands authorities in transferring their water assets to the new water authorities. [39413]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The Babtie Group was contracted to prepare a model framework and guidance notes to assist regional and islands authorities and the Central Scotland water development board in drawing up their asset transfer schemes. The cost of that contract was £108,815.98.

Babties has also been retained to examine and comment upon the asset transfer schemes submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. The value of that contract will be up to £337,750.

Irvine Development Corporation (Housing)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department estimates will be spent by Irvine development corporation in balloting its tenants on the transfer of its housing stock to alternative landlords during wind-up. [39415]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* Irvine development corporation's costs in balloting their tenants are estimated at £247,000.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much expenditure his Department has incurred so far as a result of local government reform. [39403]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* A wide range of Scottish Office staff have been involved to varying degrees on local government reform. The administrative and associated costs incurred by them cannot be separately identified. Specific elements of the reform have, however, been separately costed and these are listed in the following table:

	Cost £
Consultation Paper—"The Case for Change" (1991) and Consultation Paper—"Shaping the New Councils (1992) and associated leaflets, consultation videos, summary of responses etc."	148,800
White Paper—"Shaping the Future—The New Councils" and associated leaflets	58,200
"The New Councils" leaflet (household drop)	138,660
Total	345,660

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use his Department has made of outside consultants as part of the process of local government reform in Scotland. [39401]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 26 October 1995]:* The services of Touche Ross were used for work in connection with the costs of local government reform.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SESSION 1994–95

16th October—27th October 1995

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Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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